Proposal for a Research Ethics Framework

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Summary: Throughout the history of humanity, human beings have sought ways to improve their living conditions. At first, the challenges were to create ways to protect themselves from animals and the weather, and then they began to produce tools and utensils to make their daily tasks easier. Today, everything from the smallest particles to distant planets is explored, and information and communication technologies allow us to share knowledge on a global level. Given this, and due to the prerogatives that new technologies offer, it is vital to consider good ethical values   so that research can fulfill its true social role, as it is a means of expanding knowledge, which is also used to create services and products to meet some need in life. Research has the potential to profoundly change society, and therefore it needs to be planned and carried out in an honest and ethical manner, aiming at the well-being of individuals and the progress of civilization. Given this context, this paper aims to present a Research Ethics Framework that can help researchers assess the ethics of what they intend to investigate, or to evaluate a completed work. The Research Ethics Framework was applied to a completed research project where it was found that, although, in general, its completion was ethical, it could have been submitted to a Research Ethics Committee so that it could have independent support regarding its ethics.

Keywords: Logosophical Science. Applied Ethics. Logosophy. Morality.

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Abstract:human history, human beings have sought ways to improve their living conditions, where, at first, the challenges were to create ways to protect themselves from animals and the climate, then they began to produce tools and utensils to facilitate their daily chores. Today, we explore everything from the smallest particles to the distant planets, and information and communication technologies allow us to share knowledge on a global level. In view of this, due to the prerogatives that new technologies offer, it is vital to consider good ethical values   so that research can fulfill its true social role, as it is a means of expanding knowledge, which is also used to create services and products in order to meet some of the necessity of life. Research has the potential to profoundly alter society, and so it needs to be planned and executed with integrity and ethics for the well-being of individuals and the progress of civilization. Given this context, this paper aims to present a Research Ethics Framework that can assist researchers to assess the ethicality of what they intend to investigate, or to evaluate a completed work. The Research Ethics Framework was applied to a completed research study where it was found that, although, in general, it was conducted ethically, it could nevertheless have been submitted to a Research Ethics Committee so that it could have an independent backing on its ethicality.

Keywords: Applied Ethics. Logosophical Science. Logosophy. Moral.

1 Introduction

Since the earliest times, human beings have sought ways to improve their livelihoods, and this eagerness led them to develop various techniques and artifacts that could make life easier in the precarious conditions of those ancient times. What was once done only to preserve life, due to the dangers of the environment, such as the risk of attacks by wild animals and the harsh climate, is now used to make research, scientific methods and advanced technologies easier to live in, since the struggle for survival has long since been overcome.

The advancement of science is a necessity for society, because otherwise there is a risk of knowledge stagnation and, as a consequence, established standards falling due to unexpected situations that arise.

may appear, which society will not be prepared to face. However, it is also necessary to have a real commitment to ethics (OLIVEIRA, 2001).

Research is important for generating knowledge that can broaden human understanding of a given subject, or serve as a basis for developing a service or product that can be used to meet a need, and, therefore, its design and development require special attention to ethical issues so that it can fulfill its social function without causing harm to the people who will be impacted, directly or indirectly, by it.

Furthermore, first and foremost, the development of scientific research needs to be viable and of interest to society; otherwise, it will hardly be successful. Advances in science need to result in benefits for everyone, which can be through the development of agriculture, livestock, knowledge or any other area of human interest (OLIVEIRA, 2001).

Given the need to conduct research and its potential impact on society, it is vital It is important that they be carried out under ethical foundations that promote health, prosperity and human happiness at all levels. For this reason, the objective of this work is to present an Ethical Framework in Research that can serve as a support for researchers in evaluating the ethics of intended investigations, both new and already completed. To achieve this objective, values   present in the teachings of Logosophic Science were considered to compose its essential principles. Additionally, another element was considered, based on the health research guidelines of the Department of Health of South Africa.

This paper is organized as follows: the next section presents Logosophic Science and some of its ethical principles. Then, in Section 3, the Research Ethics Framework is described, as well as a suggestion on how to use it. Finally, the last section describes the conclusion.

2 Logosophic Science

The Argentine Carlos Bernardo González Pecotche (1901-1963) created Logosophy, which is a science with profound humanistic contours, whose legacy is to help individuals cultivate a new culture and prepare the environment for a new civilization (LOGOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION, 2020). Its name brings together the Greek words *logos* and *Sophia*, which means creative verb or manifestation of supreme knowledge, and original science or wisdom, respectively (PECOTCHE, 2013a). In the author's words:

> Logosophy is a new and conclusive science that reveals knowledge of a transcendent nature and grants the human spirit the prerogative, until now denied, of reigning in the life of the being it animates. It leads man to the knowledge of himself, of God, of the Universe and its eternal laws." (PECOTCHE, 2013a, p. 17).

The Logosophical Foundation brings together students "[...] who guide and direct themselves following their disciplines, under the motto of superior ethical principles of **respect**, **tolerance** and **freedom**." (PECOTCHE, 2012a, p. 13, emphasis added).

