

Ethical Considerations to Carry Out Social Research in Rural Communities of the Municipality of Amealco De Bonfil

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Resumen

El objetivo de la presente investigación es recabar información culturalmente oportuna para desarrollar protocolos de investigación en el contexto universitario para con población indígena. Teóricamente, se parte de la afirmación que en las disciplinas sociales el consentimiento informado es indispensable para hacer la actividad científica ética; y por ello, se deben de desarrollar mecanismos institucionales para salvaguardar este consentimiento informado. Como estrategia de acercamiento a la comunidad, se impartió un curso de capacitación para el emprendimiento, en donde se llevaron a cabo ocho encuestas. En trabajo de campo, se observa un entusiasmo de la población para que en las comunidades indígenas se desarrollen actividades científicas sociales; sobre todo si se les involucra en todas las fases de investigación a los integrantes de la comunidad. De lo anterior se concluye que un mecanismo institucional para que la academia actúe éticamente con la población indígena, es que los integrantes de la comunidad participen en todas las fases de la investigación.

Palabras clave: Bioética, Ciencias Sociales, Investigación, Rural.

ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to collect culturally timely information to develop research protocols in the university context for the indigenous population. Theoretically, it starts from the assertion that in social disciplines informed consent is essential to carry out ethical scientific activity; and therefore, institutional mechanisms must be developed to safeguard this informed consent. As a strategy of approaching the community, a training course for entrepreneurship was given, where eight surveys were carried out. In field work, there is an enthusiasm of the population for the development of social scientific activities in indigenous communities; especially if community members are involved in all phases of the investigation. From the above, it is concluded that an institutional mechanism for the academy to act ethically with the indigenous population is that the members of the community participate in all phases of the investigation.

Keywords: Bioethics, Social Sciences, Research, Rural.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is claimed that, up to now, although science and technology have greatly assisted humanity in solving technical, economic, social and environmental problems; This has not prevented the use of sophisticated research methods to outrage the same human being and other living beings. The intellectual refinement of the sciences has not prevented their achievements from being applied to barbaric acts and opposed to the civilizing process.(Romero and Romero, 2015: 12).

Unfortunately, the lack of ability to self-regulate has been demonstrated time and again in the scientific community; neither individually nor academic and governmental institutions have been able to guarantee this integrity for the investigation. When we analyze the occasions where these acts of barbarism are committed, maximized by the representatives of science, we generally find conflicts of interest, where the intention to provide a good for humanity is questioned by extreme ideologies, political pressure, interests economic or particular psychological needs, such as the overriding desire for recognition and prestige (Rodríguez et al, 2011: 4).

To solve the foregoing, the research ethics committee is the evaluating body so that ethical regulations are respected in scientific work; being able to approve, request modifications, reject and even suspend investigations, if the situation warrants it. The procedure is that research projects must be reviewed by an ethics committee before they begin, once approved, follow-up; and once finished, verify the proper procedure of its socialization or publication. At a minimum, there must be activities of ethics committees in hospitals, research centers and universities (Achío, 2003: 86).

Research ethics committees should take the following actions:

- Provide advice to other educational and research bodies.
- Evaluate the social and environmental impacts of advances in science and technology, formulating recommendations.
- Promote ethics in research in general, by creating spaces for public debate; the publication of its activities; and the training, education and awareness of bioethics issues to the general public (Hall, 2014: 112).

Some basic observations that an ethics committee will take into consideration regarding research will be the following:

- The performers must be proven qualified.
- The results must justify its development.
- The execution of the research must avoid or minimize the physical, mental and social suffering of the subjects or beings analyzed.
- No experiment should be undertaken when there is a possibility of an accident and serious harm (such as death).
- If there are risks, they should not exceed the possible benefits.
- Everything must be carefully prepared and countermeasures in place in case of the remote possibility of accidental damage.

- Informed consent must be requested from the research subjects, and if the situation warrants it, guarantee their anonymity.
- Research subjects may abandon their participation at any time they wish, without entailing any type of penalty (Romero and Romero, 2015: 15).

On the other hand, the scientist is expected to attend to certain ethical considerations before submitting his research project for review by a committee:

- Intellectual honesty in the proposal.
- Give credits to those involved.
- Transparency in possible conflicts of interest.
- No fabrication, falsification or plagiarism will occur in the data.
- The subjects and objects of study will be kept appropriate behavior (avoid harm).
- Precision in how contributions will be socialized.
- Willingness to collaborate with other research bodies.
- Acceptance of the opinion of the ethics committee (Hall, 2014: 115).

