

A Brief Study of Different Issues in Research

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Abstract—*This paper analyse the role of social, cultural, ethical and financial issues in research. This paper identifies challenge which emerges from socio-cultural, ethical and financial sector in front of researchers, while collecting, analysing and interpretation of data. This paper draw attention as how these factors affects selection of research problem, research design and even publication of research report. Given paper also gives useful insight about way to test credibility of research report and it also suggests some measures to improve availability of finance to research projects.*

Keywords: *Research, Research issues- Social, Cultural, Ethical & Financial, Research report and credibility*

1. INTRODUCTION

Research is relevant to every discipline whether it is science or art. Research works help in discovering new facts, relations among different facts as well as it adds value to the field of study. Research is done at various levels and also with different purpose. There are various social, cultural, ethical and financial issues in research which a researcher faces in conducting research. A researcher has to deal with different set of people who lives in different cultural setting with distinct socio-political orientations. Issues like developed, developing, underdeveloped countries, advanced - backward societies, moral and ethical concerns of different segments of people etc. often dominates in the field of research. Arena of research is usually engulfed in conflicts of who will finance the research, why she/he finance it, shortage of fund, sometime unmindful allocations of funds etc. are concerning area in research. A researcher has to perform difficult job. His task is to make use of the existing data to investigate and find results, and analyze whether this newly gathered facts are also true to other environment.

In conducting research, researchers must be cautious. They must allocate plenty of time to complete each stage of the activity. They must be conscientious. There are unexpected difficulties and problems and they may lead to academic failures. Hence, this study is conducted to investigate the most difficult item of all the problems that the researchers across the discipline face in conducting research.

According to Logan, any time personal problems could occupy some of the cognitive capacity and disturbs academic pursuits. Usually, the best solution to a problem depends on what causes it, in which case, one has to discover why the problem arises. But in most cases, the best approach is simply to with the solve problems. In conducting a research one must have the interest of doing it. It is a very laborious task. A research study cannot be completed when there are no respondents. Respondents are the ones to give their perception and answers on the issues in the study.

Research work requires time. It is rewarding when the goal to finish it is attained on the target date. A researcher needs to manage time properly. Time management is about establishing routines, setting goals, and understanding priorities. Dombeck and Wells-Moran (2006) claim that, “time management skills boil down to awareness, organization and commitment. One needs to become aware of and record everything he is doing so that important things will be done on time. One also needs to commit to keep a schedule, and not wandering off when something more momentarily interesting occurs. They emphasized that time management and organization skills are applicable to a wide range of life tasks one might decide to take on”.

Thus a researcher has to deal with various personal, socio-political, ethical legal and financial issues which often affects his subject matter, methods of conducting research and objectives of research.

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2. ETHICAL ISSUES IN RESEARCH

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with the conduct of people and guides the norms or standards of behavior of people and relationships with each other (Blumberg et al, 2015). It refers to an “ethos” or “way of life”, “social norms for conduct that distinguishes between acceptable and unacceptable behavior” (Shah, 2019, p.205;). Many societies have legal rules which dictate behavior, but ethical norms are broader than laws. However, societies apply laws to enforce the moral standards.

The study finds that, “ethics leads to the creation of social norms which focus on the way that a person is expected to behave in a particular situation. These norms of behavior which guide moral choices of individuals can allow for a wide range of ethical positions. Moral values are taught progressively in the life of an individual and are also influenced by the way someone interacts in the society. This is the reason why ethical norms are considered different by different individuals”.

2.1 Research Ethics

“Researchers are professionals hence, research ethics as a branch of applied ethics has well established rules and guidelines that defines their conduct. Research ethics is important in our everyday life. Research requires that researchers should protect the dignity of their subjects and correctly publish the information that is researched. There are two dominant philosophical approaches with regard to research ethics: teleology and deontology. The teleological approach holds that the ends served by the research justify the means. This implies that the benefits of the research findings could be weighed against the costs of acting unethically. But, this depends on the comparison made about the relative good over the evil produced. While the deontological theories which are the opposite of teleological approach states that the ends served by the research can never justify the use of research which is unethical. They assert that there are considerations which make an action or rule correct besides the goodness or badness of its consequences”.

