



The Awareness of Lecturers Towards the Role of Research Ethics Commission in Research

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Abstract. In order to improve the quality of higher education at international level, university lecturers are required to publish their work in an international journal. However, a high rating international journals require evidence of ethical clearance which is a written statement given by the Research Ethics Commission. This research aims to determine the awareness of higher education institution or university lecturers on the roles of Research Ethics Commission and research ethics review process. This research is a quantitative descriptive study with two research variables, i.e., the understanding of ethical clearance, the role of Research Ethics Commission, and the process of ethical clearance. The subject was university lecturers from social science and humanities and science and engineering fields. Data collection was carried out through survey questionnaires via google form using a modified 4 Likert scale. The result showed that the awareness of most lecturers from both fields towards the role of Research Ethics Commission in research is quite high. All lecturers exhibited a quite high understanding about the role of ethical clearance, as well as the process related to the research protocol submission to obtain ethical clearance. Despite the lecturers from social science and humanities fields showed a better understanding in term of the awareness and the role of Research Ethics Commission, the lecturers from science and engineering demonstrated a better knowledge on the ethical clearance submission process due the characteristics of their fields.

Keywords: Research ethics commission · Ethical clearance · Understanding level social science and humanities · Science and engineering

1 Introduction

In order to improve the quality of higher education at international level, university lecturers are required to publish their work in an international journal. This is in accordance with Indonesia's 2045 vision as stated in the Handbook of Key Performance Indicators (Indikator Kinerja Utama in Indonesia or IKU) of State Universities, i.e., to have human resources that are ready and able to compete at the international level [1]. One of the indicators of the IKU is IKU 5 which states that the work of lecturers can be used by the

community or get an international recognition. The international recognition criteria for international journals recognized by IKU 5 are inclusion in globally reputable indexes such as Scopus, Web of Science, Microsoft Academic Research, and others, according to the Directorate General of Higher Education guidebook.

Scientific journal is a publication in the form of a report on research results which means for disseminating research findings and are usually devoted to different disciplines or sub-disciplines. [2]. The purpose of a scientific journal itself is to provide information about the results of new research which supported by relevant and understandable evidence for its reliability [3]. According to Jacobsen [4], research is a process of investigation of a particular subject which is carried out systematically to study information or obtain new information. Research subjects can be humans, animals, or others [5]. The process of investigation in a study has the potential to harm research subjects, especially research related to living things so that a research process must comply with research ethical principles [6]. Therefore, any research conducted especially those related to living things must go through a process of ethical feasibility test or ethical clearance to protect research subjects. The results of this ethical clearance are in the form of a written statement of ethical clearance approval given by Research Ethics Commission (Komisi Etik Penelitian in Indonesia, KEP). Ethical eligibility approval letter from Research Ethics Commission is required in the publication of international scientific journals indexed with global reputation. According to National Health Research and Development Ethics Guidelines and Standards [7], Research Ethics Commission is an appropriate and sustainable system for monitoring the quality and effectiveness of ethical research studies. Research Ethics Commission must be able to conduct independent reviews of all existing health research at the national, regional, and/or institutional level (public or private).

Higher education institutions must continue to play an active role in conducting research and development of science and technology that is beneficial for the development of science and the welfare of society. In addition, higher education institutions must also produce scientific and creative works, both in the field of education and superior scholarship and become a reference in the application of science or technology. For this reason, in order for research to be in accordance with national and international rules governing ethical principles in research, it is necessary to have a Research Ethics Commission institution that has a role and function to ensure that every research conducted in accordance with ethical principles in research is in accordance with Good Clinical Practice and has the smallest possible negative consequence to research subjects [8].

Thus, this research aims to determine the awareness of higher education institution or university lecturers on the roles of Research Ethics Commission and research ethics review process. The results of this research will be used as a policy in determining Research Ethics Commission programs, especially on the importance of research ethics in a research process.

2 Method

This research is a quantitative descriptive with the research sample used of 40 lecturers from Universitas Negeri Surabaya consisting of 24 lecturers from social science and humanities and 16 lecturers from science and engineering fields.

The research instruments were developed to identify the awareness of lecturers on the roles of Research Ethics Commission and research ethics review process. The research was categorized into three variables, i.e. the understanding of ethical clearance, the role of Research Ethics Commission, and the process of ethical clearance.

Data was collected through survey questionnaires which distributed via google form. This research instrument uses a modified Likert scale with 4 (four) answer options, i.e., strongly agree with a score of 4, agree with a score of 3, disagree with a score of 2, and strongly disagree with a score of 1. The basis for selecting four scales is to avoid neutral choices by respondents.

3 Results and Discussion

The results of this research are discussed in four sections. The first section consists of the respondent profiles. The second section deals with the awareness of respondents toward ethical clearance. The third section talk about the role of Research Ethics Commission. While the last section discussed the understanding of respondents towards the process of ethical clearance.

3.1 Profile of Respondents

The profile of the respondents is 19 (47,5%) male and 21 (52,5%) female lecturers from Universitas Negeri Surabaya with the age distribution of under 40 years old is 12 (30%), 41–50 years old is 15 (37,5%), 51–60 years old is 11 (27,5%), and more than 60 years old 2 (5%) respondents.