A controversial aspect about what is still far from reaching agreements is in relation to the informed consent of the research subjects. It is known that the behavior of the subjects is distorted when they are observed; for what in social sciences there is usually a lot of resorting to research without people knowing that it is part of a study, they are given intentionally insufficient information, or in short they are deceived, all of this waiting for them to act "naturally". In turn, it is difficult to demarcate a clear separation between what is an invasion of privacy and the loss of confidentiality of what is not (as in the case of the study on social networks) (Achío, 2003: 93).

Until now, for Latin America the instance that has established certain control over scientific quality and integrity has been the scientific journals, which with peer review, do some scrutiny on the results of research, trying to maintain the credibility of their publications and the scientific community in general. However, these magazines are limited in their capacity for action; since, on the one hand, from the publishable results it is not possible to know whether there were no ethical violations during the entire research process; and on the other hand, if this type of transgression is identified, the only thing the magazine can do is reject the article.

In open discussion between research ethics committees and social scientists, it is identified that there are indeed substantive differences between the procedures of the life sciences with which they seek to explain human behavior. From the outset, it is understood that the damage that must be avoided in populations is rarely related to physical integrity, and on the contrary, what is usually found at risk is the mental integrity of the subjects, their social prestige and their material assets . In the same way, in general the benefits of research are not reflected in a single individual in the immediate in a quantifiable way; Instead, the positive results of research are obtained by entire communities in rather long periods of time, and the achievements are subjective and qualitative (Achío, 2003: 92).

DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMUNITY

Demographically, the Queretaro municipality of Amealco de Bonfil is characterized by having a total population of 62,197 inhabitants, of which 15,028 of them self-recognize as indigenous. With regard to social development, it has a high degree of marginalization, the second with the highest municipal marginalization in the state, with 18, 508 people living in extreme poverty (SEDESOL, 2020: 1).

Regarding the ecosystem, in pre-Hispanic times the municipality was densely populated with coniferous vegetation, although at present the forested areas are confined to a few specific areas. Most of the land is for agricultural activity, where the main crops are corn, beans, wheat and cereals for forage. Regarding animal husbandry, there are cattle, sheep and pigs, although it is kept for family consumption and its sale on a small scale (INAFED, 2020: 1).

Within the municipality of Amealco de Bonfil, the community of Santiago Mexquititlán is a political delegation located 21 kilometers from the municipal seat, deep in a mountainous area, bordering the State of Mexico and the state of Michoacán. It is a scattered rural settlement with a population of approximately 15,000. The population is made up of 80% indigenous from the Otomí group and 20% of mestizos. As for social development, the town is considered to be very highly marginalized (SEDESOL, 2020: 1).

As productive activities, there is a marked division according to sex: the men who live there work in the fields planting corn, while other men carry out temporary migration in construction jobs in the city of Querétaro or in the states of Michoacán, Guanajuato or Mexico state; women, in turn, are engaged in housework while creating handicrafts. Children usually go to school in the morning and help with housework in the afternoons (Tavarez, 2019: 1).

When it comes to culture, the Santiago Mexquititlán community proudly preserves its dialect and traditions. The Spanish language and the Otomi dialect are spoken equally on a daily basis, and many of the women wear traditional dress. Just a generation ago, it was preferred not to teach children the Otomí to avoid being discriminated against; but at present in basic education they are required to speak and write it in class (Tavarez, 2019: 1).

IMPACT, PROJECTION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

IMPORTANCE FOR THE POPULATION

According to the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics [4], Mexico has official recognition of 68 indigenous groups, with a population of 7, 382, 785 inhabitants with this condition, representing 6.5% of the total population of the country. In the state of Querétaro, approximately 1% of the population speaks an indigenous language, that is, 29,585 inhabitants; of them, the most common ethnic groups are the ñañoheos who represent more than 95% of the indigenous population of the entity, followed by the Nahuatl, the Mazahuas and the Zapotec. Amealco de Bonfil has 40% of its population self-recognized as indigenous, representing a total of 20,044 inhabitants.

