



**Associazione
Italiana
di Psicologia**



Code of Ethics for Research in Psychology

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Preamble

The Code of Ethics for research in psychology (hereinafter referred to as the Code of Ethics) defines the standards of behavior that members of the Italian Association of Psychology (Associazione Italiana di Psicologia, AIP) share and observe in order to ensure the proper conduct of research activities and the dissemination of knowledge, to protect the rights of research participants and other individuals involved, and to promote critical reflection on the ethical implications of research in the field of psychology. The Code of Ethics is inspired by the fundamental principles of the Constitution of the Italian Republic, in particular those of equality (art. 3) and the inviolability of the limits imposed by respect for the human person (art. 32), as well as by the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. It draws upon national, European, and international documents on experimentation with human beings and animals, paying particular attention to the current version of the Declaration of Helsinki [1]. It complements and integrates the Code of Ethics of Italian Psychologists, particularly the provisions relating to research (art. 9) and teaching (art. 21). Any person conducting research in psychology is required to know and disseminate this Code of Ethics, to draw inspiration from it in their work, and to respect and enforce it. Lack of knowledge of the Code cannot be used as a justification for ethically inappropriate conduct.

The Ethical Code is supplemented by the documents "Emerging Ethical Issues Related to the Use of Generative AI" and "Guidelines for Internet-Mediated Research" (authored by the AIP Ethics Committee).

General Principles

Integrity

Psychology researchers act with honesty, fairness, transparency, autonomy, and equity, with respect for all individuals involved and in the interest of participants, colleagues, students, the host institution, the scientific community, reference groups, and the public. Integrity means avoiding opportunistic or ambiguous behavior and not abusing one's institutional role or situations of informational and decision-making asymmetry. It also means preventing and removing conflicts of interest, as well as resisting any form of pressure aimed at influencing or altering research projects and their results.

Respect for Human Dignity

Psychology researchers recognize the intrinsic value of every human being. Therefore, they respect the dignity, freedom, and well-being of participants, students, colleagues, and collaborators, and safeguard their rights to self-determination and privacy, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, age, educational level, nationality, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, psycho-physical conditions, and political and trade union opinions.

Competence

Psychology researchers are aware of the limits of their competence and use only methods and techniques for which they possess adequate scientific and methodological training. They commit to continually updating their technical and professional skills, paying particular attention to ethical issues and to possible changes in national and international regulations. They ensure that those working under their supervision maintain an adequate level of preparation and operate with an awareness of the limits of their competence.

Social Responsibility

Psychology researchers are aware of the social responsibility that derives from their research focus, methodological choices, and the dissemination of results, which may be interpreted and used differently in various contexts of application. They act to ensure that research always contributes to the advancement of knowledge, the potential for intervention, and the provision of tools for understanding and solving problems. Under no circumstances do they use their activity or competence to generate or justify suffering and oppression.

Safeguarding Well-being

Psychology researchers commit not to compromise the bio-psycho-social well-being of participants or undermine their sense of security and self-esteem. They ensure that participation in research does not lead to a deterioration of current conditions or expose participants to risk, discomfort, or suffering. Safeguarding the well-being of minors and individuals in vulnerable situations [2] is the subject of particular attention.

Rules of Conduct

Article 1. Information on Participation in Research

1.1 Researchers provide adequate information to participants.

1.2 The information is presented clearly, fully, and exhaustively.

1.3 The information is provided in written form and, if necessary, also orally, in an unambiguous, understandable manner, appropriate to the age, level of education, and cognitive skills of participants. The information sheet describing the research is distinct from the consent form for participation in research (see Article 2).

1.4 The information sheet for participation in research includes: (a) a description of the research (a brief outline of objectives and procedures, with a comprehensive explanation of any potential risks and actions planned to prevent and address them, as well as the benefits for the individual and/or society); (b) the procedures for returning results; (c) the right to refuse or withdraw from participation; (d) the measures adopted to ensure anonymity; (e) the identifying details of the responsible person for the research (name, scientific and professional status, institution), and any other individuals who may be contacted for clarification and information, even after the research conclusion; (f) the source of funding and/or the possible presence of external sponsors; (g) the possibility, if applicable, that data, rendered completely anonymous, may be made available for further research, even with purposes different from the original study, under the responsibility of the research coordinator.

It is also useful to indicate the contact details of an independent guarantor, external to the research group, who can be contacted in case of problems.

