

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES CONCERNING RESEARCH ON HUMANS AND HUMAN ACTION IN THE FINNISH CONTEXT - PLANNING STAGE AS AN ESSENTIAL QUESTION OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY IN THE DIGITAL SOCIETY

Raija Koskinen

University of Helsinki, Finland

ABSTRACT

To be careful about how to prepare a new research project can be considered as a self-evident feature of any scientific activity. Nevertheless, the accelerating technological development for how to identify and handle research data has created both new possibilities and challenges in the digital society. Additionally, the boom created by access to applications utilizing generative artificial intelligence has also waken interest among researchers. This development has led to more detailed regulations of technology and resulted in new legislation of the European Union and member countries of the EU. In concrete, laws have been enacted on data privacy and detailed restrictions on how to handle personal data in various settings. The current themes covered in the research integrity are closely linked to this legislative development originating in multifaceted technological advances. Hence, it has become even more important than before to reserve enough time for the planning stage of each study to be able to find appropriate solutions to realize the study with due respect of the rights of the research participants.

In the context of Finland, researchers and research organisations are supported by national institutions. The Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK, is promoting responsible conduct of research in Finland. The Data Protection Ombudsman is a national supervisory authority, that safeguards the data protection rights in Finland. In this paper, the instructions provided by these two focal organisations in Finland were examined focusing on the planning stage of research. In the theory-informed content analysis the processual sociology introduced by Anrew Abbott was applied. The results indicate that researchers need to pay specific attention to handle the aspects of time and social lineages in the planning stage in to meet all the requirements adequately.

Keywords: data privacy, personal data, planning stage, research ethics, normativity /value, processual sociology

INTRODUCTION

Digitalization, previously often described as developments of information societies is fundamentally a global issue, and hence on the agenda of the United Nations [1]. In 2024 the world leaders adopted a pact that includes The Global Digital Compact, a comprehensive global framework for digital cooperation and governance of artificial intelligence to utilize the extensive potential of digital technology and to close digital divides. Currently, the technological development advances in accelerating speed having impact on everyday lives as well as in various fields of professional activity, also in scientific research. To understand the essence of this ongoing change, it has been argued that the digital structure was part of the modern societies before the computers were