Therefore, for the country, for the State of Querétaro, but especially for the municipality of Amealco de Bonfil, respecting the rights of indigenous people is to meet the most basic needs of respecting their culture for one of the most diverse groups. numerous.

SCIENTIFIC VALIDITY

The establishment of Ethical Directives to carry out research with the indigenous population of the state of Amealco reinforces the activities of the university research ethics committees; since there will not only be more observance on the development of field work, but also on the conclusions, the dissemination of information, and the design of the protocol itself, since the investigation must be justified in its objectives in terms of a damage relationship - Benefit for the indigenous inhabitants of the entity.

SOCIAL VALUE

Taking a look at the argument previously exposed in this text, we can infer that it is an urgent need to establish research protocols for the indigenous population; given that this would imply by the academy and the student community the recognition of the indigenous population as subjects with rights; previously recognized by an infinity of national and international bodies.

METHODOLOGY

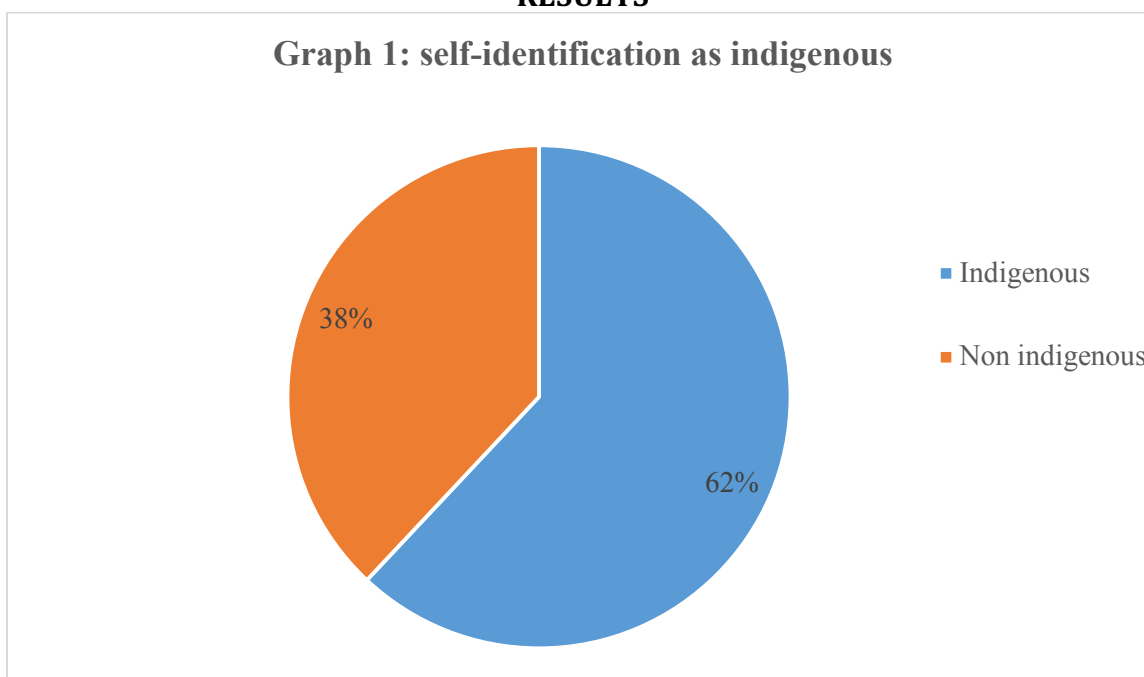
Given the need to address a significant number of research subjects in a short period of time, the information collection instrument selected was the survey. This consisted of 16 questions, 5 of which were open, and the remaining 11 dichotomous questions.

As a strategy to approach the respondents, a training course for rural entrepreneurship was given, where the congregation was asked for their support by giving us their opinion.

To access the population, the help of the municipal presidency of Amealco de Bonfil was obtained, who were in charge of making the call in the community of Santiago Mexquititlán. It should be noted that given the contingency due to the COVID-2019 pandemic, attendance at the event was low, so only 8 people could be surveyed.

