

The Women Educational Researchers of Kenya (WERK)

Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

The term “child”/ “children” means any person(s) under the age of 18 years.

Preamble

- i. This code of conduct provides a standard to assist the Consultant’s key and non-researchers and collaborators in undertaking WERK program activities. It provides guidance to ensure that the principles of integrity, accountability, independence/impartiality, social responsibility, respect, professional scientific and scholarly responsibility, and professional commitment are followed at all levels of programme management and structure.
- ii. This Code is underpinned by the Women Educational Researchers of Kenya (WERK) Research Policy and the WERK Programmes and Child Protection Manual, which articulate a common set of values upon which educational and social researchers, investigators, researchers and collaborators build their professional and scientific work. It sets forth the principles and rules intended to govern the professional environment and circumstances they may find themselves in.
- iii. It is the individual responsibility of each researcher, officer or volunteer involved in the project to aspire to the highest possible standards of conduct in research and service. Further, this requires a personal commitment to a continual effort to conduct themselves ethically, and to encourage ethical behaviour by research assistants under their purview.

Principles

In addition to, and expanding on, the above moral principles, the following ten general ethics principles should be adhered to by all researchers, investigators, researchers and collaborators engaged by WERK. Again, the ethical principles may not, by themselves, resolve all ethical problems and dilemmas which confront researchers, collaborators and project staff.

Researchers, collaborators and project staff may be required to balance the demands made by moral principles of research and to privilege one principle over another, depending on the context and circumstances of the research involved.

1. *Essentiality and relevance*; Before undertaking research adequate consideration will be given to existing literature on the subject or issue under study, and to alternatives available.
2. *Maximization of public interest and of social justice*; All research will be carried out for the benefit of society, and with the motive of maximizing public interest and social justice. All efforts will be made to make public in an appropriate manner and form, and at an appropriate time, information on the research undertaken, as well as the results and implications of the completed research.

3. *Competence, ability and commitment to research*; Researchers, project staff and collaborators will be professionally and personally qualified to undertake specific research. Commitment to research in general and to the relevant subject in particular remains an essential prerequisite for good and ethical research.
4. *Respect for and protection of participants' rights*; Researchers, project staff and collaborators shall respect and protect the dignity, privacy and confidentiality of participants and shall never expose them to procedures or risks not directly attached to the research project or its methodology. Research and the pursuit of knowledge will not be regarded as the supreme goal at the expense of participants' rights.
5. *Informed and non-coerced consent*; Autonomy requires that individuals' participation should be freely given, specific and based on informed consent. Direct or indirect coercion, as well as undue inducement of people in the name of research shall be avoided as this acts as a barrier to autonomous decision making and may result in people consenting against their better judgment to participate in studies involving
6. *Respect for cultural differences*; Researchers, project staff and collaborators shall treat research participants as unique human beings within the context of their community systems, and shall respect what is sacred and secret by tradition. Research shall preferably be undertaken with, and not merely on, an identified community. In some situations the consent of community may have to be obtained in addition to that of research participants.
7. *Justice, fairness and objectivity*; Criteria for the selection of participants of research should be fair, besides being scientific. Easily accessible individuals or groups should not be inordinately burdened with research being carried out repeatedly on them.
8. *Integrity, transparency and accountability*; The conduct of researchers and collaborators shall be honest, fair and transparent. The contribution of other researchers, project staff and collaborators or members of the research team shall be properly acknowledged. Researchers, project staff and collaborators shall not abuse their positions or knowledge for personal power or gain.
9. *Risk minimization*; Researchers, project staff and collaborators shall ensure that the actual benefits to be derived by the participants or society from the research clearly outweigh possible risks, and that participants are subjected to only those risks that are clearly necessary for the conduct of the research. Researchers, project staff and collaborators shall ensure that the risks are assessed and that adequate precautions are taken to minimize and mitigate risks.
10. *Non-exploitation*: There shall be no exploitation of research participants, researchers, project staff and collaborators (including student and junior members), communities, institutions or vulnerable people. There shall be benefit to a community in which research is conducted. As far as possible, communities shall receive feedback on research carried out on them.

Ethical Standards

1. Researchers and collaborators shall ensure
 - a. Strict adherence to and respect for all applicable laws, rules, and regulations;
 - b. Treat fellow researchers, teachers, children, local communities and the public with dignity, respect, courtesy and consideration;
 - c. Act with impartiality, integrity and tact.
 - d. Avoid behavior that is unbecoming, abusive, belittling or threatening to fellow experts, collaborators, researchers community members, teachers, children, or any member of the public; and
 - e. Not bully or perpetrate offensive behaviour, which is vindictive, cruel, malicious or humiliating and is intended to undermine fellow experts, collaborators, researchers community members, teachers, children, or members of the public.
2. WERK has a zero tolerance policy with respect to:
 - a. Sexual exploitation and abuse:
 - b. This includes any sexual activity with minors or any actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions; any actual or attempted abuse of position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, professionally, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. This includes acts of transactional sex, solicitation of transactional sex and exploitative relationships.
 - c. This zero tolerance further includes the explicit prohibition against unacceptable behavior towards and/or in the presence of children.
 - d. Violence, including sexual and/or gender based violence:
 - i. Violence here refers to acts that inflict physical, mental, sexual harm or suffering, threats of or attempts at such acts, coercion to perpetrate these and other forms of degrading, humiliating acts, deprivation of liberty, exploitative behavior or abuse of power.
3. Contravention of these codes will invite sanctions against the researcher, including disciplinary actions and measures instituted by WERK, in accordance with its members' policies.
4. WERK expects that, with respect to property and equipment, all researchers and collaborators exercise, at the very minimum, a reasonable standard of care in the handling of equipment and property under WERK's custody, and in so doing;
 - a. Employ use of equipment as it was designed and procured;

- b. Prohibit the theft, misappropriation, waste, and destruction of property and equipment.
5. WERK expects that researchers and collaborators will make adequate use of safe and hygienic sanitary and sanitation facilities designated as such, where available for hygiene and excretion, including wash sinks and toilets.
6. WERK remains cognizant of the likelihood, however mitigated, of cases of misconduct involving research experts and researchers and collaborators. In response, WERK will ensure that all credible allegations are investigated and that appropriate action is taken when allegations are substantiated.
7. Signatories to this code have a responsibility to report any and all infractions and incidents of violation of this code as soon as is reasonably possible.
8. WERK in turn will endeavour to ensure the strict protection of their confidentiality, an assurance of non-retaliatory measures against the reporting expert.
9. WERK may investigate or cause to be investigated any allegation of breach of this Code so as to determine the veracity of such allegation.
10. WERK may carry out investigations on researchers and collaborators' improprieties on its own initiative or pursuant to a complaint by any person.
11. WERK may refer a matter to another appropriate body for investigation, which shall investigate the matter within a reasonable time and submit a report to WERK on its findings. Upon the submission of a report, WERK shall ensure that the findings of the investigations are implemented in accordance with the disciplinary action stipulated in their respective human resources policies.
12. An investigation may be carried out under this paragraph notwithstanding the fact that the person being investigated has ceased or is not an employee of WERK.
13. If a key expert or collaborator considers that anything required of him or her is in contravention of this Code or is otherwise improper, unethical or unlawful, the researchers and collaborators shall report the matter to an appropriate authority.
14. Researchers and collaborators can, and are encouraged to, report any matter that violates this Code or misrepresents WERK to the legal representative of WERK, the head of the member institutions or any other appropriate authority as the case may be.