

Ethics and Security in Data Collection

Tilman Brück, ISDC

Damir Esenaliev, SIPRI/ISDC

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Overview

1. Key ethical and security principles of data collection and research
2. Ethics in collecting data on conflict and violence
3. Security of the field staff
4. Life in Kyrgyzstan: case presentation
5. Discussion and group work

1. Key principles of ethical data collection and research

Why ethics and security in surveys?

- A breach of confidentiality and the consequences that may flow from it is the most serious risk
 - for example, a respondent may lose reputation by or employment or be at a risk of civil or criminal prosecution.
- To avoid such breaches we do
 - Training of interviewers and other employees in means of protecting data confidentiality
 - Careful scrutiny of the data released to other researchers and the public
 - Follow the ethical and security principles of data collection, storage, and dissemination

Basics of ethical research

- Origins are traced to Helsinki Declaration adopted in 1964 by World Medical Association
- It is widely regarded as the cornerstone document on human research ethics
- Every social scientific and professional associations adopted Codes of Ethics
- Professional and academic associations have a long tradition of creating self-regulating norms and responsibilities.
- These self- regulations often exceed the legal requirements in an effort to uphold the profession's reputation and assure confidence of stakeholders

Basics of ethical research-2

- Countries have laws and regulations as well. For example, USA has Federal Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research
- National laws on statistics regulate ethical principles
- Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) are to safeguard the rights of respondents to surveys

The key principles are ...

- Integrity:
 - adopt an unbiased attitude and open-mindedness in an approach to research.
 - selection and formulation of research questions and the conceptualisation or design of research undertakings does not presume or determine an outcome and does not exclude unwanted findings from the outset.
- Transparency:
 - the whole research process is transparent to colleagues, clients and users,
 - ensure that research data subjects (respondents) receive information
 - which information you hold about them;
 - how you will use that information;
 - whether you combine that information with other data.

The key principles are ... (2)

- Consent:
 - seek explicit, informed consent to use personal data
- The right to withdraw:
 - participants have the right to withdraw from your research at any time. Make it clear that they have this right.
- Efficiency:
 - Researchers must strive to design research that is cost-efficient and of adequate quality, and to carry this out to the specification agreed

Data Security Principles

- Anonymisation: handle the least amount of personally identifiable data possible.
- Physical and IT security: take physical and IT security measures appropriate to the risk level of the personal data
- Written procedures: written procedures setting out how the personal data is to be handled, stored and accessed.
- Training: staff handling personal data must receive training in their obligations as regards the handling and use of your research data.

2. Ethics and security of conflict data collection

- Ethical and security constraints are more acute when doing primary research in areas of violence
- Conflict surveys risk asking questions that may do harm to respondents
 - May evoke traumatic memories about suffering, victimization, or guilt, potentially harming them psychologically.
 - If information about the roles in a conflict becomes public.
- How we can avoid:
 - avoid asking some of these questions: ask only what is utmost necessary
 - Ask about groups behavior, not individual ones.
 - Train enumerators well and prepare for various scenarios including cases when respondents become distressed.

3. Field staff security

- Some areas may be still risky to visit to collect data about conflict and violence
- Security protocols and safeguard measures are important to develop and follow

4. Life in Kyrgyzstan Study: ethical considerations

1. Study partners apply for ethical approval in each wave
2. The data collection company obtains written consent from the respondents
3. The study has data confidentiality and security protocols
4. Field staff security protocols:
 - LiK data collection in 2010 started within several months after the violent conflict in south regions took place.
 - The next waves of data collection also took place in a tense political atmosphere before or after national elections.
 - Security protocols were created for field staff and necessary supporting documents were supplied.

Conclusion

- Ethics and security considerations are important parts of data collection and research
- More complications added when collecting data about conflict and violence due to a higher risk to cause psychological and physical harm
- Develop mechanisms to avoid security risks for data collection staff

Discussion questions

- Your experience with ethics and security in data collection and dissemination
- What challenges do you have in your work?
- Are there challenges in using new technologies:
 - CAPI based surveys.
 - Web-based surveys (no control of who is responding)

Group work

- Discuss ethical and security principles that can be included in your survey which your group is developing.
- Develop a list of ethical considerations related to conflict and violence questions and modules
- Include one slide on ethics and security in your presentation on Friday

Useful resources on ethics

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *International Compilation of Human Research Standards*, 2018.