RESULTS

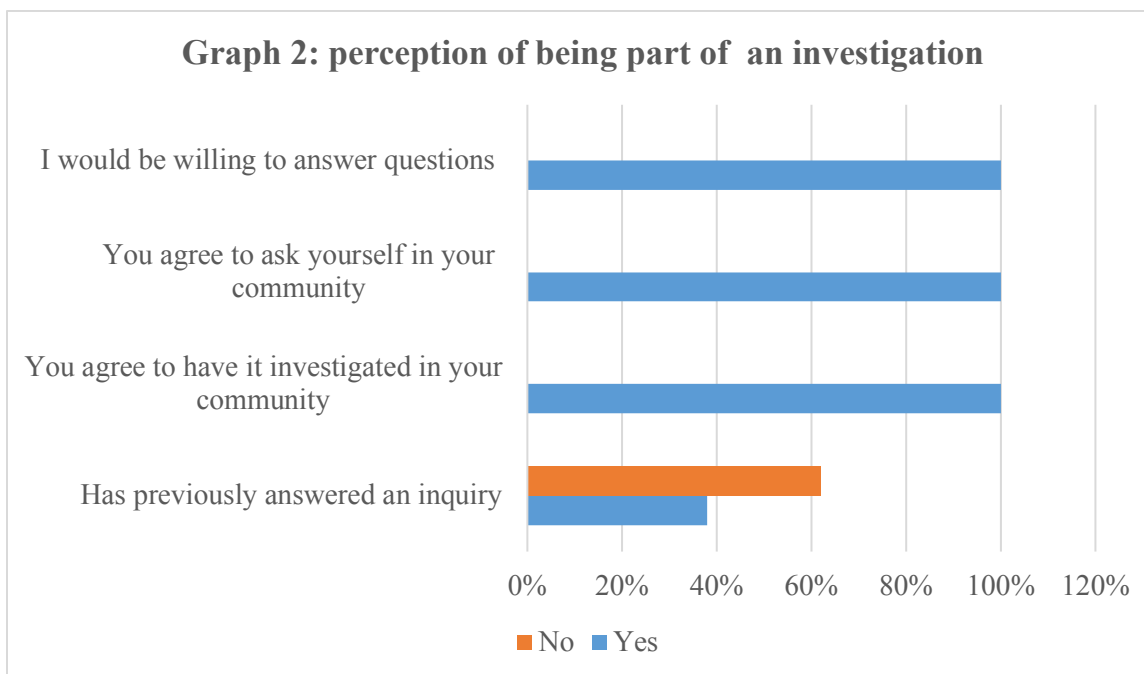
Graph 1: self-identification as indigenous



Source: Own creation

First, in graph number 1, 62.5% of those attending the training event held in the community of Santiago Mexquititlán, Amealco, Querétaro self-identified as indigenous.

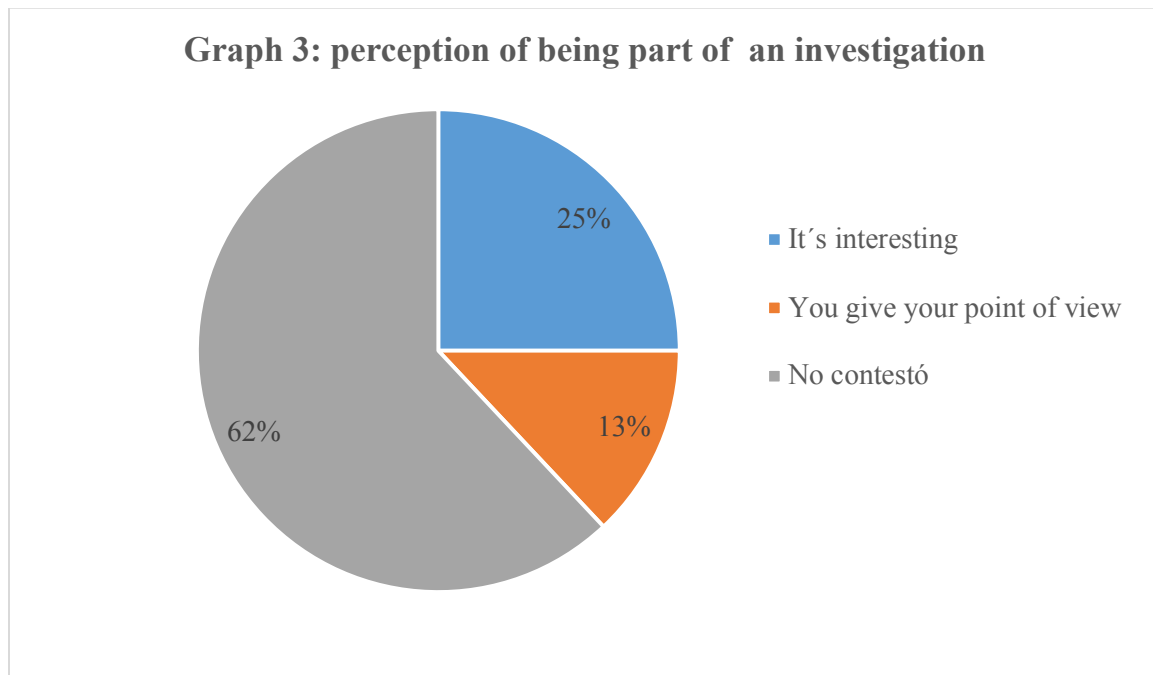
Graph 2: perception of being part of an investigation