1.5 Participants are clearly informed that consent to participate in research can be granted, refused, or withdrawn at any time. They are guaranteed the greatest freedom of choice and allowed all the time necessary to reflect, raise doubts, and request clarification. Participants are explicitly informed that they are free to withdraw at any time without providing any justification and that refusal or withdrawal entails no disadvantage.

1.6 The information sheet may contain partial or misleading information only in the cases and under the conditions specified in Article 3.

1.7 Even the individual who cannot legally provide consent is adequately informed.

1.8 If AI models are used in research, the consent form highlights details about their use and the specific nature of their application in the research [3].

Article 2. Consent to Participate in Research

2.1 Researchers obtain prior written consent for participation. If written consent cannot be obtained, alternative methods are used to ensure and document consent (e.g., video-recorded verbal consent).

2.2 Participants signing the consent form declare that they have received full information, that no doubts remain unresolved, and that they have no further questions. Where applicable, they also indicate the reference person to be informed if unforeseen relevant information emerges during the study. Finally, they may give or deny consent to be contacted again for future studies or for reuse of data collected in the current research.

2.3 For individuals unable to provide a valid consent, parent or legal guardian is requested to provide it. For minors, consent is generally provided by both parents. For adolescents over 16 years old, consent may be requested directly from the minor when researchers, after the approval from the local ethics committee (CEL), take responsibility for conducting a low-risk study for participant's well-being. In cases where a low risk cannot be assured, consent is obtained from the parents [4].

2.4 Even individuals unable to give valid consent are invited to express their willingness or unwillingness to participate, in accordance with their capacity for understanding and self-determination. If consent is given by a parent or guardian, the participant retains the right to refuse participation or withdraw from the study. In the case of minors, especially younger children, it is the researcher's responsibility to pick up on signals, including non-verbal ones (e.g., crying, signs of distress), that indicate unwillingness to participate in the study or a desire to discontinue it.

2.5 Freedom to participate is particularly protected when vulnerable individuals are involved (e.g., minors; institutionalized, hospitalized, or detained persons; groups at risk of stigma or discrimination), or when there is an asymmetrical relationship between participant and researcher (e.g., student/teacher; client/therapist). In these cases, research activities are clearly distinguished from professional or educational practice to prevent misunderstandings and unjustified expectations. In the case of minors, special caution is adopted to address the power imbalance between adults and children. Researchers ensure that minors can withdraw participation at any time without consequences or perceived coercion.

2.6 Researchers avoid situations where personal relationships stemming from other roles (e.g., teacher, clinician) might undermine objectivity or lead to indirect forms of coercion.

2.7 Consent to participate is distinct from authorization to conduct research outside the University or Research Institutions (e.g., schools or workplaces). Authorization must be obtained in advance from managers or responsible parties of host institutions in order to access premises of the institutions involved and to interact with the staff. Such authorization does not imply the automatic or mandatory participation of all members of that organization without individuals being individually informed and freely expressing their consent. Only in the case of school-based research included in an educational program the consent of the principal and the student involved may be sufficient, as parents have already subscribed the school's educational program.

2.8 If data from a previous study need to be used for purposes different from the original research, and this was not explicitly stated in the consent form, new consent must be obtained from all participants. In studies conducted outside universities or research institutions, host organizations must also be informed of the new use of collected data.

2.9 It is possible to derogate from the obligation to obtain consent only in the case of research conducted in public places and where there is no possibility of contacting the persons involved in the observation and data collection either beforehand or afterwards. In such cases, the right to privacy of the participants must still be protected by anonymizing the data and ensuring that it is not possible to trace the identity of the participants, for example by making faces and voices unrecognizable when disseminating and sharing the data and results.

2.10 Researchers ensure that participants can grant, refuse, or withdraw consent without suffering any disadvantage (e.g., academic penalties for students, damage to therapeutic relationships for patients, or adverse consequences for institutionalized individuals or employees).

Article 3. Confidentiality and Anonymity

3.1 Researchers always respect participants' rights to confidentiality and anonymity. Personal data, including special categories of data [5], collected in the course of research are processed and stored with appropriate technical and organizational security measures, as required by applicable law [6].

3.2 Anonymous data, i.e., data collected in such a way that the participant cannot be identified even through cross-referencing with other databases, are not subject to personal data protection regulations.

