



# ETHICAL ISSUES IN RESEARCH



Codes of ethic  
applicable at each  
stage of the research.



# Goal

- ▶ To ensure that no one is harmed or suffers adverse consequences from research activities.

# Unethical activities

- ▶ Violating nondisclosure agreements.
- ▶ Breaking respondent confidentiality.
- ▶ Misrepresenting results.
- ▶ Deceiving people.
- ▶ Invoicing irregularities.
- ▶ Avoiding legal liability.

# Ethical Issues



- ▶ Remain to be issues.
- ▶ Local norms suggest what ought to be done under the given circumstances.
- ▶ Codes of ethics developed to guide researchers and sponsors.
- ▶ Review Boards and peer groups help sorting out ethical dilemmas.

# Anticipate ethical dilemmas



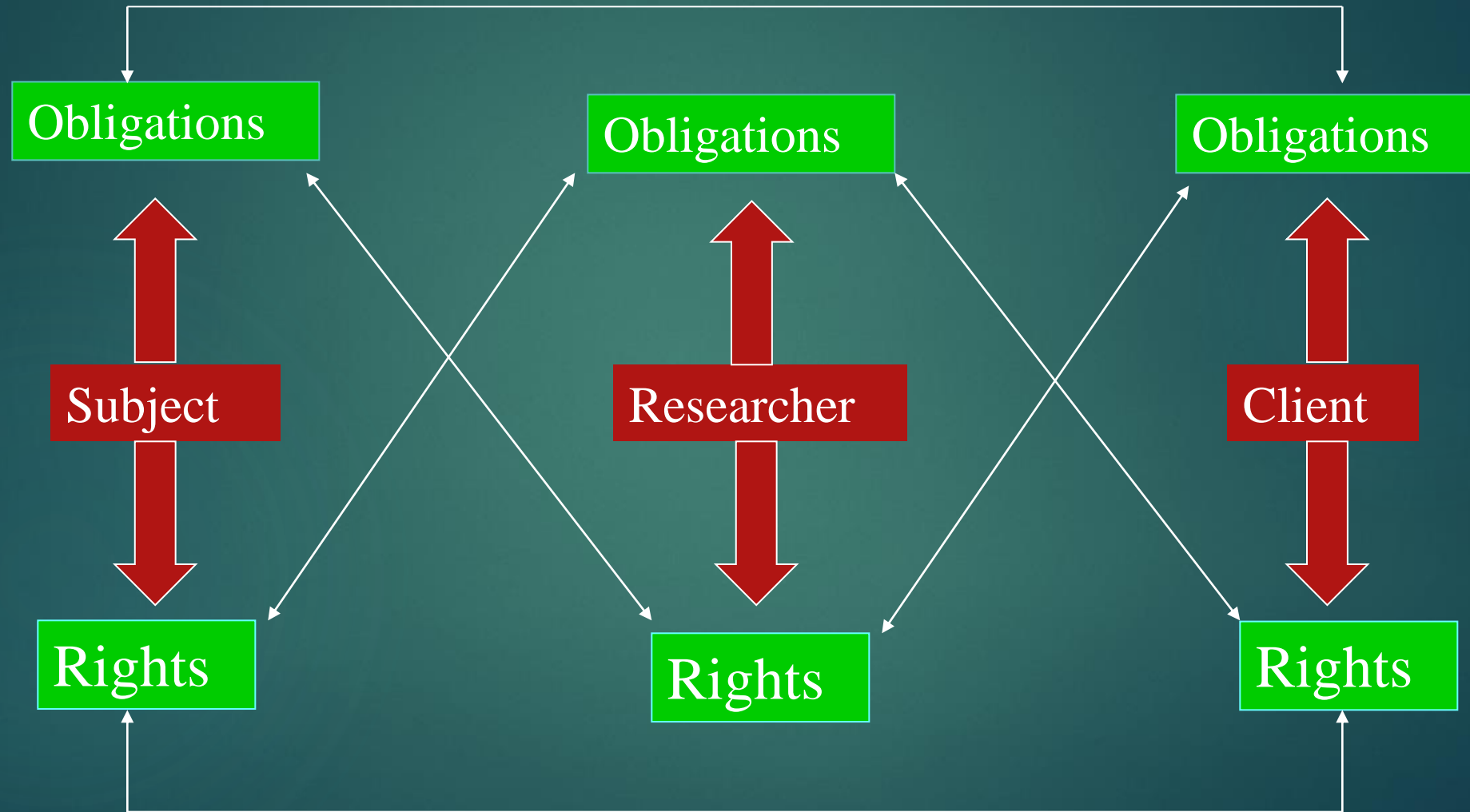
- ▶ Adjust the design, procedures, and protocols accordingly.
- ▶ Research ethics require personal integrity of the researcher, the project manager, and research sponsor.

