

# Ethics in Criminal Justice Research

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Ethics refers to the art of judging between right or wrong. Criminal justice system and security management require researches to conduct ethical research issues so that justice and fairness can be achieved. Criminal Justice/ Security Management research is a fragile sector whereby integrity of the highest degree has to be maintained or else the entire section will be unreliable. It is unethical and morally wrong for researchers in this sector to conduct research without considering ethical issues applying to Criminal Justice/Security Management research. There are ethical issues concerned which ensure that both researchers' and respondents' rights are protected and there is no potential harm to the individuals and the entire sector. Researchers are expected to apply several ethical concerns such as, confidentiality, informed consent, Debriefing, freedom to participate and stop participating at any time, protection from physical and psychological harm and expectation of consequential research results the aim of Criminal Justice/Security Management research is effectiveness and implementation of programs, law enforcement strategies, and policies. Multiple populations are involved in this research including general public, criminal justice practitioners, potential offenders and offenders among others.

One of the most important ethical issues applying to the to Criminal Justice/Security Management research emphasizes that, researches must inform each and every potential participant in the research in advance of the possible risks and all possible emotional experiences which might be encountered before, during and after the research. This is important as it prepares all potential participants to handle risks throughout the research process. Additionally, participants are able to avoid vulnerable situations



and environments which can be harmful to them and the entire research. In addition to this, Criminal Justice/Security Management research requires the researchers to avoid invading privacy of all participants. This means that, the research should be goal oriented and as much as possible avoid interfering with the participants' privacy. Invasion of privacy is dangerous as it can make participants react negatively as they feel the researcher has hidden agenda. Similarly, this can make the research results biased especially if the participant is trying to protect his or her past experience which if revealed will harm his or her career (Smith J., 2004).

Criminal Justice/Security Management research is sensitive as it deals with people of all education levels, religion, race and tribe among other diversities. In this case therefore, it is important for researchers to avoid biasness when conducting research. Sometimes researchers deal with participants of low education level who have knowledge concerning the issue in question. Therefore, the participant has to be treated as fair as possible so that he can offer reliable information. Researchers are expected to remain impartial, and avoid humiliating participant because of their illiteracy or low education level. On the same, participants with diminished capacity, under correctional observation and minor have to be treated carefully. These individuals usually have critical information which they can only reveal if treated fairly and with respect (Lippman, 2012).

Confidentiality is of most importance as far as Criminal Justice/Security Management research is concerned. Therefore, it is compulsory for researchers in this sector to embrace confidentiality from throughout their career. Criminal justice system requires researchers to request participants to reveal critical information which might endanger them. Therefore, researchers have to assure respondents that confidentiality will be



maintained. Information gathered should not be revealed to unauthorized personnel at any time. It is ethically wrong and morally unacceptable for researchers to leak information to media or any other person as this destroys the researcher's credibility. It is crucial to maintain secrecy of the venue to avoid attack from the enemy. The progress of the research should remain a secret until the whole research is complete to be published. Participants' names should not be published unless they have mutually agreed to do so and critical evaluation done to ensure their security.

Impartiality is another crucial ethical issue that applies to Criminal Justice/Security Management research. In this case, impartiality refers to the relationship between the researcher and the information gathered while neutrality is relationship between the researcher and the respondent. It is expected that the researcher remains impartial throughout the research process. The researcher should not favor one side of the information as this harms his credibility. Therefore, the researcher has to avoid comments which suggest he is favoring one side of the information gathered. However, it is practically impossible to be neutral. The researchers may internally sympathize with one individual and not the other. In such cases, the researcher has to control his emotions and avoid any suggestive conduct (World Bank, 2007).

Protection of data collected is another ethical concern applying to criminal Justice/Security Management research. Information gathered in criminal justice research is crucial and has to be protected from theft, destructive weather conditions and leakage. Researchers should ensure that data is securely coded to avoid unauthorized personnel from accessing it. Additionally, it is important to have back up so that in case of loss, information will still be available. Criminals can do everything possible to access the data and destroy evidence. Therefore, security officers should be deployed to take care of such instances. Criminal justice and



Security Management are allowed to stop participating at any particular time. This ensures that they are working on voluntary basis and ultimately increase effectiveness (World Bank, 2007).

In conclusion, ethical living refers to the thinking beyond individual interests. Ethics offers a chance to make a decision what is right or wrong in a regardless of the situation. Criminal justice research is critical as it is the solution to all injustices in the society. Therefore, it requires the judiciary, law enforcers and researchers to apply ethical issues so that justice can be maintained. Researchers are expected to apply several ethical concerns such as, Confidentiality, Informed Consent, Debriefing, freedom to participate and stop participating at any time, protection from physical and psychological harm and expectation of consequential research results.



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