3.3 Researchers adequately inform participants about the purposes and methods of personal data processing and obtain consent for such processing, including that of special categories of data [5] (e.g., health data, genetic data, biometric data, sexual life, or sexual orientation).

3.4 Personal data are used solely for the purposes defined in the research project (see Appendix A of this Code) and described in the information sheet for participation. Special categories of data [5] are collected and used only if strictly relevant to the research purposes.

3.5 The person responsible for the research project (i.e., the principal investigator) must safeguard personal data and identifying codes to prevent loss, theft, or any use not compliant with applicable laws and the ethical principles of this Code.

3.6 All personal information concerning participants is treated confidentially and is accessible only to researchers authorized by the data controller.

3.7 Research results are disseminated only in anonymous or aggregated form, avoiding disclosure of any information that could allow identification, even generic, of the participants. Any disclosure of identifying information requires prior written authorization by the participant and/or their representative/legal guardian.

3.8 In the dissemination of results, and in the absence of explicit authorization, researchers ensure anonymity of the institution where data were collected.

3.9 The rights to anonymity and confidentiality are guaranteed even in research using online tests and questionnaires, through all available technological means to ensure responses cannot be traced back to individuals.

3.10 If, during research, participants reveal information concerning serious threats to the life, health, or safety of others, researchers carefully assess the necessity of partially or fully waiving confidentiality.

3.11 To balance the right to data protection and confidentiality with the needs of scientific research, researchers act in compliance with the "Ethical Rules for Processing for Statistical or Scientific Research Purposes" [7]. Compliance with these rules is an essential condition for lawful and proper data processing.

Article 4. Information on the Processing of Personal Data

4.1 In the case of processing personal data, i.e., non-anonymous data, researchers prepare an information sheet in accordance with the law [6]. Even for minors and vulnerable individuals, participants are informed about the processing of personal data, taking into account their linguistic comprehension and cognitive skills.

4.2 The information form for personal data processing, in line with legal requirements [6], describes: (a) the identity and contact details of the data controller; (b) the contact details of the data protection officer, where applicable; (c) the purposes and legal basis for the processing of personal data; (d) any recipients or categories of recipients of the data; (e) if applicable, the controller's intention to transfer data to a third country or international organization and the existence or absence of an adequacy

decision by the European Commission or other appropriate safeguards; (f) the period of data retention or, if not possible, the criteria used to determine such period; (g) the data subject's rights to request access, rectification, erasure, restriction of processing, objection to processing, and data portability; (h) where processing is based on consent, the right to withdraw consent at any time without affecting the lawfulness of prior processing; (i) the right to lodge a complaint with a supervisory authority; (l) whether the data subject is obliged to provide personal data and the possible consequences of not doing so; (m) the existence of automated decision-making processes, including profiling, with meaningful information about the logic used and potential consequences for the data subject.

4.3 If AI systems are used, the information sheet explicitly states the processing methods and their implications [3].

Article 5. Consent to the Processing of Personal Data

5.1 Participants signing consent to the processing of personal data declare that they have received full and complete information, have no remaining doubts, and no further questions.

5.2 For individuals unable to provide valid consent, this must be given by a parent or legal guardian. For minors, consent is provided by both parents.

5.3 If unforeseen relevant information emerges during the research, and a reference contact has been indicated, the researcher must obtain consent for the processing of that person's data for the purposes indicated.

Article 6. Use of Deception in Research

6.1 Where scientific objectives require it and no alternative methods are available, participants may be kept unaware or misled about certain aspects of the study. Consequently, the information sheet may contain partial or false information to avoid disclosing the true aims of the research.

6.2 Even in cases of deception, potential risks to participants' bio-psycho-social well-being can never be concealed and must always be accurately and fully disclosed.

6.3 Researchers who use deception provide full debriefing at the end of the session or, if necessary, at the end of data collection, and request participants' consent for the use of collected data, replacing the previously obtained consent (which is invalid, as it was based on incomplete or incorrect information).

6.4 In the absence of new written consent, collected data cannot be used and must be permanently deleted.

6.5 The debriefing and reassurance session after the experiment is not limited to describing the deceptive aspects of the study but aims to restore participants' prior mood and self-esteem, and to eliminate any misconceptions about the study or themselves that may have arisen during participation.

6.6 If AI-generated synthetic stimuli are presented as a form of deception, participants are made aware of this manipulation at the end of the study [3].