This development dates back even before the 18th century. According to Kour, “it was seriously taken into consideration when on 9th December 1946 an American tribunal opened criminal proceedings against

23 leading German physicians and administrators who willingly participated in war crimes and crimes against humanity”.

As per finding of Burns in 2015, “it then necessitated the introduction of professional codes and laws to prevent the abuse of human subjects and protection of human rights in research. The Nuremberg code emphasized the need to observe informed voluntary consent, liberty of withdrawal from research, protection from physical and mental harm or suffering and death with particular emphasis on the risk-benefit balance”. The most significant one was the Helsinki declaration of 1964 which states the need for non-therapeutic research emphasizing the protection of subjects by noting that the well-being of individuals is more important than other needs.

It is widely recognised fact that, “Norms enhance the purpose of research which includes the dissemination of knowledge, reporting or saying the truth and finally the need to counteract errors. Various steps that are vital in research begin with research proposal writing and approval leading to the actual research study. A researcher must select the appropriate methodology to employ, relevant ways of collecting data, present the research findings and interpret them accordingly leading to presentation of information in a logical sequence. The data is then analyzed and reported well in form of an article, project report, thesis or a book. It is vital that a researcher must observe appropriate values at all these stages while conducting research. If this is not observed, it could result into research misconduct. And, it is within this framework that we discuss ethical issues related to research emphasizing on those related to the research itself, research subjects and the research process”.

2.2 Ethical Issues Related to Research

As per accepted ethical standards, “a researcher must be cautious in revealing his or her research findings if they may impede the good working relations of his or her sponsor. This is evident if the information focuses on the policies of the organization and could reveal sensitive matters of the people or organization. This calls for the need to collaborate well with other researchers and yet uphold the intellectual rights of the researchers. If this is not well adhered to, it could lead to rebellion or even protests”.

2.3 Academic Freedom

People in academic field are continuously engaged in research work. Academicians are people of great significance for value addition in the field of research and hence they are expected that they should act ethically. But sometime due to some reasons like wrong intension, inappropriate resources available for pursuing research, inadequate guidance etc. induce researcher to stole material from other research work.

2.4 Fabrication and Fraud

Kour has defined it as, “it involves creating, merging, inventing or faking data or results which are already recorded or reported while, fraud is the manipulation of data, materials, and equipment’s, processes etc. by changing/modifying results or omitting some data or adding data so that the research does not seem to have been well represented or recorded”. Any researcher who is usually involved in this kind of practice violates the primary objective of research ethics which renders him/ her untrustworthy or unethical and could mislead other research scholars, while at the same time undermining his/her own academic authority. This is prevalent if the researcher or researchers misuse his/ her privilege and abuse the power inferred to him/ her for their benefit at the expense of the vulnerable subjects.

2.5 Financial Issues and Sponsorship

Research work involves hard work. It requires logical presentation and analysis of information. Hence, researchers should be held accountable to the public and must seek for financial support and sponsorship so that a research study should be thoroughly undertaken. But, in some cases, the research findings could be compromised by the funding organization which does not fully support the research work financially and instead it tries to save money thus impacting the quality of the study. Such kind of acts generally leads to hurried research and distorted findings. Such studies could be a waste of money or is of no value or impact on the consumers/producer or targeted population. Some research studies are even conducted under the guidance of a sponsor/s who specifies their needs or demands. In one way, this could lead to non-compliance or non- conformity to the ethical standards in research.

2.6 Plagiarism

The issue of plagiarism is an important topic in academic institutions of higher learning. In this practice an author or researcher has to ensure that any work which is written is original and be devoid of some existing texts, results or even expressions which are borrowed, manipulated or used such as ideas, or even words of the author or publication without acknowledging where the information has been taken from (Mugenda, 2013). This malpractice has been necessitated by the increasing use of internet in the contemporary time. Incidence of plagiarism could be attributed to laziness, ignorance or diversity of cultures hence affecting the integrity of the researcher. It should be the responsibility of the writer to quote, or refer to the original material appropriately.