The aforementioned triad constitutes the basis for good coexistence between people, since: "Human beings are different from each other in culture, education, age, judgment and in everything; but Logosophy unites them through the bond of respect, intelligent tolerance, active patience and knowledge." (PECOTCHE, 2011, p. 379).

Starting from the triad of respect, tolerance and freedom, we arrive at the first principles of the Ethical Structure in Research, the value and importance of each of which is expressed in the following teachings.

Respect:

> "Logosophy therefore teaches that one of the foundations on which human morality should be based is the respect that each person owes to himself and to others. When there is respect, there is harmony, there is love and there is everything, because this reflects an elevation of spirit and a very broad understanding of what coexistence between fellow beings should mean. When respect is destroyed, everything else breaks down with it; this is what we see in all parts of the world, and this is what causes, more than anything else, the tragedies that most of humanity suffers." (PECOTCHE, 2011, p. 354).

Tolerance: "[...] considered by us an indispensable element for harmonious coexistence." Pecotche further adds that it "[...] is closely linked to **patience** –both combine in action – and if

supports respect and consideration for the conduct of others." (PECOTCHE, 2007, p. 133-134, author's emphasis).

Freedom:

> "Freedom, which is the essential foundation of life, forms the vertex of the triangle whose base rests on duty and right. Faced with this ternary that embodies the synthesis of human responsibility, it will be necessary to raise the consciousness of men and make it manifest in all its splendor and its maximum power. The future of humanity depends on this achievement. In it we will find the key that will ensure peace on Earth." (PECOTCHE, 2010, p. 199).

It is clear when reading the teaching above that for an individual to enjoy his freedom, he must first be responsible for his own actions, based on the ternary principle: freedom, duty and right, which is illustrated in Figure 1.

Since responsibility is closely linked to freedom, it will also be incorporated into the Research Ethics Framework. Regarding responsibility, Pecotche announces that:

> "If one truly wants to obtain a complete knowledge of what freedom is and should represent for life, it is necessary to link it very closely to duty and individual responsibility, as these two terms, of great moral content, constitute the lever that moves human acts, preserving them from excess, always detrimental to the independence and freedom of those who incur it." (PECOTCHE, 2012b, p. 205).

Freedom is a right of all individuals, just as acting responsibly is a duty. When a human being is aware of his responsibility and, therefore, enjoys his freedom, he is acting with reason; and this reason needs, among other factors, to be fair, as Pecotche points out:

> "Reason must once again reign on earth; the reason for natural existence as a subject of a marvelous creation, ignominiously denied; the reason for mutual and universal love and respect, so often tarnished and offended; **the reason for rights and duties and, above all, the reason for freedom and justice**, instituted since nations were organized as such, and concepts of civilization and progress were born as imperative needs for the conservation and improvement of the human race, in its superior condition on a rational and social level." (PECOTCHE, 2002, p. 123, emphasis added).

A society with individuals who possess a healthy reason, that is, with the qualities described above, can contribute to the prosperity of civilization. And for this, it is also necessary to be fair:

> "Every man should seek to equal himself to those who, by their own efforts or by any circumstance of which he is unaware, are above him. The **equality** must be conceived on a level of equity and justice, and the one who is at the bottom must rise to where the one who is at the top is, if he wants to be equal to him. For example, someone who begins a military career knows that only through achievement and study will he be able to earn his ranks and reach each of his superiors in their respective hierarchical positions, until he becomes equal to the one who has the insignia of general. But for that to happen, he will also need to be a general. It would be absurd for the incipient military man to expect the one with the highest hierarchical position to be his equal, going back until he reaches his position, when it is up to him to make the upward trajectory that will lead him to become equal to his superior." (PECOTCHE, 2012b, p. 112, author's emphasis).

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Justice can be summarized by the following axiom: "For justice to be fair, in any of the forms in which it is applied, there should be neither partiality nor abuse on the part of those who administer it nor those who benefit." (PECOTCHE, 2013b, p. 349). Thus, based on this axiom, this principle is exemplified in Figure 2.

Thus, with the principle of justice, we have the Research Ethics Framework containing: respect, tolerance, freedom, responsibility and justice.

3 Research Ethics Framework

In Brazil, all institutions that conduct research must have a Research Ethics Committee, which is composed of an interdisciplinary and independent board. This committee is an important instrument responsible for evaluating and monitoring ethical issues related to research, whose guidelines aim to ensure the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of people involved in the research (MINISTRY OF HEALTH, 2002).

All research must invariably be ethical, especially research that directly involves people. This research requires greater attention, as it must reflect care and respect for everyone, as well as valuing well-being. Therefore, research carried out in the health field must be given special attention, as it can result in side effects, causing harm to participants. This is why it is important to consider research carried out in this area, such as that produced by the South African Department of Health.