Source: Own creation

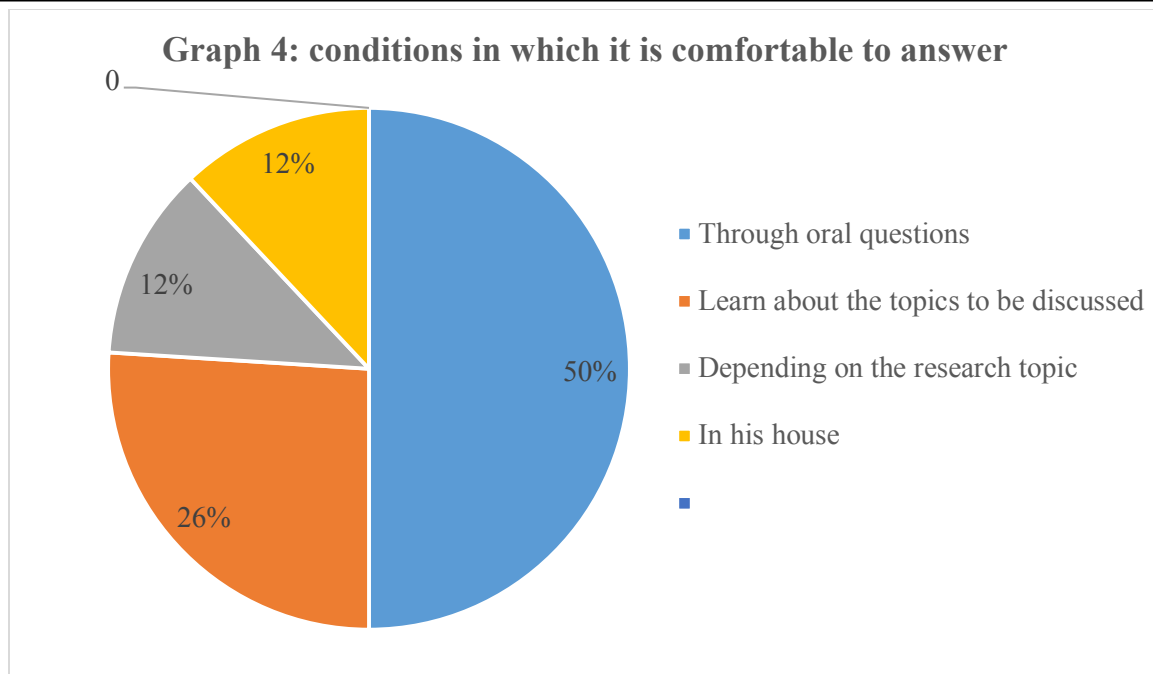
In graph number 2, they inquired about their previous experience of being part of an investigation, as well as the possible acceptance or refusal to carry out investigations in their community. 37.5%

of those surveyed had previously collaborated in other research, which tells us that it is not something unknown for the members of this community to participate in research. It is striking that there is a total positive perception towards research, in its modality of any kind, requesting someone from the population as an informant, or even personally, there is a full willingness to participate.



