

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH BASED ON LEGAL STANDARDS, ETHICS, AND PROFESSIONALISM IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

This study aims to deeply analyze the relationship between research independence and adherence to legal, ethical, and professional standards at the doctoral level, where supervisor supervision is minimal. Independent research is central to achieving doctoral competency, requiring the ability to responsibly plan, implement, and account for all stages of research without detailed direction. However, this independence is not unlimited; each research step is bound by a legal framework, research ethics norms, and scientific professionalism principles that guarantee the protection of subject rights, data accuracy, and the dignity of scientific work. This study employed a qualitative approach with a juridical normative analysis and an in-depth reflective case study. Data were collected through a review of laws and regulations, national and institutional research ethics guidelines, academic ethics literature, and a critical review of the implementation of independent research with minimal supervision. The analysis was conducted by exploring the normative basis of researcher independence, mapping points of legal and ethical compliance at each stage of the research, and formulating self-control mechanisms that serve as a substitute for detailed external supervision. The research findings demonstrate that research independence and adherence to legal and ethical standards are not mutually exclusive, but rather mutually reinforcing: the more independent a researcher is, the greater their legal and ethical responsibilities. Minimal oversight actually demands a strong sense of legal awareness, ethical integrity, and professional commitment within the researcher. It was also found that legal and ethical violations in independent research are more likely to occur not due to malicious intent, but rather due to ignorance of applicable regulations and weak self-control systems. A Framework for Independent Research Based on Legal, Ethical, and Professional Standards, along with a detailed compliance checklist, was developed to enable researchers to conduct research independently while ensuring compliance.

Keywords: *Independent research; minimal supervision; legal standards; research ethics; professionalism; protection of research subjects; self-control; human resource management.*

INTRODUCTION

The doctoral level of education is characterized by demands for the ability to conduct original, independent, and scientifically sound research. This independence demonstrates that researchers have the capacity to determine the direction of their research based on their own academic abilities. Researchers are expected to formulate research problems, review and evaluate the literature, determine appropriate approaches and methods, develop instruments, collect and analyze data, interpret findings, and develop conclusions and recommendations. This entire process is carried out with academic responsibility, not simply following technical instructions from supervisors. In this context, supervisors still play a crucial role, but supervision should be more focused on strategic points, such as the accuracy of the research direction, methodological consistency, the quality of the argumentation, and adherence to academic standards. Overly detailed and continuous supervision can reduce the opportunity for researchers to develop critical thinking skills and make independent decisions.¹ This broad independence, however, does not mean researchers have unlimited freedom to act. Academic freedom remains within the framework of law, research ethics, and standards of scientific professionalism. Researchers have a responsibility to ensure that every methodological decision and action during the research is accountable. Therefore, independence should be understood as the ability to make conscious and responsible decisions, not as the freedom to ignore applicable regulations. Independent

¹ Suciono, W. (2021). Critical thinking (a review through independent learning, academic ability, and self-efficacy). Indramayu: Adab Group.

researchers must be able to recognize the limits of their authority, understand the risks of each action, and know when further consultation or examination is necessary.² This issue is becoming increasingly important in human resource management research because research in this field generally involves humans as respondents, informants, and objects of study. The data obtained can relate to work experiences, perceptions of the organization, employee relationships, performance, leadership, job satisfaction, and even certain personal information. Therefore, researchers must pay serious attention to protecting the rights of research subjects. Consent given by respondents or informants must be based on an adequate understanding of the research objectives and process. Furthermore, the confidentiality of identities and information provided must be maintained, and its use must be limited in accordance with the research objectives.³

Researchers must also avoid actions that could harm research subjects, either directly or indirectly. Information obtained in research should not be manipulated to support a particular hypothesis or conclusion. Similarly, data should not be disseminated indiscriminately if its dissemination could harm individuals, groups, or organizations participating in the research. Scientific integrity requires researchers to present findings based on actual conditions, even if the research results do not align with the researcher's initial assumptions or expectations. The problem that then arises is how to ensure compliance when supervisor supervision is minimal. On the one hand, overly lax supervision can increase the risk of methodological errors, ethical violations, or non-compliance with legal requirements. On the other hand, overly strict supervision can make researchers dependent on their supervisors and hinder the development of their independent abilities. Therefore, the relationship between researchers and supervisors needs to be built on the principle of trust, accompanied by control mechanisms for key aspects.