3.2 The Awareness of Ethical Clearance

The awareness of lecturers from social science and humanities and science and engineering fields towards the existence and the purpose of ethical clearance in research are shown in Fig. 1.

According to Fig. 1, most of all lecturers in both fields (social science and humanities and science and engineering) are aware towards the existence and the purpose of ethical clearance in research. The awareness of all lecturers is more than 50%. However, the

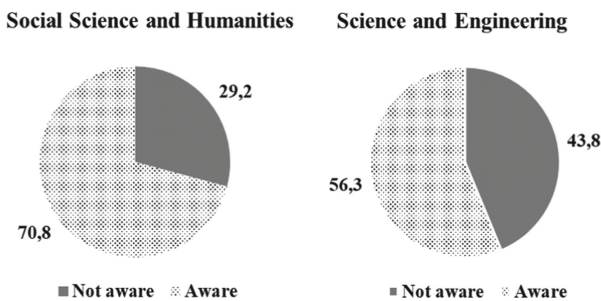


Fig. 1. The awareness of ethical clearance

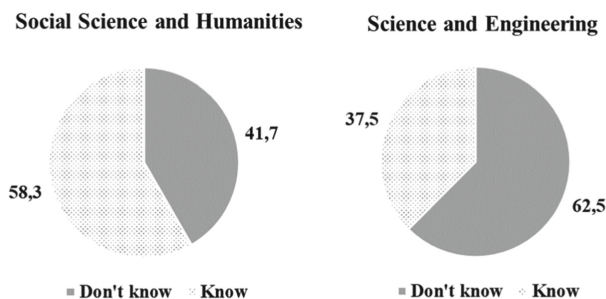


Fig. 2. The role of Research Ethics Commission

awareness of lectures from science and engineering field (56,3%) was lower than the lecturers from social science and humanities field (70,8%). This might attribute to that the characteristics research of science and engineering fields which generally not related to human or animal subjects, except for some science field such as biology which utilize an animal as subject experiments.

3.3 The Role of Research Ethics Commission

The understanding of lecturers towards the importance of ethical clearance in terms of the role of Research Ethics Commission are divided into three discussions, i.e. the role of Research Ethics Commission itself, the role of Research Ethics Commission in research protocol evaluation and research subject protection as shown in Fig. 2, Fig. 3, and Fig. 4, respectively.

Figure 2 shows the understanding of all lecturers towards the role of Research Ethics Commission. Despite all lecturers demonstrates a high awareness about the ethical clearance, their understanding towards the role and the existence of Research Ethics Commissions is not quite high. The social sciences and humanities respondents which know the role of Research Ethic Commission demonstrates merely 58.2%. A lower result is shown by respondents from science and engineering which only show 37.5% in term of the Research Ethics Commission role. This corroborated the results in Fig. 1 which also shows the low awareness towards ethical clearance among the science and engineering lecturers.

However, a contradiction results are shown by Fig. 3 which explains the level of respondents' understanding of the role of Research Ethics Commission (KEP) in research protocol evaluation. Although both respondents from social sciences and humanities and science and engineering indicates a low understanding of the role of Research Ethics Commission, almost all respondents agree and understand about the research protocol evaluation process which conducting by Research Ethics Commission. This is might be caused by one of the primary duty of the lecturer which related to research which goes through a process and method that is clear and sequential.

These previous results are also supported by Fig. 4 in terms of research subject protection. Most of the respondents in both fields, i.e. social science and humanities (83.3%) and science and engineering (93.8%) are agree that one of the role of Research Ethics Commission is to protect research subject during the data collection process, such

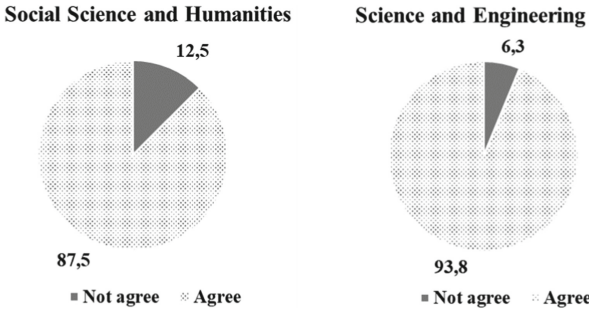


Fig. 3. The role of Research Ethics Commission (KEP) in research protocol evaluation

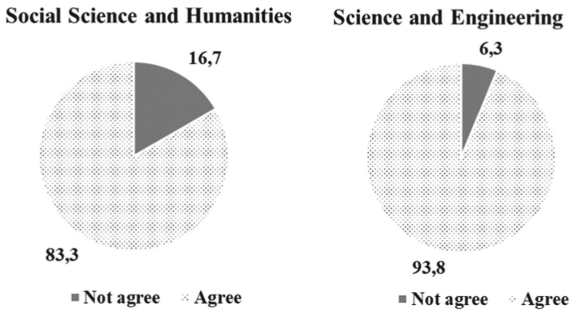


Fig. 4. The role of Research Ethics Commission (KEP) in research subject protection

as interview or data collection through questionnaire. This protection is not only applied to research subjects, but also applies to the institution which the researchers work.

