

LETTER TO EDITOR**Ethical Considerations in Nursing Research****Dr. Yusrita Zolkefli (Assistant Professor)**

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Dear Editor,

Writing research proposals and seeking research ethics approval are commonly incorporated in today's undergraduate nursing programs. Students are then expected to be familiar with international standards such as the Nuremberg Code, the Belmont Report, and the Helsinki Declaration. These guidelines focus on the research ethics considerations that researchers must take into account. These ethical principles include autonomy, privacy, confidentiality, data security, consent process, among others. The researchers must also be able to identify and address the impact of certain research on the researcher. These impacts include preparedness, maturity, and positionality (1), which necessitate considerable support from higher education institutions. For example, Williamson and Burns (2) highlight the importance of addressing the safety of researchers and participants when conducting research. This includes establishing risk from the researcher's perspective, having a range of skills for coping effectively with emotionally painful research experiences, and making reasonable efforts to avoid physical dangers. They also highlight participant safety by describing risk from the participant's perspective and focusing on emotional safety. These points are particularly critical when considering the impact of sensitive research (3) or the challenges in accessing and interviewing participants (4).

Meanwhile, researchers must be mindful of the potential for ethical violations during various stages of the research process and activity. Zastrow (5) and Khoshsaligheh et al. (6) present descriptions of these violations, whereby among the most striking violations identified were the translation and presentation of work as one's own, text recycling, duplication of publication, and misreferencing (6). Ethics violations can occur due to honest mistakes or ethical oversights, but they can also be intentional. Steneck (7) outlines the challenges of the honest researcher, which include failing to mention the names of individuals who contributed considerably and dividing a project into multiple publications. There is, however, no justification for this. Any research project that involves human subjects must undergo some

degree of ethical scrutiny and consideration. That, too, must be evaluated against the same high ethical standards. All of this should begin with the researchers taking greater responsibility in their research activities and developing a deep understanding of how to do the right thing, uphold the credibility of the research, and be as transparent and honest as possible from the start. This necessitates a greater understanding of ethical values among researchers and establishing a Research Ethics Committee to support them (8). Providing ongoing formal training in research ethics would lead to better and clearer protocols and fewer research delays (9). Alas, some researchers have taken shortcuts and dismissed the value of ethics and honesty for various reasons, for example, administrative pressure, time constraints, and the pressure to publish. In some researchers' view, ethical scrutiny does nothing more than delay research.

As a result, there is a pressing need for researchers to always adhere to their ethical commitments to ensure the responsible conduct of research. One recent study highlighted the need for more knowledge about ethics and research integrity training and the impact of supervisors, senior researchers, and role models on young researchers' knowledge, attitudes, and practices (10). Training in responsible research conduct is also necessary to create trustworthy research and foster high-integrity research environments (11). Above all, they must be willing to commit to being ethical and responsible researchers. Research is indeed a respectful practice (12). Understanding ethical best practices and guidelines is perhaps what will really matter the most when they undertake future research.

In summary, researchers must be aware of the value of ethics in nursing research and fully reflect on key ethical considerations when planning and conducting research. Such considerations include being familiar with the international guidelines, researchers' responsibility to uphold ethical commitments and greater awareness of potential ethics violations. Thus, while we recognise that new knowledge and increased awareness gained

through research have brought us considerable progress in nursing, what good is it if the research is unethical?

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