Within this framework, minimal supervision should not be interpreted as a complete absence of supervision, but rather as proportional and risk-based supervision. Researchers are given the freedom to make academic choices but remain obligated to explain and account for their choices. Supervisors can serve as guides and reviewers at critical points without taking over the entire research process. In this framework, primary responsibility remains with the researcher, while the supervisor ensures that the research adheres to academic, legal, and ethical standards.⁴

Therefore, a balance between independence and oversight needs to be established through a clear framework. Researchers must have guidelines regarding methodological standards, ethical procedures, data protection, research documentation, and evaluation mechanisms at key stages. Independence cannot be interchanged with absolute freedom, just as minimal oversight should not be interpreted as a complete lack of control. The two must be balanced, allowing researchers room to develop while remaining bound by scientific responsibility. With this approach, doctoral research can produce work that is truly original and independent, while still meeting legal, ethical, and scientific professional requirements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Nature of Independent Research and Minimal Supervision

Independent research is a research process that is designed, implemented, and accounted for by the researcher themselves in a responsible manner. The supervisor's role is not to direct the steps or determine the content of the research, but rather to provide strategic direction, test the feasibility of the design from a methodological and ethical perspective, and monitor compliance with scientific principles at established control points. Minimal supervision means that supervision is not carried out in detail, continuously, and intervening in every decision of the researcher, but is limited to basic control points: ethical feasibility before the research begins, appropriateness of the methodology, the accuracy and originality of the data, and the objectivity of the conclusions. Independence is not a gift bestowed by the supervisor, but rather a competence demonstrated by the researcher through the ability to control oneself obediently and responsibly.⁵

Legal Standards Applicable to Human Resources Research

Any research involving humans is bound by applicable laws and regulations, which are legally binding and carry real consequences if violated. These provisions include: the Personal Data Protection Act, which guarantees

² Suryaningsih, NI, Winarno, A., & Subagyo, S. (2025). Freedom and Responsibility in Modern Ethical Perspective: A Literature Study. *Journal of Management Research*, 3(4), 29-39.

³ Gustari, LA, & Riswanto, NK (2024). Basic principles and ethics in scientific research. *Pendas: Scientific Journal of Elementary Education*, 9(04), 486-494.

⁴ Indriaty, L., Abdullah, G., Agus, F., & Habib, MPF (2026). *Textbook of Research Methods*. Jambi: Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia.

⁵ Manalu, H., Ramly, F., Djodding, IM, Kusuma, PP, Guampe, FA, Farida, E., ... & Sari, DD (2024). *Economic Research Methods: Concepts, Methods, and Implementation*. Mifandi Mandiri Digital Publisher, 1(01).

individuals' rights to their personal data and requires consent before data is collected and processed; provisions on the confidentiality of confidential employee data; and prohibitions on actions that could cause material or immaterial harm to research subjects. In the field of human resources, research often accesses employee data on personnel, working conditions, opinions, and personal experiences.⁶ The collection, processing, and presentation of such data must comply with legal provisions that guarantee the protection of individual rights, so as not to give rise to lawsuits, labor violations, or losses in the form of violations of honor and good name.

Principles of Research Ethics in Human Resources

The principles of research ethics are not merely recommendations, but rather binding norms to maintain the honor of science and the protection of human beings. The main principles include: (1) Benefit and Non-Harm: research must bring benefits and must not endanger the safety, work safety, or status of research subjects; (2) Respect for Dignity and Independence: providing complete and easily understood information, obtaining voluntary consent, and guaranteeing the right to stop at any time without sanction; (3) Justice: distributing burdens and benefits fairly, not placing the burden of research solely on the weaker party; and (4) Integrity and Honesty: conducting research honestly, thoroughly, and openly. In human resource research, ethical violations that often occur include: forcing employees to become respondents on the orders of superiors, promising improvements in working conditions that cannot be fulfilled, disseminating confidential data to other parties, and manipulating research results for the benefit of management or the personal interests of researchers.

Professionalism Rules for Scientific Research

Professionalism in research means carrying out tasks with adequate knowledge, high precision, full responsibility, and non-negotiable honesty. These principles include: originality of work, accuracy and correctness of citations, thorough data processing without manipulation, objectivity of analysis even when the results are not as expected, and the courage to state the limitations of research findings. Professional researchers do not plagiarize, falsify data, manipulate findings to support hypotheses, and conceal findings that contradict their opinions. Adherence to these principles ensures public trust in research results. Without professionalism, researcher independence can degenerate into irresponsible freedom and undermine trust in science.

