

## **Ethics in Online Sociological Research**

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### **Abstract**

Research ethics is a complex topic in itself that becomes more significant when considered in the context of online research. New research areas and the development of research methods in a virtual environment imply the need for constant reflexivity of the researchers themselves, as well as discussions about the ethical guidelines of online research. One of the specificities of online research is that such research projects involve researchers and/or participants/informants from different social and cultural environments. Such research shows different legal, methodological and ethical practices. For sociologists, the Internet offers various possibilities for data collection and the application of research methods (online surveys, online ethnographic methods, etc.), which encourages such theoretical-methodological discussions about online research ethics. Conventional issues of research ethics such as informed consent, anonymity/confidentiality and privacy acquire new dimensions in such an environment, while the emergence of "big data" imposes the need to redefine certain research concepts (for example, interaction between participants and researchers). One of the features of online quantitative and qualitative research is simplicity in the data collection process or easier access to research data and information. However, the aim of this paper is to analyze, discuss and contextualize ethical codes in sociology regarding the methodological, research and ethical aspects in online sociological research.

**Keywords:** sociological research, research ethics, online research, "big data", quantitative and qualitative research