

A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Ethical Standards in Social and Behavioral Research

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Abstract : The paper is to analyze research ethics in social and behavioral sciences from a cross-cultural perspective. A multi-phase study investigated implementations of ethical standards and guidelines in higher institutions in China. Institutional policies and procedures on human subject research and perceptions of human subject protection were assessed in the Chinese research universities from different regions. The findings of the study indicate that the implementations of ethical standards and guidelines vary from institution to institution and from region to region. Education and cultural backgrounds of the participants influence their perceptions of the welfare and privacy of human subjects. The results of the study reveal great differences and complexities in ethical standards for the protection of human subjects of research in contrast to the Western world. The Chinese collectivistic values and the cooperative-harmonious democracy play a significant role in perceiving and implementing ethical guidelines. Chinese researchers find themselves a long way to go before seeing implementations of regulations and guidelines on human subject research in social and behavioral sciences.

Keywords : ethical standards, human subjects, research ethics, social and behavioral research

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