Article 7. Return of research results

7.1 At the end of data collection or the study, the researchers will schedule a debriefing session and/or an interview to clarify and explain the research. They also remain available to respond to participants' questions or doubts after the conclusion of the research and to provide additional information, even after the research has been completed.

7.2 Researchers make themselves available to report research results to participants and other involved parties (teachers, healthcare staff, managers, etc.). For minors or individuals unable to validly express their will, results are communicated in appropriate ways to their language comprehension and cognitive skills. In such cases, results are also communicated to parents or legal guardians. In studies

commissioned by external organizations (e.g., schools, workplaces, healthcare institutions), results are provided both to participants and the commissioning body, while respecting participants' anonymity.

7.3 Research results are presented in aggregated form so that information cannot be traced back to individual participants. In intervention studies, where results may serve as training or self-reflection, individual feedback is given privately and only upon explicit request by the participant.

7.4 When presenting results, researchers pay particular attention to practical, cultural, and political implications, aiming to reflect the complexity of issues and to prevent unjustified interpretations based on prejudice or stereotypes. They use accessible language, provide clear information, and avoid comments that could be interpreted as evaluative of individuals or their groups.

7.5 In clinical studies, researchers specify that results have only informative value and provide no personal diagnostic or therapeutic benefit.

7.6 In cases where returning research results could, despite precautions, cause harm or disadvantage to participants, researchers commit to taking all necessary measures to restore participants' prior state of well-being and safety.

Article 8. Risks and Risk Management

8.1 Research activities must never compromise, either permanently or temporarily, the bio-psycho-social well-being of participants. Likewise, research activities and the return of results must not harm participants' relationships with colleagues, friends, or family, nor damage their self-image.

8.2 Research that may cause illnesses of any kind, whether organic or psychological, or that involves the possibility of harmful long-term effects from physical or chemical agents, is unacceptable.

8.3 Risk assessments and assurances are always documented and supported by evidence from scientific literature.

8.4 Where research procedures may pose risks due to participants' vulnerability or fragility, participation must be preceded by a targeted interview to identify any factors incompatible with the research.

8.5 If research involves presenting stimuli that are even minimally painful or in conflict with individuals' personal or cultural sensitivities, researchers adopt appropriate procedures to prevent discomfort and suffering. Experiments using painful stimuli are preceded by tests to establish individual pain thresholds. Studies requiring potentially distressing stimuli must include a preliminary familiarization phase.

8.6 Beyond preventing foreseeable risks, researchers must be prepared to address unforeseen circumstances. If participants display signs of discomfort or suffering, even unrelated to the study conditions, the research must be immediately interrupted.

Article 9. Research Participants, Collaborators, and Colleagues

9.1 Researchers possess proven interpersonal skills, as well as scientific competence, and ensure respectful and appropriate interactions with all individuals involved in the study.

9.2 Researchers avoid and counter all forms of discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, age, education, nationality, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, political or trade union opinions, and psycho-physical conditions.

9.3 When interacting with participants, researchers take into account their linguistic and cultural diversity, potential vulnerability, and communication abilities. In the case of minors or fragile/vulnerable individuals, researchers refrain from exerting pressure that could make them feel inadequate or emotionally uncomfortable, and respect the time needed to adapt to the research process through staff trained to provide an appropriate and welcoming environment.

9.4 Researchers manage relationships with collaborators and technical staff in a way that guarantees full respect for personal dignity, values individual skills, and supports professional growth and development [8].

9.5 Researchers make efforts to encourage, where possible, the participation of diverse social groups, including those traditionally underrepresented.

9.6 If a study involves even minimal risks to participants' health, researchers must have specific skills in emergency intervention.

9.7 If collaborators in training are involved in research, the person responsible for the study ensures they possess the necessary skills to perform their tasks correctly and have adequate relational competence.

9.8 If unforeseen information emerges about participants' bio-psycho-social conditions, or incidental findings potentially of clinical significance arise, the contact indicated by the participant in the consent form must be notified.

9.9 Researchers pay particular attention to the use of control groups. The effectiveness of new educational, clinical, or rehabilitative interventions must be tested by comparing them with standard interventions. Where the control group receives no treatment, at the end of data collection, when possible and appropriate, the new intervention is proposed.