Framework of thinking

Research independence → Cultivating awareness of personal responsibility → Implementation of legal, ethical, and professional standards as internal controls → Minimal supervision at fundamental control points → Research is conducted independently but remains compliant, safe, and high quality.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with two complementary approaches, namely a juridical normative approach to examine the provisions of laws and regulations, ethical guidelines, and scientific principles to find the normative basis and legal-ethical obligations, and an in-depth reflective case study approach to review the implementation of independent research with minimal supervision in identifying obstacles, risks, and the need for independent control. Data were obtained from laws and regulations related to the protection of personal data and research, national and institutional research ethics guidelines, research ethics and human resource management literature, as well as in-depth reflection notes on the implementation of independent research that is the object of the study.

Data collection was conducted through a review of normative documents, examining legal texts, ministerial decrees, ethical guidelines, and professional standards to identify binding obligations for researchers. Furthermore, in-depth reflection was conducted on the stages of independent research, including adherence to standards, obstacles, and doubts encountered when supervisor supervision was minimal. Cross-confirmation was conducted by comparing research practices with legal, ethical, and professional provisions to identify conformities and deviations. Data were analyzed through identification of standards, mapping of research stages and points of compliance, analyzing the risk of violations, and formulating self-control mechanisms and compliance checklists. Supervisor supervision focused on five control points: pre-research, data collection, data processing, writing, and completion, which encompassed legal and ethical feasibility, subject protection, data honesty, originality of work, and the appropriateness of conclusions to evidence.

⁶ Alfitri, NA, Rahmawati, R., & Firmansyah, F. (2024). Protection of personal data in the digital era based on Law Number 27 of 2022. *Journal Social Society*, 4(2), 92-111.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Researcher Independence and the Responsibilities that Follow

The analysis shows that research independence does not mean freedom from regulation. Quite the contrary: the more independent a researcher is, the greater the legal, ethical, and academic responsibilities they bear.⁷ Minimal supervision from a supervisor requires the development of internal oversight within the researcher. Legal awareness and ethical sensitivity serve as a substitute for external oversight. Without this awareness, researchers can misuse their independence or inadvertently violate applicable regulations. Many legal and ethical violations in independent research occur not because of malicious intent, but rather due to ignorance of applicable regulations and a lack of awareness that independence carries with it commensurate responsibilities.

Minimum Supervision and Self-Control Mechanism

In human resource research, there are critical points at each stage that must be strictly adhered to:

During the preparation stage, researchers need to develop a research design that will not harm any party. From the outset, researchers must prepare a consent form that fully outlines the rights of research subjects, including the right to know the purpose of the research, to give or refuse consent, and to withdraw. Furthermore, methods for maintaining data confidentiality must be determined from the outset so that protection of personal information is incorporated into the research design. During the data collection stage, researchers must honestly explain the purpose and objectives of the research to the subjects. Consent must be obtained voluntarily without coercion or pressure. Subjects' refusal or withdrawal must not negatively impact their working relationships or positions. Researchers must also guarantee confidentiality and anonymity during the storage, processing, and use of data in research.⁸

During the data processing stage, all information must be processed as is without selective or manipulating data to support a particular view or assumption. Personal data and respondents' names must not be shared with other parties without written permission. If identities are no longer needed in the analysis process, they must be removed or disguised to prevent misuse of information. Furthermore, during the writing and reporting stage, researchers must cite all sources accurately, refrain from plagiarism, and maintain confidentiality of the sources of information used. Conclusions must be based on the data and should not exceed what can be proven by the research results. Research limitations must also be honestly communicated to provide readers with an objective picture. Finally, at the completion stage, the researcher remains responsible for the use of the research results. Findings should not be used to harm the individuals or organizations subject to the research. Research results must be presented objectively, based on the evidence obtained, and not directed at fulfilling or justifying specific interests.