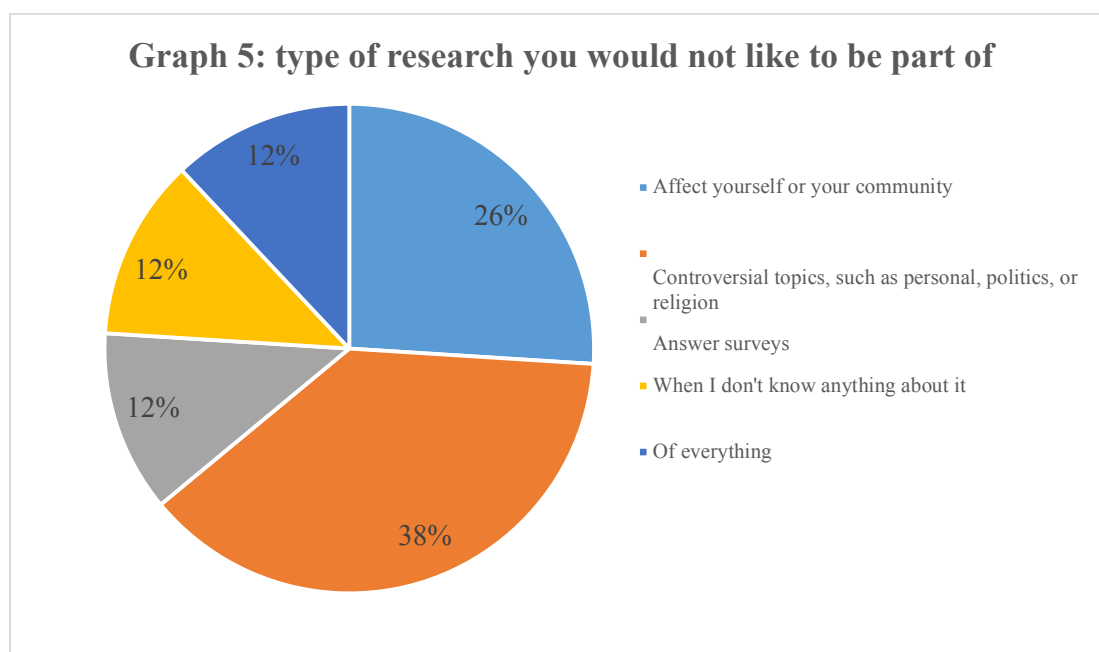
Source: Own creation

In graph 3, it can be seen that for the population of Santiago Mexquititlan (Amealco, Querétaro, Mexico), being part of an investigation in 5 out of 3 cases is something about which they have no prior experience; But in the case of having this experience, there are positive evaluations, which in 2 of 3 cases are classified as interesting, and in 1 of 3 cases they have been pleased to express their points of view.



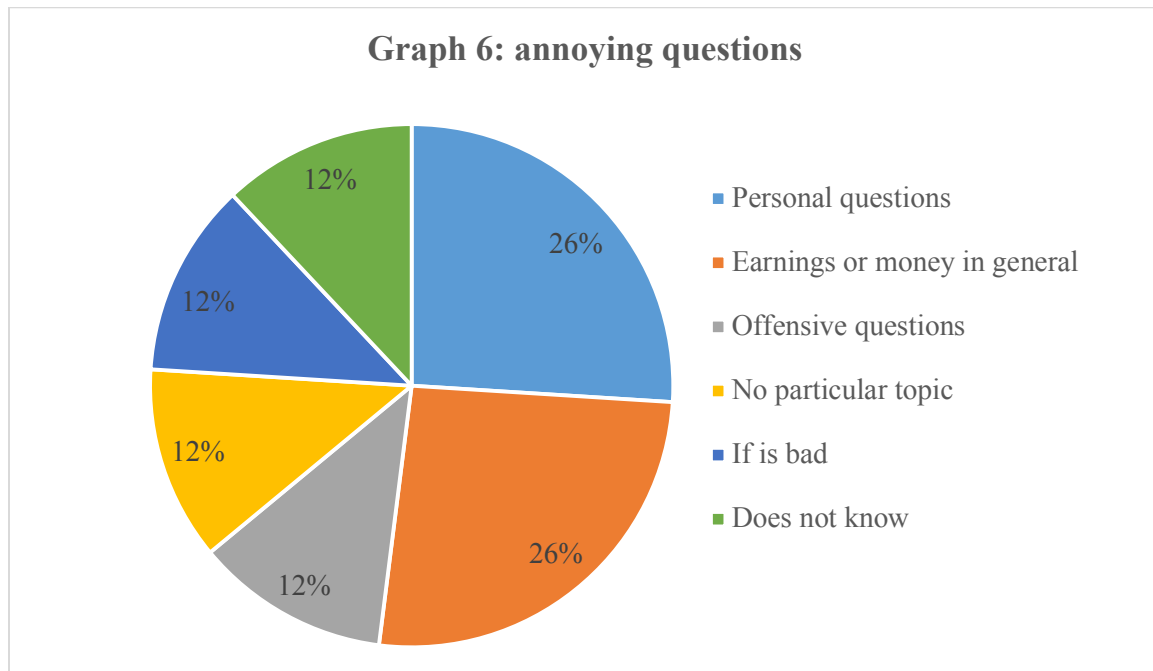
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Regarding the conditions in which it is pleasant for them to be research subjects, in graph 4 it is observed that in half of the interviewees they like that the interviews are oral; second of importance, 1 out of 4 is satisfied with being asked for their opinion on topics in which they feel safe to know; And as diverse opinions we have that one person finds it more pleasant to be approached at home, while another's satisfaction when answering surveys will be in the same content of the investigation.