2.7 Writing and Publishing Ethics

The publication of articles/research papers in peer reviewed journals or in books is mandatory for academic and professional advancement in institutions of higher education. The rule of the thumb in some institution of higher education is, “publish or perish”. With this thought in mind, each institution of higher education has to motivate its scholars to engage in the act of publishing article/research paper so as to improve on its visibility and ranking to compete with other institutions. So any written article/paper must be original and it should make significant contribution the domain of knowledge by presenting findings that will be new/unique to the other scholars. So it is Ernst responsibility of every author that, they should show their affiliation to an institution of higher learning because, it is mandatory for the researcher or author of a paper or article to contribute in one way or the other to the final paper. It is however unethical to submit one article to two different journals or duplicate publication of research findings without informing the editors that the work is under consideration elsewhere.

2.8 Issue of Anonymity, Confidentiality and Deception

Anonymity refers to keeping secret by not disclosing the ethnic or cultural background of respondents, refrain from referring to them by their names or their cultural identity. But, if the researcher needs to disclose any information, then consent must be sought from the respondent. This work enhances honesty towards the

research subject by protecting them from physical and psychological harm thereby ensuring that the researcher does not ask questions which can cause inconvenience to respondents. When conducting research, participants should be told the truth. But, if they are told only part of it or if the truth is completely denied or compromised this could lead to deception.

2.9 Beneficence and Non- maleficence

The concept of beneficence means doing good. It is the role of a researcher who has contact with a participant to explain the purpose/benefits of the study and that will accrue from it. The major purpose of maintaining ethics in research is to serve and enhance the welfare of people and avoid deception. Beneficence asserts the usefulness of the study while, non-maleficence expresses the potential risks of participation. It emphasizes on what constitutes harm which could be physiological, emotional, social or even economic in nature. It is important to prevent any intentional harm or minimize any aspect of potential harm by refraining from injuring the respondent either physically or psychologically.

2.10 Voluntary and Informed Consent

This is one of the major ethical issues in conducting research which states that “a person knowingly, intelligently, and in a clear way, gives his or her Consent for research.

2.11 Vulnerable Groups/ Minorities

While conducting research, it is possibility to involve populations which are disadvantaged or vulnerable or minorities such as children, poor or sick or tribal people. If this is done, then the researcher must obtain due consent from their parents or guardians or heads so as to involve them in the research investigation.

3. SOCIAL– CULTURAL ISSUES IN RESEARCH

A researcher has to perform his job in different socio cultural setting. Social – cultural environment does have effects on all other disciplines of research. So to arrive at comprehensive conclusion of any research this specific socio cultural environment is of special importance.

3.1 Prevalence of Different Medical Systems

In different countries there are different socio-cultural practices which affects their respective medical systems

whether it is developed or developing country. Like in India system of medicines rests on Ayurveda but in western countries it rest on Allopathy. Such kind of different systems do affect research work in these countries. Such difference implies that research work done in one country doesn't have implication in other countries.

3.2 Informing Perspective of Participants about Research

Perspective of subjects in research in different countries is not same. People in developing countries are more reserved about their customs, traditions and belief systems as compared to their western counterparts. People in western countries are more willing to talk about their liking-disliking and value system. So the researcher has to take into account different socio-cultural setting of different countries while conducting research and sometime question of same research projects varies in different countries due to their specific socio-cultural requirement.

3.3 Selection of Research Topic

A researcher pursues research for a definitive purpose whether to find out something new phenomena or to eliminate some socio cultural problem. So topic of research itself based on specific socio cultural requirements of society. Like in developing countries focus of research usually based on how to achieve growth and development, how to eliminate poverty hunger or unemployment whereas in developed countries research work usually focus on maintaining standard of current living, issue of freedom of individual etc.

3.4 Research Process

Deployment of research tool and techniques during research process is also determined by respective socio cultural setting of countries. Research methods are stated as more refined and accurate in developed countries as compared to developing countries. It is usually argued that research finding in developed countries is more objective and based on more refined data as compared to developing countries due to their social-cultural environment.

4. FINANCIAL ISSUES IN RESEARCH

Financial issue does play important role in every domain of knowledge whether it is art, science or

commerce. In research finance does play significant part. Significance of finance in research can be analysed in selection of research topic, research methods, research objectives and research area. Role of finance in research can be highlighted under following heads.