Thus, it can be assumed that although most respondents from both fields (social science and humanities and science and engineering) are not aware to the role of Research Ethics Commission, most respondents have understood about the role of Research Ethics Commission in terms of protocol evaluation and subject protection.

3.4 The Process of Ethical Clearance

The process of ethical clearance is related to the research protocol submission. According to the National Health Research and Development Ethics Guidelines and Standards [7], a research protocol must be submitted to Research Ethics Commission before the research is carried out. Figures 5 and 6 show the level of understanding of the lecturers of both fields, i.e. social science and humanities and science and engineering on the process of submitting ethical clearance to Research Ethics Commission.

According to Fig. 5, most of the respondents agree that the research protocol must be submitted before the research is carried out. Science and engineering respondents demonstrate a better understanding in research protocol submission procedure with a value of 70.8% compare to that social science and humanities with merely 70.8%. This result indicates that most of the respondents have already understood the procedures

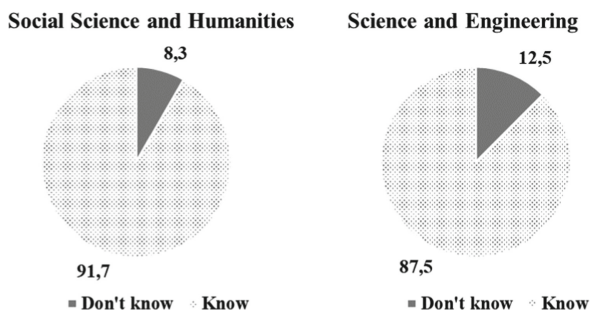


Fig. 5. Research protocol submission prior data collecting

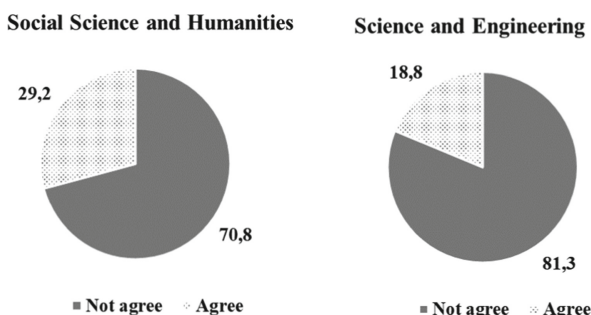


Fig. 6. Research protocol submission after data collecting or research completed

to get ethical clearance in accordance with Health Research and Development Ethics Guidelines and Standards [7].

In terms of ethical clearance process, the results from Fig. 6 clearly corroborate the previous results in Fig. 5. Most of the respondents from social sciences and humanities and science and engineering disagreed if the research protocol was submitted after the research was underway or after the data collection process. They argue that ethical clearance must be submitted to Research Ethics Commission before the data collection process.

3.5 Comparison Between Social Science and Humanities and Science and Engineering

Table 1 displays the comparison results between respondents from social science and humanities and science and engineering in terms of the awareness on the roles of Research Ethics Commission and Ethical Clearance.

According to Table 1, lecturers from social science and humanities have a better awareness to the importance of ethical clearance in research. They also demonstrate a better understanding to the role of Research Ethics Commission, especially in research protocol evaluation. However, they show a lower understanding towards subject protection and research procedure to obtain ethical clearance compare to that lecturers from

Table 1. Comparison between social science and humanities and science and engineering respondents

Variable	Social Science and Humanities	Science and Engineering
The awareness of ethical clearance	70,8	56,3
The role of Research Ethics Commission (KEP)	58,3	37,5
The role of Research Ethics Commission (KEP) in research protocol evaluation	91,7	87,5
The role of Research Ethics Commission (KEP) in research subject protection	83,3	93,8
Research protocol submission prior data collecting	87,5	93,8
Research protocol submission after data collecting or research completed	29,2	18,8

science and engineering. This is might related to the type of research subjects that apply living subjects which is require an ethical clearance.

In contrast, despite lecturers from science and engineering do not exhibit a high awareness of ethical clearance, as well as the understanding level of Research Ethics Commission role, the knowledge on the concept of ethical clearance submission procedure slightly higher compare to that social science and humanities lecturers. According to previous research [9, 10], it requires a better understanding of ethical clearance in implementation science or engineering. The research characteristics of science engineering respondents which have sequential processes to achieve its aim have a significant influence on the mindset of researchers in terms of ethical clearance process.

4 Conclusion

This research deals with the awareness of lecturers on the roles of Research Ethics Commission and Ethical Clearance. Based on the results of the discussions, it can be concluded that the awareness of most lecturers from both fields towards the role of Research Ethics Commission in research is quite high. All lecturers exhibited a quite high understanding about the role of ethical clearance, as well as the process related to the research protocol submission to obtain ethical clearance.

In addition, despite the lecturers from social science and humanities fields showed a better understanding in term of the awareness and the role of Research Ethics Commission, the lecturers from science and engineering demonstrated a better knowledge on the ethical clearance submission process due the characteristics of their fields.

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