



Ethical Issues in
Software
Engineering
Research: A
Survey of Current
Practice



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Introduction

- ◆ In this paper, we discuss about how the software engineering research community is currently dealing with the ethical issues that some empirical research presents.
- ◆ Discussion about survey of UK university department heads related to the ethical issues in empirical research.
- ◆ The attitudes of software engineering community when the research is conducted involving human participants.

Research Methods

- ◆ The aim was to see how UK university departments are considering the ethical dimensions in software engineering research involving human participants of some of the research that is being done.
- ◆ The survey was focused on sections like size of the respondent's department, number of software engineering researchers employed, and amount of software engineering research undertaken by the department.

Research Methods

- ◆ Sent detailed questionnaires to all 94 university computing department heads in the UK.
- ◆ The questionnaires were directly posted to heads of the departments.

Research Findings

- ◇ Size of research effort
- ◇ Importance of ethical dimensions
- ◇ Rate of approval
- ◇ Training in Ethics

Conclusions

- ◇ About the ethical issues involved in conducting research with the human participants.
- ◇ Most of the staff working in computing departments come from a technical background.
- ◇ Software engineering and computing research generally is becoming more people-centered.
- ◇ Culture of the institutions.

Possible ways forward

- ◇ Software engineering community needs to be encouraged to take ethical issues more seriously.
- ◇ Helpful, if there were a code of conduct to guide researchers.
- ◇ Codes to be updated or software engineering community to develop its own code.
- ◇ Provision of training in research ethics.

Reference

- ◇ Hall, T., Flynn, V. Ethical Issues in Software Engineering Research: A Survey of Current Practice. *Empirical Software Engineering* 6, 305–317 (2001).
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Thank You