Research Ethics Committee as an effective instrument of ethical regulation in educational research

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Introduction

Research ethics violations are widely spread nowadays in academic communities and institutions which do not provide strong policy of scientific integrity (Vadeboncoeur et al., 2016).

In some regions, e.g. in Russia, the social and cultural context does not contribute to making ethical control stronger – the society stays quite tolerant to academic cheating (Gevorkyan et al., 2018; Rushby, 2017). That is why humanities in Russia, including educational sciences, has been contaminated by plagiarism, fabrication and falsification of research results, selling thesis, etc. In 2016 we established Research Ethics Committee (REC) in Moscow City University as an experiment to eliminate ethical violations emerged in master students' research.

REC performs 4 functions:
* Installation of Research Protocol as a standard of identification of problems, making hypotheses, constructing theoretical framework, etc. in master research
* Promotion of research ethical rules and norms
* Ethical review and approval of master students' research proposals
* Ethical review of master theses.

REC consists of 9 experts who are professors at Dept. of Psychology, Dept. of Pedagogy, Dept. of Educational Methods.

Research questions:
* How effective is REC in ethical regulation of educational research in university if academic community is quite tolerant to ethical violations?
* What kind of ethical risks and violations do young scientists in education make more often in their research?
* What kind of ethical risks and violations are most

Method

Participants & Design. Master students specializing in "Pedagogical Education" and "Psychological & Pedagogical Education" in Institute of Pedagogy and Educational Psychology (Moscow City University).

DESIGN	SAMPLE A (2018)	SAMPLE B (2019)
STAGE 1	N = 91	N = 81
STAGE 2	N = 48	N = 48

STAGE 1: Ethical review of *research proposals.*
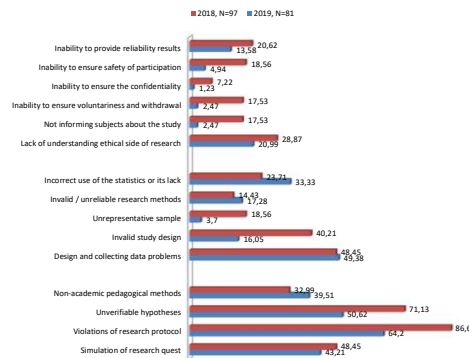STAGE 2: Ethical review of *master theses.*
Each review is conducted by 1 expert of REC, then checked and approved by head of REC after reaching a consensus in results.
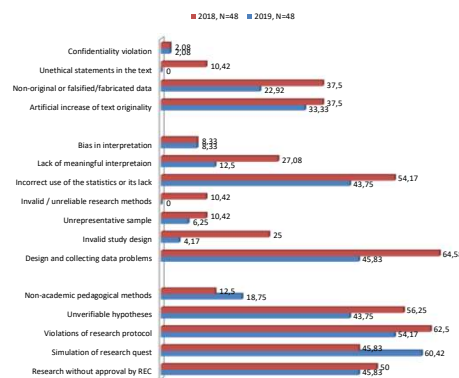**Tools & Measures:**
* Protocol of Ethical Review for Research Proposals (7 items with dichotomous scale - "Yes" or "Not" + 2 add. items with multiple choice)
* Protocol of Ethical Review for Master Thesis (11 items with dichotomous scale - "Yes" or "Not" + 2 add. items with multiple choice)
* Online software ANTIPLAGIAT for automatic checking the originality of thesis text www.antiplagiat.ru (subscribed version)

Results

Ethical risks and violations in master students' research proposals (%)

Ethical violations in master students' theses

Conclusions

1. Research Ethics Committee displayed itself as an effective instrument of ethical regulation in educational research. Its efficiency is determined by obligatory ethics reviews and a combination of ethical requirements with requirements of Research Protocol.

2. The ethical risks and violations that young scientists make more often are violations of Research Protocol, making unverifiable hypotheses, imitation of research quest.

3. Some risks and violations stay quite sustainarble and resistant to correction, such as imitation of research quest, incorrect use of the statistics or its lack, artificial increase of text originality, the use of non-original or falsified/fabricated data.

4. Nevertheless, many risks and violations can be effectively eliminated by REC activities. They are a lack of understanding ethical side of research, breaking ethical norms of experiments with human subjects, invalid research design.

Table 1. Fisher's (φ) test for validity of differences in ethical risks / violations in master students' research proposals and theses between 2018 and 2019 academic years ($*p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$)

Ethical risk / violation	Research proposals (2018 vs 2019)	Theses (2018 vs 2019)
Research without approval by REC	-	0,409
Simulation of research quest	0,699	1,437
Violations of research protocol	3,543**	0,829
Unverifiable hypotheses	2,817**	1,229
Non-academic pedagogical methods	1,052	0,938
Design and collecting data problems:	0,123	1,859*
Invalid study design	3,649**	3,116**
Unrepresentative sample	3,344**	0,744
Invalid / unreliable research methods	0,519	3,219**
Incorrect use of the statistics or its lack	1,420	1,023
Lack of meaningful interpretaion	-	1,822*
Bias in interpretation	-	0
Lack of understanding ethical side of research:	1,213**	-
Not informing subjects about the study	3,643**	-
Inability to ensure voluntariness and withdrawal	3,643**	-
Inability to ensure the confidentiality	2,134*	-
Inability to ensure safety of participation	2,940**	-
Inability to provide reliability results	1,248	
Artificial increase of text originality	-	0,427
Non-original or falsified/fabricated data	-	1,566
Unethical statements in the text	-	3,220**
Confidentiality violation	-	0

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EDUCATION & LEARNING

References

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