Minimum Supervision and Self-Control Mechanism

Minimal supervision does not mean no supervision at all. Supervision is still necessary, but it must be conducted strategically and limited to predetermined control points. In such circumstances, researchers have a greater responsibility to implement self-control in lieu of detailed supervision. Researchers must independently verify compliance with legal, ethical, and academic norms before proceeding to the next stage of the research. Every important process and decision must also be documented as evidence of compliance that can be relied upon if needed. If there is any doubt about a provision, researchers must consult with their supervisor or other authorized party. Therefore, independence does not mean unlimited freedom of action, but rather the ability to conduct research responsibly. Researchers who are unable to consistently exercise self-control are not eligible for minimal supervision, as independence requires the ability to control oneself while ensuring that the entire research process remains in accordance with legal, ethical, and scientific standards.⁹

The Relationship Between Independence and Compliance

The findings indicate that independence and adherence to legal and ethical standards reinforce, rather than undermine, each other. Researchers who adhere to standards actually become more independent because they don't rely on detailed supervision to avoid errors. Conversely, independent researchers have a greater sense of

⁷ Indriaty, L., Abdullah, G., Agus, F., & Habib, MPF (2026). Textbook of Research Methods. Jambi: Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia.

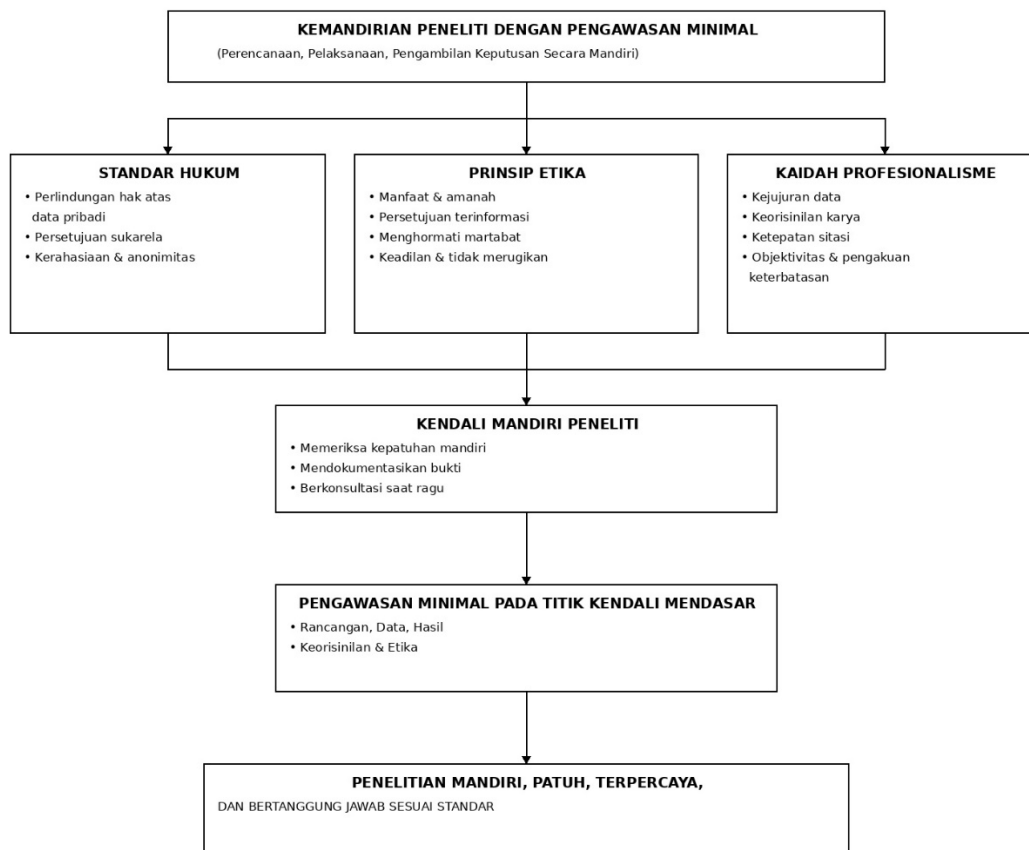
⁸ Iswahyudi, MS, Wulandari, R., Samsuddin, H., Sukowati, I., Nurhayati, S., Makrus, M., ... & Febianingsih, NPE (2023). Research methodology textbook. Jambi: Publishing Indonesia.

