

A mixed methods study assessing the impact of research ethics and integrity training

Authors: Thando Mdaka, Dr Retha G Visagie, Tanya Coetzee, Dr Angelo Fynn
tmdakat@unisa.ac.za

Introduction

In 2014, our institution recognised the importance of formal research ethics training and integrated it into our strategic framework. Despite training 2289 individuals over the past five years, the true impact of this initiative remained unknown. Our mixed-methods study sought to bridge this gap by exploring the perceptions and experiences of those who underwent training. With the rapid expansion of online learning, the importance of robust research ethics and integrity training in higher education institutions has become increasingly apparent. Our study aims to shed light on the effectiveness of training and uncover areas for improvement within an ODeL context.

Methodology

This study made use of a mixed method design:

cross sectional, survey design as it aimed to draw on a cross section of trainees in ethics from the institution to ascertain the impact of the research ethics and integrity training programmes;

exploratory, descriptive and contextual qualitative design to obtain a better understanding of the participant's experiences of the research ethics and integrity programmes through semi-structured interviews.

Preliminary results from phase two emphasise how these programmes enhance academic growth and professionalism while highlighting opportunities for improvement. Interviews with participants emphasise the importance of continuous assessment and upgrading the training programme to develop a culture that promotes responsible behaviour regarding research conduct. They have also recommended a more targeted marketing campaign to address prevalent issues like plagiarism.

"Previously, I would simply fill out forms without fully understanding the implications, but now I understand the importance of categorising risks and how they benefit both myself and the participants."

"The positive feedback received from these engagements (training offerings) has affirmed the value of the training and reinforced my dedication to upholding ethical standards in research. The training has significantly contributed to my professional development and deepened my understanding of research ethics."

Problem statement

Training has been provided by the Research Integrity Office (RIO) since 2014 and has aided in achieving institutional governance objectives. Nonetheless, it is uncertain whether this training benefits individuals or the institutions to any great extent.

STUDY DESIGN

Phase One: Survey

In the first phase, an anonymous survey was distributed to 627 individuals who participated in the RIO training offerings. A low uptake of under 10% was recorded.

According to phase one, most of the respondents expressed satisfaction with the training and even noted positive changes in behaviour as a result. Most respondents indicated that the training motivated them to pursue further training. They have also offered suggestions for improving future sessions.

The aim of the study

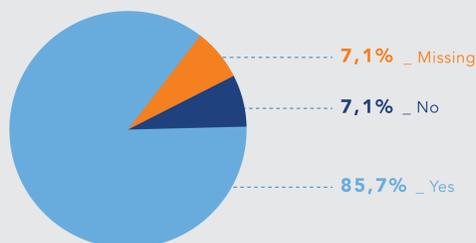
This study aimed to assess the effect of research ethics and integrity training on academics and professional employees using Kirkpatrick's learning evaluation framework. Kirkpatrick's is based on four levels: Reaction, Learning, Behaviour, and Results (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 1994).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the individual-level impact of RIO office training.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the RIO office training at an institutional level.



Did the training motivate you to pursue further ethics training?



Phase Two: Interviews

In addition to the survey, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders who had received the training. Participants were purposively selected based on the following criteria:

Attendance at a minimum of three training sessions during the study period.

Current employment at Higher Education Institution.

Age over 18 years.

Recommendations

- Provide targeted training for specific roles (e.g., supervisors and researchers).
- Enhancing accessibility to training sessions through flexible scheduling.
- Practical exercises and interactive sessions were highlighted as particularly beneficial.

Conclusion

The analysis of research ethics and integrity training at an ODeL institution determines as part of preliminary findings that the training offerings positively impacts academic and professional development. It highlights the need for continuous assessment and enhancement of research ethics and integrity training programmes. By resolving existing issues and adopting suggested enhancements, institutions can facilitate a more robust environment promoting responsible conduct in research practices.

Key Insights

Insights derived from the results provided quantitative measures for assessing satisfaction and qualitative understanding of participant needs.

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