9.10 In cases of conflicting interests with colleagues or other parties involved, researchers do not place their own interests above those of others and carefully ensure that pursuing their objectives does not harm others.

9.11 Respect among colleagues is also expressed through constructive and non-violent communication.

9.12 In research design, data interpretation, and analysis, support tools such as AI are considered supplementary, not substitutes for the researcher's expertise [3].

Article 10. Incentives for Participation

10.1 Participation in research and experimentation is voluntary and never subject to direct and indirect coercion, explicit and implicit.

10.2 The use of incentives must not compromise participants' well-being or dignity. Incentives must not induce participation against personal judgment or values, respecting participants' autonomy and self-determination.

10.3 Researchers exercise particular caution in using incentives in situations where: (a) reluctance to participate is high, including for religious or cultural reasons; (b) there is a dependency or power imbalance between participants and researchers; (c) participants come from cultural backgrounds different from those of the researchers.

10.4 The type and amount of incentive must respect principles of dignity and well-being and consider participants' characteristics (e.g., age, culture, religion). For example, financial incentives cannot be offered to minors.

10.5 The amount of an incentive must never be determined by the degree of reluctance to participate.

10.6 The use of lotteries as incentives is discouraged, as it may foster addictive behavior and create disparities between participants who win rewards and those who do not.

10.7 Where participation entails expenses for participants, reimbursement of costs is ethically appropriate.

10.8 Recognition of research participation by academic staff in charge guarantees an educational and training opportunity for students but it is not a source of inequality. Those who do not participate must be provided with alternative ways to obtain equivalent educational academic benefits.

Article 11. Research with Animals

11.1 Researchers who use animals for scientific purposes are responsible not only for their treatment during experiments but also for their overall well-being, including health and comfort, throughout the research process, in full compliance with national and international regulations [9].

11.2 Animal welfare must be ensured beyond the experimental sessions, including aspects of nutrition, hygiene, housing, and social needs. Researchers' responsibilities extend to all aspects and stages of animal care.

11.3 Researchers ensure that all individuals collaborating in animal research, regardless of their role (e.g., cleaning, feeding, euthanasia, or direct involvement in experiments), have adequate competence and experience.

11.4 Experimental methods and procedures must follow the principle of using the minimum possible number of animals while ensuring reliable results.

11.5 Experimental procedures involving surgery or painful stimuli are minimized and permitted only when justified by the significance of research objectives and when no alternative methods are available.

11.6 Researchers make every effort to minimize painful stimulation or other stimuli likely to induce strong negative emotional states, discomfort, or stress in animals.

Article 12. Dissemination of Scientific Research

12.1 Presenting research in scientific forums (conferences, journals, publications, etc.), which is essential for the advancement of knowledge, must be guided solely by scientific or educational purposes. Theories, hypotheses, results, and their interpretations must be presented clearly and comprehensively, to encourage the exchange of ideas and methods within the scientific community and to promote the dissemination of knowledge in society.

12.2 Researchers make efforts to enable replicability of their work and reproducibility of results, ensure accurate and detailed scientific communication, and are willing to provide details of their research through pre-registration of studies or, retrospectively, by sharing all information useful for meta-analyses or replication.

12.3 At no stage of research are practices such as fabrication of data, falsification, plagiarism, or self-plagiarism allowed. Self-plagiarism refers to multiple publications of the same study reproducing identical results, or multiple publications of the same work reproducing substantial portions of text. If a study gives rise to multiple publications addressing different aspects, the connection to other publications must always be made explicit.

12.4 Data collected in other studies may not be used without citing the source or obtaining the consent of the original researchers. The use of tools and datasets requiring authorization is only allowed after prior consent has been obtained.

12.5 Publications must indicate funding sources and acknowledge any type of support or assistance received from institutions or individuals.

12.6 Publications must cite original sources and give full credit to the work of others, whether used as inspiration or reproduced in whole or in part, even if modified. This also applies to unpublished material known through scientific collaborations, personal relationships, or material obtained online.

12.7 Researchers must clarify their role and responsibility regarding collected data. Individuals who contributed substantially to different phases of the research (colleagues, technical staff, students) are entitled to co-authorship of publications or conference presentations. Those who contributed in a minor but verifiable way must be explicitly acknowledged. Conversely, individuals who did not contribute at any stage of the research or writing must not be listed as authors.