⁹ Iswandi, I. (2014). Basics of the supervisory process in organizations. JSI (Journal of Information Systems) Suryadarma University, 1(1).

responsibility to comply with all applicable regulations. Minimal supervision is safe and ensures quality when supported by legal awareness, ethical integrity, and the researcher's professional commitment. Without these three elements, minimal supervision risks producing independent research that deviates from applicable regulations.¹⁰

FRAMEWORK AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Independent Research Framework Based on Legal, Ethical, and Professional Standards



Self-Compliance Checklist

- ✓ Researchers must check the following things before proceeding to the next stage:
- ✓ Develop a design that does not have the potential to harm research subjects
- ✓ Prepare complete and easy-to-understand information sheets and consent forms.
- ✓ Obtain voluntary consent without coercion or excessive promises
- ✓ Explains the right to stop at any time without any penalty.
- ✓ Guaranteeing the confidentiality and anonymity of data throughout its storage and use.
- ✓ Do not access or use personal data without valid permission.
- ✓ Data is processed as is, not engineered or selected for certain benefits.
- ✓ Each quote is cited and referenced correctly according to the guidelines.
- ✓ There are no parts that plagiarize or hide reference sources.
- ✓ Conclusions are supported by sufficient and relevant data evidence.
- ✓ State the limitations of the research honestly without hiding weaknesses.
- ✓ The research results are not used to harm any party.
- ✓ Document all evidence of compliance for accountability purposes

¹⁰ Pratama, R., & Sari, D. (2022). Ethical Principles of Research Involving Human Subjects. *Journal of Human Resource Management*, 16(1), 33–50.

Strategic Recommendations

Strengthening legal and ethical understanding from the outset is a crucial step in building independence for doctoral researchers. Before beginning research, researchers must understand the legal provisions, ethical principles of research, and academic norms related to the research activities they will undertake. This understanding is necessary to enable researchers to recognize the boundaries of permissible and impermissible actions. With adequate understanding, self-control can be applied appropriately at every stage of the research. Conversely, ignorance or a lack of understanding of legal and ethical provisions can be a cause of deviations, especially when research is conducted with limited supervisor supervision.¹¹

Clearly establishing supervisory control points is also necessary to ensure a balanced relationship between independence and supervision. Supervisors do not have to oversee the entire research process in detail,¹² but rather conduct supervision at predetermined, fundamental control points, such as before the research begins, during data collection, data processing, writing, and completion. This pattern allows researchers to make independent decisions, but still provides a check mechanism at stages that carry greater risk. Excessive supervision can actually hinder the development of responsibility and the researcher's ability to control their own research process.¹³

Compliance documentation should also be mandatory as part of self-control mechanisms. Researchers must retain evidence demonstrating that each stage of the research has been carried out in accordance with legal, ethical, and academic standards. This documentation can include research approvals, data collection records, confidentiality protection, and notes from consultations with supervisors. Thus, documentation serves not only as a substitute for detailed oversight but also as evidence of scientific accountability. This framework needs to be widely disseminated to researchers and supervisors for understanding and consistent application. This dissemination is necessary to prevent the misconception that minimal supervision means unrestricted freedom. Instead, minimal supervision should be understood as a form of trust coupled with responsibility, compliance, and the researcher's ability to self-regulate.

CONCLUSION

Research independence and adherence to legal and ethical standards are not mutually exclusive, but rather mutually reinforcing: the more independent a researcher is, the greater their legal and ethical responsibilities. Minimal oversight actually demands a strong sense of legal awareness, ethical integrity, and professional commitment within the researcher. It was also found that legal and ethical violations in independent research are more often not due to malicious intent, but rather due to ignorance of applicable regulations and weak self-control systems. A Framework for Independent Research Based on Legal, Ethical, and Professional Standards, along with a detailed compliance checklist, was developed to enable researchers to conduct research independently while ensuring compliance.

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¹¹ Tahir, R., Astawa, IGP, Widjajanto, A., Panggabean, ML, Rohman, MM, Dewi, NPP, ... & Paminto, SR (2023). *Legal research methodology: A theoretical and practical approach*. PT. Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia.

¹² Moleong, LJ (2023). *Qualitative Research Methodology*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.

¹³ Nashrullah, M., Maharani, O., Rohman, A., Fahyuni, EF, & Untari, RS (2023). *Educational research methodology (Research procedures, research subjects, and development of data collection techniques)*. Sidoarjo: Umsida Press.

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