The study presents guidelines and principles, processes and structures so that health researchers can guide their investigations, which need to be designed considering values of respect, scientific merit and integrity, justice and beneficence, as well as ethical norms and standards, such as: relevance and value, relationship between risks and benefits, competence and specialized knowledge of researchers, participant engagement, fair selection and continued respect for participants, and free and informed consent (DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, 2015). Of the values and standards suggested in the study, "relevance and value" will be inserted for the Research Ethics Framework, since the other elements are already, to some extent, incorporated into the existing principles.

The element of relevance and value refers to the need for research to be relevant and in tune with what people need. Therefore, the research proposal needs to include the expected contribution, which could be the production of knowledge or the potential for the results to generate something that can raise people's standard of living and well-being (DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, 2015).

It is also worth noting that when the results of some research are made available for society to enjoy, it is essential that they fulfill their objective, which must be to contribute to the common good and promote prosperity (TOLEDO, 2021). To this end, respect is an element that, when it becomes a moral value for the individual who cultivates it, will serve as motivation for them to seek solutions that converge towards peace, dedicating themselves to resolving any issues in a way that does not harm the dignity of others (TOLEDO, 2020).

Thus, we arrive at the Research Ethics Framework, illustrated in Figure 3.

Up to this point in the article, the means employed to arrive at the principles set out in the Research Ethics Framework have been reported. Next, it will be suggested, using a previously conducted study, how to apply it. The study can be found in detail in the book "Integrating Automatic Speech Recognition Systems into Applications" *Web*" (TOLEDO, 2019), or succinctly in the related article in Toledo *et al.*(2018).

The research consisted of evaluating speech recognition systems in order to select the most suitable one to be used in an Application *Web* with the intention of producing medical reports, which would be generated through dictation, that is, the health professional narrates the content they wish to include in the report and the system converts it into text.

To select the speech recognition systems, tests were carried out on different systems in order to select the most suitable ones. For this, ten individuals contributed voluntarily, who read a text that was recorded and submitted to the systems to generate the respective texts, and then, using methods statistical, the results were evaluated to select those that had the best efficiency.

Therefore, as the experiment with speech recognition systems involved the collaboration of human beings, its ethics will be assessed using the Research Ethics Framework, as indicated by each of its principles below:

• Relevance and Value: The research aimed to evaluate the feasibility of using speech recognition systems in a hospital environment to verify whether it could be an alternative and suitable method to the traditional method of typing the medical report. Thus, as the research did not involve any form of apparent physical or psychological harm to the participants, and as there was no possibility of validating the proposed method by other means, the research proved to be relevant, therefore, being able to

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be carried out;
- • Respect: volunteers who agreed to take part in the research chose the most suitable day and time to participate;
- • Tolerance: participants were free to stop the recording whenever they felt necessary and repeat the recording as many times as they wish;
- • Freedom: participants decided to participate in the research freely and with full knowledge, that is, the objective was explained to them, what they would do and an estimate of the time they would need, in addition to clarifying any doubts they might have;
- • Responsibility: participants could withdraw from the research at any time, and could also refuse to allow the results obtained from their recordings to be used for subsequent publications. However, even if the research did not cause any apparent physical or psychological harm, it would be good practice to submit it to a Research Ethics Committee to obtain approval from people qualified in ethical matters;
- • Fairness: nothing beyond what was strictly agreed in advance with the participants was asked of them.

As a result of the research assessment, it was possible to identify the positive points, that is, the care taken during the conduct of the research to meet each of the ethical principles, as well as to recognize a negative point, which was not submitting the project for approval by a Research Ethics Committee.

If the Research Ethics Framework were applied in the initial phase, that is, assessing ethical issues before starting the research, there would be a greater chance of avoiding mistakes or errors, in addition to making it possible to find areas for improving the research. Of course, even with this prior assessment, it does not eliminate all unpredictability or future situations that may occur during the work, however, it certainly offers a means of anticipating what is possible, as well as creating an environment where researchers will be aware of the concern that is incumbent on them to commit to ethical issues.

4 Conclusion

This paper presents a Research Ethics Framework to provide researchers with an additional resource to verify the ethics of the work they intend to develop, or evaluate that which they have already completed. The framework was designed based on Logosophic Science, comprising the principles of respect, tolerance, freedom, responsibility and justice, and the attribute of relevance and value, derived from research conducted by the South African Department of Health.

The Research Ethics Framework can be a means for those involved in the research to reflect, from its conception, ethical aspects so that the desired result is beneficial to society, and if any unethical point is identified, researchers would have the opportunity to review the project.

The Research Ethics Framework was then applied to a completed study, with the aim of suggesting a way to use it. It is worth noting that the proposed framework is a recommendation of essential ethical principles for good coexistence, and that therefore, it increases the possibilities of the research being beneficial. However, it can be expanded, receiving new elements according to the particular characteristics of each study.

Finally, the suggestion for future work is to expand the Research Ethics Framework to a specific field of study.

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