12.8 Any use of support tools for research design, writing, or data interpretation, including artificial intelligence systems, must be explicitly stated [3].

12.9 Presentations in scientific forums must be original and not mere repetitions of previously presented work. If the research has already been published or presented at a conference, even partially, this must be clearly stated with appropriate references.

12.10 Researchers must be willing, for at least three years after publication of results, to share anonymized raw data upon request for further verification. Sharing anonymized data on open-access platforms is encouraged.

12.11 In all scientific communications, language that expresses discrimination against any group or minority must be avoided.

12.12 In scientific or outreach contexts, researchers must clearly specify their expertise and professional role.

12.13 In media communication, researchers refrain from expressing opinions on topics outside their expertise and avoid oversimplifications and trivializations of psychological research that could threaten the reputation of individuals and the discipline [10].

Article 13. Research, Teaching, and Evaluation

13.1 Researchers commit to promoting awareness of the ethical principles of research within degree courses and through specific seminars and continuing education activities.

13.2 Researchers or supervisors of others' research are aware of their educational responsibility towards collaborators and of their duty to transmit the principles established in this Code of Ethics and to ensure compliance with them.

13.3 Researchers are responsible for the proper use of psychological tools (tests, questionnaires, etc.) and for their safeguarding, even in the absence of copyright protection requirements. They do not allow trainees to use such tools independently before they have acquired adequate preparation.

13.4 Researchers guarantee the training of collaborators in training (students, doctoral candidates) and ensure the accuracy with which they present their qualifications externally.

13.5 Participation in research is offered to students and citizens as an important educational opportunity to understand the aims and procedures of scientific activity. Researchers are available to illustrate, explain, and discuss all theoretical and methodological aspects of the research.

13.6 In the evaluation of research projects, articles, and other editorial initiatives, researchers are exclusively guided by principles of merit and scientific quality; they avoid behaviors aimed at obtaining undue advantages for themselves or their research group (for example, demanding unwarranted citations or blocking publications that report results or hypotheses contrary to their own theories); they respect the work of others, even in the case of negative evaluations, adopting an approach aimed at improving the scientific product [11].

Article 14. Local Ethics Committee

14.1 Research projects in psychology must be reviewed and approved by a Local Ethics Committee, where established, with a commitment to prompt establishment where one does not yet exist.

14.2 For research in the health and pharmacological fields and for animal experimentation, the establishment and operation of Local Ethics Committees, as well as the procedures for submitting research protocols, are defined by current legislation [12].

14.3 With regard to psychological research involving human beings, the Local Ethics Committee pays particular attention to cases involving: (a) risk to the bio-psycho-social well-being of participants; (b) the participation of vulnerable individuals (such as minors, persons unable to provide consent, detainees, hospitalized or institutionalized persons, groups exposed to stigma or at risk of social

discrimination); (c) the use of biomedical devices and invasive investigative tools; (d) the use of deception; (e) the use of stimuli that may offend the personal and cultural sensitivity of participants; (f) restrictions on participants' rights to anonymity and confidentiality.

14.4 In the absence of a Local Ethics Committee that also covers psychological research involving human beings, researchers commit to raising awareness within their institution so that the competencies of the existing Ethics Committee are extended, or the establishment of an Ethics Committee for Research Involving Human Beings is promoted, preferably organized at the University or Research Institution level and in accordance with the principles described in the following sections.

14.5 The Local Ethics Committee is independent from the researchers, from the institution, and from the research funders. To ensure independence and impartiality and to avoid conflicts of interest, the majority of the members of the Local Ethics Committee must be external to the institution (University, Department, or Research Body) within which it operates.

14.6 The Local Ethics Committee adopts its own regulations, consistent with current legislation, and establishes operational procedures suited to the institutional context (available resources, type of research, specificities of the institution, etc.), ensuring at the same time the protection of both the participants and the researchers.

14.7 The composition of the Local Ethics Committee guarantees pluralism of ethical perspectives and includes diverse expertise (e.g., psychological, legal, medical, statistical, philosophical, and bioethical). For specific issues, the Committee may be supplemented with external experts and may seek specialist opinions. It is also recommended that representatives of vulnerable populations be invited, in order to safeguard these groups and bring their voice into the process.

14.8 The Local Ethics Committee performs the functions of consultation, evaluation, approval, and monitoring of research protocols, issuing reasoned and binding opinions within clear and reasonable timeframes [13].

