

RESEARCH ETHICS FOR THE STUDIES IN ECONOMICS

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ABSTRACT

Research is as old as the evolution of man. Man is a social animal and sensible creature, who has his eyes, ears and nose alert to what is happening around. Every event that occurs draws the attention of man, and he does not feel at rest until he is able to understand and control the event. It is his nature to welcome all those events that are for his good, and to condemn those ones that bring problems to him. It does not matter whether the events belong to positive zone or the negative zone, each of them is an issue of serious concern, and wants to be controlled for the betterment of man and his life.

Research is a universal affair. It is made under the various sciences and disciplines. Thousands of research scholars and scientists are always found engaging themselves in the research projects. The scholars are both- professional and non-professional. All the researches are not college or university course oriented. There are the amateurs besides the college and university scholars, who have an insatiable lust for the unknown and unexplored world.

No doubt, research is the demand of all times, but most of the researchers take their projects just for formality, and are not serious about them. In an age when everything is served through the internet sites, they adopt the copy, cut and paste technique to reproduce the same stuff under their own name, and feel proud of them. Real research is not what is being brought forth by the majority of the scholars, but something rare that involves the researcher's curiosity to know more and more and his selfless efforts. Hence, research ethics is needed to make research better.

The paper is a theoretical study based on the secondary data on the research ethics needed by the scholars of Economics. In the centre of the contents of the study there is a special focus on the

significance of the research ethics meant to be observed by the scholars all over the world while carrying out studies in Economics. The study finds out that there is a horrible deterioration in research, and especially in social science research, and that research ethics can be helpful in its improvement.

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INTRODUCTION

Meaning & Definition of Research

Research may be defined as a systematic enquiry of related materials for the sake of establishment of facts and drawing conclusions. In research, the researcher investigates and studies the natural and social phenomena systematically in order to understand the problem and to control it. Since it is impossible for anyone to study the entire phenomena, some specific problem or issue is studied in detail through scientific method. The famous American sociologist Earl Robert Babbie defines research as “a systematic inquiry to describe, explain, predict, and control the observed phenomenon.”

Characteristics of Research

- Systematic and scientific study of some specific event, concern or issue in social and natural phenomena
- Logical reasoning based
- Use of inductive and deductive methods
- It involves observation of the phenomena
- Data collection, classification, tabulation, analysis and interpretation
- Specific research questions oriented
- Research should pave path of research for the progeny of researchers in future
- Analytical and interpretative, and free from ambiguities

- True and accurate information
- Originality

Types of Research

- Basic research which chiefly concerns the enhancement of knowledge
- Applied research which refers to the scientific study made to solve the real life problems
- Problem oriented research which is conducted with a view to understanding the nature of the problem and finding some solution to it
- Qualitative research which aims at makes an in-depth understanding of the problem, and which is non-statistical in nature.
- Quantitative research which is a structured way of collecting data in which the conclusions are drawn by making analysis of the collected data

Research Ethics

Research ethics involves the application of moral rules and professional codes of conduct to the collection, analysis, reporting, and publication of information about research subjects, in particular active acceptance of subjects' right to privacy, confidentiality, and informed consent. It is the moral liability of a researcher to act upon the ethical norms, as they are essential for the promotion of knowledge; they are helpful in making him familiar with the research values; they help to ensure the accountability of the researcher to the society at large, and finally, they promote a variety of other moral standards required for the social welfare.

The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH) is an impartial advisory body established to provide a line of action for research. The Committee finds the research ethics to be valuable for all those who pursue research. It is only through acting upon the research ethics that all the ethical dilemmas can be clarified and truth can be arrived at by preventing scientific misconduct. Moreover, the research ethics are very effective in planning a research project etc. as research tools. It is obligatory for both the researchers and the institutions allowed for research to follow the guidelines prescribed for research ethics. The sole concern is the good research work. The research institutions are accountable for the observance of the research ethics. For it, they can adopt the procedure for administration, management and funding as per the norms. The Committee makes it binding for both the individuals and the research institutions to follow these ethics.

Meaning of Economic Studies

The studies that are made with an economic perspective, and which concerns the economic activities of man are called economic studies. While living in society, man performs several activities that help him survive in the society and world. Many of his activities are encompassed in the economic sphere. They are production, manufacturing, purchase, sale, auction, exchange of money and many others. It is worth mentioning that economic activities are the major activities of man. These activities prove his potential and help him lead a good life.