# Parties in Research

- ▶ **Mostly three parties:**
  - ▶ The researcher
  - ▶ The sponsoring client (user)
  - ▶ The respondent (subject)
- ▶ Interaction requires ethical questions.
- ▶ Each party expects certain rights and feels certain obligations.



# Interaction of rights and obligations of parties in research



# Ethical Treatment of Participants



# Rights of the participants

- ▶ No physical harm, discomfort, pain, embarrassment, or loss of privacy.
- ▶ *Follow three guidelines:*
  - ▶ 1. Explain study benefits.
  - ▶ 2. Explain respondent rights and protections.
  - ▶ 3. Obtain informed consent.

# Benefits

- ▶ Discuss the study's benefits.
- ▶ Can be part of establishing rapport.
- ▶ Further inducements to participate.  
Should not be used as coercive measure.
- ▶ Note that sometime actual purpose is concealed just to avoid the bias. This deception.

# Deception

- ▶ Truth is fully compromised. Debatable
- ▶ Two reasons for deception:
  - ▶ (1) To prevent biasing. (2) To protect the confidentiality of the third party.
- ▶ The cost and benefits of deception to be balanced. More benefits – scientific, educational, or applied value.
- ▶ Respondents must have given informed consent.

# Informed consent

- **Disclosing fully the procedures of the study prior to requesting to proceed with the study.**
- **Exceptions for children. Parents to sign.**
- **How about non-literates? Oral consent.**
- **Types of limits about confidentiality, or of any harm to be explained.**
- **In case of intentional deception, debriefing is necessary**

# Debriefing



- ▶ After data collection:
- ▶ Explanation of any deception.
- ▶ Description of the hypothesis, goal or purpose of the study.
- ▶ Post study sharing of the results.
- ▶ Post study follow-up medical or psychological attention.
- ▶ A goodwill gesture. (experiments)

# Right to Privacy

- ▶ Help retain the validity of research
- ▶ Protect the respondents through confidentiality of the survey answers.
- ▶ One has the right to refuse to be interviewed, or to refuse to answer any question in interview.
- ▶ One can withdraw from the experiment



# Several ways to protect the confidentiality

- ▶ Obtaining signed nondisclosure documents.
- ▶ Restricting access to respondent's identification
- ▶ Revealing respondent information only with written consent.
- ▶ Restricting access to data instruments where the respondent is identified.
- ▶ Nondisclosure of data subsets.

# The obligation

- ▶ Once agreeing to participate, the subject should provide truthful answers. Honest cooperation is the main obligation.

# Ethics and the Sponsor



# Confidentiality of Sponsor

- ▶ Several types of confidentiality:
- ▶ Sponsor nondisclosure (due to sensitive nature of the research. No influence of the sponsor)
- ▶ Purpose nondisclosure (new idea to be hidden from competitors).
- ▶ Findings nondisclosure (findings may not go to any interested parties)

# Right to quality research

- ▶ Includes:
- ▶ Providing research design appropriate for the research question.
- ▶ Maximizing the sponsor's value for the resources expended.
- ▶ Providing data handling and reporting techniques appropriate for data collected.

# Sponsor's Ethics

- ▶ Unethical demands. Compliance unethical →
- ▶ Violating respondent confidentiality.
- ▶ Changing data or creating false data to meet the desired objective.
- ▶ Changing data presentation or interpretation.
- ▶ Interpreting data from a biased perspective.
- ▶ Omitting sections of data analysis and conclusions.
- ▶ Making recommendations beyond the scope of data collected.

# Researchers and Team Members Ethics



# Safety

- ▶ Project design should provide of all interviewers, surveyors, experimenters, or observers.
- ▶ Ensure researcher's right to safety.



# Ethical Behavior of Assistants

- ▶ **Ethical compliance by Assistants.**
- ▶ **Carry out the sampling plan, interview or observe respondents without bias, accurately record data.**

# Protection of Anonymity



- ▶ **Protect the confidentiality of the sponsor's information and anonymity of the respondents.**
- ▶ **Sign a confidentiality and nondisclosure statement.**

# Professional Standards



- ▶ Many Corporations, Professional Associations, and Universities have code of ethics.
- ▶ The code of ethics to be enforced. Professional standards of ethics to be observed.