14.9 The Local Ethics Committee expresses its opinion on the ethical implications of research protocols by considering: (a) the clear statement of the research objectives and/or hypotheses, and the soundness of the theoretical and/or methodological framework, limited to aspects such as the consistency of the research design with the theoretical/methodological approach adopted or the ethical implications of such an approach; (b) the presence within the research team of the expertise required by the protocol; (c) the protection of participants with regard to psychological and physical well-being, decision-making autonomy, and confidentiality; (d) the completeness and clarity of the information forms; (e) the reliability of safety procedures for risk prevention and management, as well as for data storage and protection; (f) respect for the social groups represented by participants during the interpretation and dissemination of results.

14.10 The Local Ethics Committee collaborates with those submitting research protocols to clarify all ethical issues, share solutions, prevent and resolve problematic situations, and improve the writing of protocols. To this end, it adopts constructive communication methods that support the projects and their timelines [13].

Implementing Provisions

Dissemination

This Code of Ethics is published on the website of the Italian Association of Psychology (AIP) [14].2. The AIP is committed to promoting the widest possible dissemination of this Code of Ethics through

initiatives of presentation and awareness-raising, preparation of informational materials, organization of seminars and symposia, and any other appropriate means. 3. Participation in scientific initiatives organized by the AIP requires a declaration attesting to the conformity of the research with this Code of Ethics.

AIP Ethics Committee

1. The Ethics Committee is a body provided for by the Statute of the AIP [15]. 2. The Ethics Committee is composed of one representative for each Section and is elected at the same time as the governing bodies of the Section. From among its members, the Ethics Committee elects a Coordinator. 3. Members of the Ethics Committee serve for three years and may be reappointed only once. 4. The operating procedures of the Committee are defined within the AIP regulations [16]. 5. The Ethics Committee has consultative, informational, and educational functions aimed at fostering a shared ethical awareness: (a) proposes recommendations on behaviors and practices to be adopted in research activities, including responding to specific requests from members; (b) manages the AIP website page on ethical issues in psychological research and updates it with discussion materials, bibliographic references, announcements of conferences and courses, and reports on the activities of the Ethics Committee; (c) organizes training events (seminars and schools) and opportunities for discussion (round tables and conferences); (d) produces consultation documents; (e) provides support and advice in the preparation of research projects. 6. The Ethics Committee is responsible for drafting and updating the Code of Ethics, in accordance with national and international regulations and with the AIP Statute, and for keeping records of changes made over time, monitoring its development. 7. The Ethics Committee does not replace Local Ethics Committees and does not assume their functions; under no circumstances it evaluates or authorizes individual research projects. It may interact with Local Ethics Committees established at Universities, Faculties, Departments, or Research Institutes, providing its consultative opinion when requested. 8. The Ethics Committee ensures its collaboration with Universities and Research Institutions for the establishment of Local Ethics Committees. 9. The Ethics Committee proposes to the Executive Board issues related to the ethical aspects of psychological research on which to develop documents or statements to be disseminated externally. 10. The Ethics Committee monitors compliance with the Code of Ethics by all AIP members, ensuring in particular that the research underlying publications and communications at events organized or sponsored by the Association's Sections is in conformity with it. It reports to the AIP President any inconsistencies or shortcomings in the Association's procedures and practices. 11. To ascertain possible violations of the Code of Ethics by an AIP member, the Ethics Committee acts on its own initiative, at the request of the Governing Council, or upon a non-anonymous report by at least one person, whether a member of the AIP or not. If it initiates a disciplinary procedure, the Ethics Committee hears all parties involved, ensuring and guaranteeing the necessary confidentiality. At the conclusion of the procedure, the Ethics Committee submits a detailed report to the Governing Council, with any proposed sanction to be adopted, which may include expulsion in the most serious cases. The initiation of disciplinary proceedings is preceded by a preliminary investigation to verify the validity of the report.

Procedure for the Approval and Updating of the Code of Ethics

1. The draft Code of Ethics is prepared by the Ethics Committee and sent to all members in order to receive comments and suggestions. After the consultation phase, the Code of Ethics is approved by the Governing Council and ratified by the Ordinary General Assembly.
2. The same procedure is followed in the case of partial revisions.