Steps of Economic Studies

While conducting an economic study, the following steps need to be observed-

- Identification of relevant economic issues
- Development of certain one or more research questions
- Undertaking of literature search
- Review of the relevant literature
- Identification of an area of potential contribution
- Developing evidence through the data collection, classification, tabulation, analysis and interpretation
- Drawing conclusions
- Comparing conclusions to the identified literature
- Applying the analysis of the issue to the current policy issue

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To focus the meaning and characteristics of research
- To analyze the types of research
- To get an in-depth feedback of the economic study and research
- To discuss the process of the economic studies and research
- To discuss the standards of a legitimate economic study
- To discuss the significance of research ethics
- To discuss the deterioration of ethical values in economic research
- To discuss the causes of the deterioration in the quality of economic research
- To bring forth the factors responsible for the deterioration in economic studies
- To interpret the causal-effect relationship of the problem

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

- **Wassenaar Douglas (2006)**, in his research article on **Ethical Issues in Social Science Research**, approves that research ethics should serve to protect the rights and welfare of the participants at all times. Specific principals must be adhered to in order to ensure that the research is carried out according to ethical guidelines. All research studies present a number of ethical and moral dilemmas which must be identified and addressed prior to carrying out any research in order to shield all respondents from potential harm. The two fundamental roles of ethics in social science research are the protection of the research participants by conducting research in such a way that is in the best interests of the participants as well as to ensure that the interests of the broader project of research -the transparent generation of dependable data for analysis and interpretation – are protected. In order to ensure that strict codes of ethics were followed while conducting this research, informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to the commencement of the interviews.
- **Wet de Katinka (2010)**, in her study, emphasizes the importance of the awareness of the research ethics on the part of not only the researchers but also the faculty and the institutions. The study accepts the ethical dimension an important aspect of research, but discards the idea of its observation in social sciences on the ground that its absence causes hardly any harm in case of social sciences.
- **Zarif Tayyaba (2013)**, in her study on **Trends in Social Research & Dealing with Plagiarism: Perspective of a Research Supervisor**, observe that plagiarism is not easy to explain neither it can be identified using simple means. Irrespective of that fact, it is most important that student's community and faculty members must clearly understand the plagiarism concept. Findings included visuals that sum up the participants' perception of and experiences with plagiarism keeping in view the findings it is necessary to build the capacity of teachers especially research supervisors regarding ethics of research generally and concept of plagiarism specifically.
- **Blomfield Megan (2014)**, in the research paper entitled **Ethics in economics: lessons from human subjects research**, lays emphasis on the experimental research and on the use of field experiment in Economics. The author argues a number of ways in which ethical

considerations should enter into economic practice. Economists themselves have a responsibility to further develop the necessary ethical guidelines for their profession, and to encourage the relevant values through active discussion and training (particularly if they do not want to risk having their academic freedom limited by the powers of an external agency that is instead assigned with such a duty).

- **Altug Yalcintas & Isil Sirin Selcuk (2015)**, in their study on **Research Ethics Education in Economics**, admit that the teaching of the research ethics is available in very few Economics departments; in the Economics courses, no such topic is prescribed to be studied by the students of Economics; very few research papers on the economic studies are published in the peer-reviewed journals; at the undergraduate and graduate levels, teaching of research ethics is not made.
- **Keshab Bhattarai (2015)**, in **Research Methods for Economics**, emphasizes the significance of the use of economic theories, statistical and econometric methods, test of predications of models based on the theoretical analysis from optimizing models in micro or macro, finance related fields of economics using empirical evidence using basic econometric or statistical or applied general equilibrium or strategic analyses etc. while conducting research to find answers to puzzling issues in modern economies. It is also argued that a researcher need to be more open and comprehensive while thinking about alternative research techniques applicable to analysis of a particular issue under consideration.
- **Jose F. Molina-Azorin (2016)**, in **Mixed methods research: An opportunity to improve our studies and our research skills**, admits the significance of the use of mixed methods in the economic studies, and holds the idea that the use of mixed methods research in business studies may play an important role in the development of our field because results obtained from different methods have the potential to enrich our understanding of business problems and questions.
- **Ligia Munteanjemna (2016)**, in **Qualitative and Mixed Research Methods in Economics: The Added Value When Using Qualitative Research Methods**, suggests the use of mixed research methods in economic studies for the sake of proper comprehension. The study says that although qualitative methods are often portrayed as less accurate, less powerful or less credible than quantitative methods, in fact, the two sets of methods have their own strengths.