4.1 More fund to Some Research Areas Only

Worldwide there is trend toward concentration of finance in some research areas only and neglect of other smaller research projects. Sometime finance for research project is concentrated in some countries only or even in some specific areas only. Due to this evolving trend research in other areas is marginalised and often important areas are not studied. Thus financial relationship affects the selection of research problem or question because companies tend to fund research that has the potential to promote their financial interests. For example, if a company is trying to obtain regulatory approval for a new drug, it is required to sponsor studies designed to obtain data on the drug's safety and efficacy.

4.2 Inadequate Size of Research Grant

Many research projects are not completed or these projects wait for their start for wants of sufficient funds. Along with availability of funds, it should be sufficient for the on-going project. Lack of fund is a major problem in developing and underdeveloped countries where many areas are still not researched properly. In this situation sometime objective of research or research process as a whole is compromised. Private companies have the financial resources to conduct clinical trials with large sample sizes with increased statistical power. In larger studies one is more likely to detect a difference between treatments (i.e. positive result) than in smaller ones. since the govt. funded researchers generally have less money to spend, they often cannot afford to conduct trials with larger sample sizes, and they are therefore less likely to obtain positive results (Hochster 2008)

4.3 Vested Interest of Funding Agencies

When government funds are not available for financing research project then other private agencies come to finance research work. In such a scenario aims/objective pattern of research proposal, research methods, research sample etc. are modified to suit the requirement and ambitions of funding agency. This kind

of research is often biased and it doesn't serve large social aims and just fulfil vested interests. Example of such studies are many like a study of cardiovascular clinical trials found that industry-sponsored studies were more likely to report positive findings than studies not funded by industry (Ridker and Torres, 2006)

4.4 Finance and Research Design

Financial relationships may impact study design if an individual or an organization with a financial stake in the outcome makes methodological choices that affect how the data are analysed (Lexchin, 2012). For example, a Pesticide company might conduct a study with a small sample size that shows no evidence of adverse effects of exposing human subjects to low doses of its products. Because the study is underpowered, it is not likely to demonstrate adverse effect. If the study had a large sample size, it might demonstrate such an affect. Another way that financial relationships can impact research design concerns the selection of variables that the study will measure, data collection, analysis of data and also interpretation of data.

4.5 Finance and Research Reports

It is found that financial interests can impact publication because individuals or organisation or organisations with a stake in the outcome of research generally fail to publish unfavourable data or results. One of the most cited examples of this is of Merck which had suppressed publication of data showing that its drug Rofecoxib was associated with significantly higher cardiovascular risks as compared to competing drugs.

5. CONCLUSION

Thus domain of research is influenced by various socio-cultural and ethical issues. These issues have wide spread effect on various stages of research. Ethical issues, conflicting values, and ambiguity in decision making are the important issues which affect research work. As far as ethical issue is concerned there is lack of a single standard of ethical norms which are applicable to all societies and countries. Professional codes, laws, rule-regulations, and ethics committees can provide some guidance but the final decision of how research is conducted, rests with the particular researchers' value system, his morality and his individual preferences.

Social and cultural issues do have prominent influence on research work. It is found that specific socio-cultural environment largely effects research work. Importance of this specific socio-cultural environment ranges from selection of research problem to the publishing of research report. Consideration of speciality of socio-cultural environment is helpful in cross country research. Study of socio- cultural factor helps in analysing specific problem of developed, developing, and under developed countries. By taking into account specific socio cultural requirement of different countries in their research project, it is generally found that research is more productive and it is more beneficial to concerned societies.

Along with socio-cultural, ethical consideration financial issues does have stake in research work. Financial issues can impact study design, data analysis and interpretation. How finance has affected research can be analysed by identifying whether sponsors institutions, or researchers have a significant financial stake in the outcome of a study; whether the sponsor, institution or researchers have a history of biasing research in order to promote their financial goals; how it is easy to manipulate the research in order to further their financial goals. It is also necessary to assess available regulatory mechanism in research design to prevent or minimise biasness.

Thus research work is a tedious job. A researcher has to overcome many personal, social-cultural and

financial difficulties while conducting research. It is expected that a research work should be impartial in its outcomes and it should present accurate facts of prevailing situation. So a researcher should follow well established rule and regulation while doing his/her job. Government of every country should make provision for availability of enough funds to researchers and private funding agencies should not try to manipulate research report instead of thing about their narrow interests they should think about larger interest of welfare of mankind.

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