APPENDIX A. Ethical Rules for Processing for Statistical or Scientific Research Purposes

According to the “Ethical Rules for Processing for Statistical or Scientific Research Purposes” [6], research is carried out on the basis of a project drafted in accordance with the methodological standards of the relevant disciplinary field. Such a project: (a) specifies the measures to be adopted in the processing of personal data in order to ensure compliance with the “Ethical Rules for Processing for Statistical or Scientific Research Purposes” published pursuant to Article 20, paragraph 4, of Legislative Decree No. 101 of 10 August 2018 [5], as well as with the legislation on the protection of personal data; (b) identifies any data controllers; (c) contains a declaration of commitment to comply with the aforementioned Ethical Rules. A similar declaration must also be signed by the individuals—researchers, data controllers, and authorized personnel—who may be involved in the subsequent stages of the research, and must be retained in accordance with Article 3, paragraph 3, of the aforementioned Ethical Rules [6]. The research supervisor deposits the project with the University, research institution, or scientific society to which they belong, which is responsible for its retention in a confidential manner (as the project may only be consulted for the purposes of applying the legislation on personal data). The project must be retained for five years from the scheduled conclusion of the research.

Notes

[1] The latest version is that of Helsinki, Finland, October 2024.

[2] Vulnerability is understood as a lack of resources in one or more areas of life which, in specific situations, may lead individuals or groups to experience negative consequences stemming from stress factors, difficulties in effectively managing such factors, and an inability to recover or seize opportunities (Spini et al., 2013, p. 19). Although vulnerability is a dynamic process involving changes in levels of exposure (Spini et al., 2017), some individuals or groups experience vulnerability more consistently due to personal or social conditions.

[3] See the document “Emerging Ethical Issues Related to the Use of Generative AI.”

[4] This guidance is consistent with international ethical reflection. The Code of Human Research Ethics of the British Psychological Society (<https://explore.bps.org.uk/content/report-guideline/bpsrep.2021.inf180>), for example, indicates that the age of 16 is appropriate for obtaining minors’ autonomous consent in the context of low-risk research. Similarly, the guidelines of the National Health and Medical Research Council and the Australian Research Council and Universities (2025) state that, for older minors deemed mature and under specific conditions, their assent to participation may be considered valid without parental consent.

National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council and Universities Australia (2025). National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council.

[5] Pursuant to Article 9 of EU Regulation 2016/679.

[6] See Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (General Data Protection Regulation – GDPR), repealing Directive 95/46/EC, as well as Legislative Decree No. 196 of 30 June 2003, as amended – “Personal Data Protection Code” (so-called Privacy Code).

[7] See Ethical Rules for Processing for Statistical or Scientific Research Purposes, published pursuant to Article 20, paragraph 4, of Legislative Decree No. 101 of 10 August 2018 (<https://www.garanteprivacy.it/home/docweb/-/docweb-display/docweb/9069637>).

[8] See the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

[9] The relevant legislation is Legislative Decree No. 26 of 14 March 2014 implementing Directive 2010/63/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 September 2010 on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes.

[10] For further details on this point, see the Guidelines on “Professional Ethics and Communication in the Mass Media, with Particular Reference to News Reporting” prepared by the Order of Psychologists of Lazio (<chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://aipass.org/wp-content/uploads/migration/15070/linee-guida-mass-media.pdf>).

[11] See Ethical Practices of Journal Editors: Voluntary Code of Conduct (<https://editorethics.charlotte.edu/editor-ethics-2-0-code/>).

[12] The relevant legislation includes the four Decrees of the Minister of Health regarding territorial ethics committees, in accordance with European Regulation No. 536/2014 on clinical trials of medicinal products for human use, in particular Annex 1 to the Ministerial Decree of 26 January 2023, the Decrees of 27 January 2023 and 30 January 2023, and the Decree of the Minister of Health in agreement with the Minister of Economy and Finance of 30 January 2023.

[13] See the Catalogue of Good Practices for Local Ethics Committees, <https://aipass.org/commissione-etica/>.

[14] <https://aipass.org/commissione-etica/>

[15] The Statute of the Italian Association of Psychology was approved by the Ordinary General Assembly on 25 March 2011, with subsequent amendments approved by the Ordinary General Assembly on 19 March 2019. The text is available at <http://www.aipass.org/node/11621>.

[16] Regulation (approved by the AIP General Assembly of Members on 1 June 2021), available at <http://www.aipass.org/regolamento-aip>.