- **Muhammad Mahboob Ali (2017)**, in his article on **Research Methodology for Economics and Business Students**, admits the significance of tabulation in economic studies. He finds tabulation to be the process of summarizing raw data and displaying the same in compact form for further analysis. When mass data has been assembled, it becomes necessary for the researcher to arrange the same in some kind of concise logical order. The study finds tabulation quite advantageous as it simplifies complex data, facilitates comparison, facilitates computation, presents facts in minimum possible space, and the tabulated data are good for references and they make it easier to present the information graphically and diagrammatically.
- **Eva Jereb, Matjaz Perc, Barbara Lammlein, Janja Jerebic, Marko Urh, Iztok Podbregar & Polona Sprajc (2018)**, in their joint-research paper, discuss at length the growing tendency of the researchers for plagiarism. The study calls it ‘a multi-layered phenomenon of dishonesty in higher education. Internet and modern technology is responsible for plagiarism. The major findings of this research reveal that easy access to information-communication technologies and the Web is the main reason driving plagiarism.

HYPOTHESIS

- Economic research is a particular type of research which studies the economic activities of the individual
- Economic studies may be both qualitative and quantitative
- There is a horrible deterioration in the economic studies
- Economic research needs to be improved
- Professionalism is the root cause of the deterioration in the economic research
- There is research ethics, but it is not observed strictly
- Without the observation of the research ethics meant for the economic studies, a true economic research is not possible

METHODOLOGY

The paper is purely a theoretical study based on the secondary data on the methodology of the economic research in India and abroad. Designed to teach the significance of research ethics to the scholars of Economics, it concerns chiefly the ethical issues pertaining to the economic

studies. For the purpose, immediately after the identification of the issue, search for the literature was made, and relevant literature was reviewed from the different angles. After the content analysis of the secondary data, ethical considerations were suggested and conclusions were drawn. The approach and perspective of the author while developing the things was all economic. The contents are meant for the economic studies in particular in addition to the interdisciplinary studies.

KEY-FINDINGS

- Researchers need to practice ethics and a code of conduct while making observations or drawing conclusions
- A systematic approach based on rules and procedures must be followed for accurate data
- Research should be based on logical reasoning involving both the inductive and the deductive methods
- The data should be derived from actual observations in natural settings made by the researcher
- The studies in Economics should be both qualitative and quantitative
- The qualitative economic studies should interpret the behavior of man while making his economic studies, and the quantitative economic studies should produce the quantitative output derived as a result of the study
- The economic studies should be conducted with certain specific research questions in mind, and with a specific aim to find answers to those questions
- The use of economic theories, statistical and econometric methods should be preferred to the methods that are used in the non-economic studies
- Both the primary and the secondary data should be used, but the results should be drawn on the basis of the primary data
- Secondary data should be collected and used only for the sake of taking a feedback of the selected problem or issue, and for making a review of the stuff already available
- In economic studies, primary data is more important than the secondary data, and so the researcher should keep himself judicious to the collection, classification, tabulation, analysis and interpretation of the primary data

- The economic studies should be free from bias and should ensure objectivity rather than subjectivity
- Economic studies can be made successfully by using any of the popular techniques of data collection, but schedule and interview should be preferred to questionnaire, as questionnaire is useful in the study of a wide study area which is almost inaccessible to the researcher
- The collected data should be presented through attractive tables and graphs in order to make it quite presentable
- Certain statistical tools, such as, measures of central tendency, various types of deviation, index, correlation etc. need to be used and employed unfailingly by the researcher in order to make a proper analysis of the variables
- While making the analysis and interpretation of the data and the problem in question, the perspective should be purely economic for the sake of study, and only the economic aspect of the selected units should be presented
- The study should have no ambiguity of any type, and transparency should be maintained
- Field experiment in the economic studies is the demand of the time, and so experimental research should be promoted
- The beginning of the developing research ethics should be made at the college and university level in order that those who pursue research later, find themselves inclined to the research ethics in a natural way
- There is a horribly growing trend of plagiarism in research which should be checked for the sake of originality of the research work
- Easy access to internet is the main reason of plagiarism
- It is the moral duty of the college, university, governing body, supervisors and researchers to abide by and adhere to the research ethics meant for the economic studies, and to keep away from the plagiarized matter for the sake of the originality of work.

Obviously, research ethics are essentially to be observed while conducting intensive or extensive studies in Economics. They not only ensure the goodness of research work but also the social liability of both the study makers and the institutions where the research work is carried out. They facilitate the research process keeping it free from the plagiarism trends. Hence, they should be taken as the guidelines for a genuine research or study.

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