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**ETHICAL DILEMMAS EXPERIENCED BY EARLY
CAREER EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS IN
AUSTRALIA AND AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND**

**A thesis submitted
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
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Ethical dilemmas experienced by early career educational psychologists in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand

Abstract

The ethical dilemmas confronting early career psychologists (those with less than five years' experience) employed in school settings in Aotearoa New Zealand and in Australia, are explored in this research. Responses were sought through requests to professional bodies to publicise the survey to their members. Sixteen responses were received, seven from New Zealand, and nine from one state in Australia, giving a total of 14 eligible responses. The research was carried out with the goal of developing an understanding of the ethical situations confronting early career educational psychologists, and the processes used to resolve ethical challenges, with findings being used to inform training practices. Being aware of the types of challenges typically confronting educational psychologists allows educators to prepare them as well as possible for those challenges.

Given the small data set, at most the study can be seen as a preliminary consideration of the ethical issues confronting early career educational psychologists in the two countries however the research has provided some foundations on which future research can build. It was found that the use of inappropriate assessment tools, and issues related to security of school records were the most commonly reported ethical transgressions, and issues related to interventions, such as failure to follow up on interventions were also encountered frequently by respondents. Uncertainty about contacting child protective services in cases of suspected child abuse was the most frequently experienced and highly challenging ethical dilemma, followed by challenges related to disclosure to parents of minors engaging in risky behaviour.

Data suggest that increased collaboration between educational psychologists, the professional bodies representing them, school stakeholders, and other agencies representing students with educational challenges, is likely to be beneficial to all parties. Additionally, research to identify the strategies used by more experienced practitioners to cope with extensive work commitments and limited time is another area worthy of consideration. Exploration of the different types of supervision and their effectiveness is indicated to enhance the supervision process, and finally ensuring that educational psychologists are familiar with current best practice to ensure the security of electronic data is recommended.

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