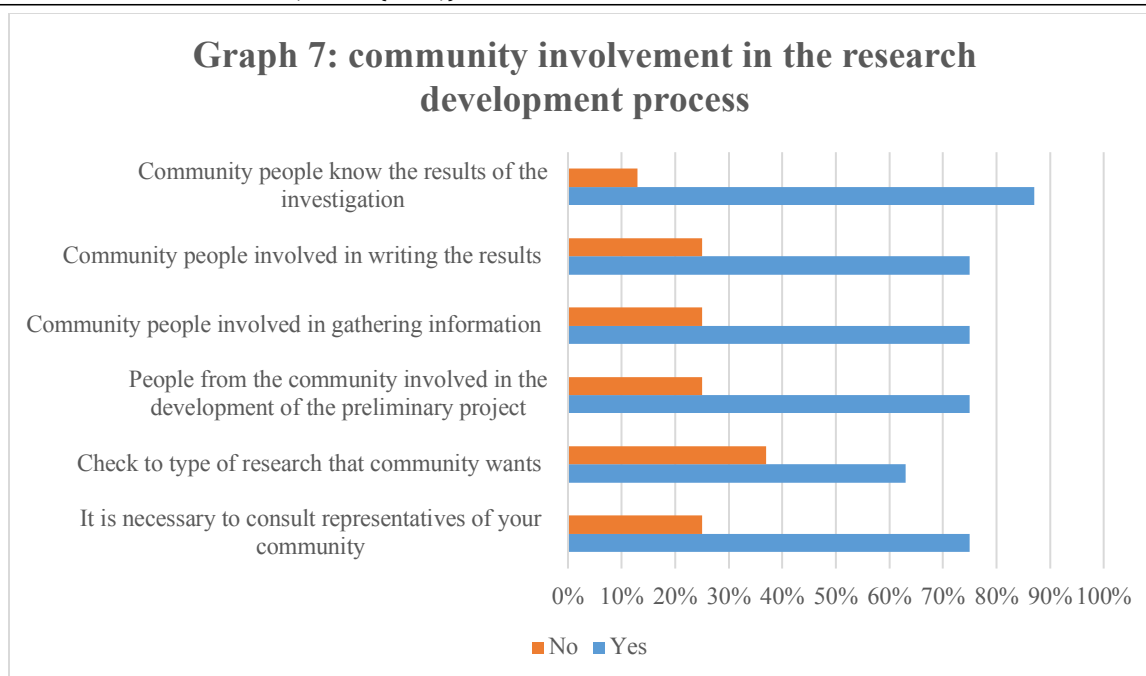
Source: Own creation

In contrast to the above, graph 5 explored the type of research that they would not like to be part of. On this occasion, it is the subject that is addressed that will be put to trial in most cases; being that 3 of 8 will refuse to answer controversial questions (such as religion or politics) or from the private sphere; in turn, it appears in 1 interviewee as unpleasant to get involved in research in which nothing is known on the subject. It should be noted that 1 in 4 places emphasis on the repercussions of the investigations, being that what bothers them is that the collection of the information negatively affects their person or their community. Other answers where it is judged as uncomfortable to work in research, is when you have to answer surveys by 1 informant,



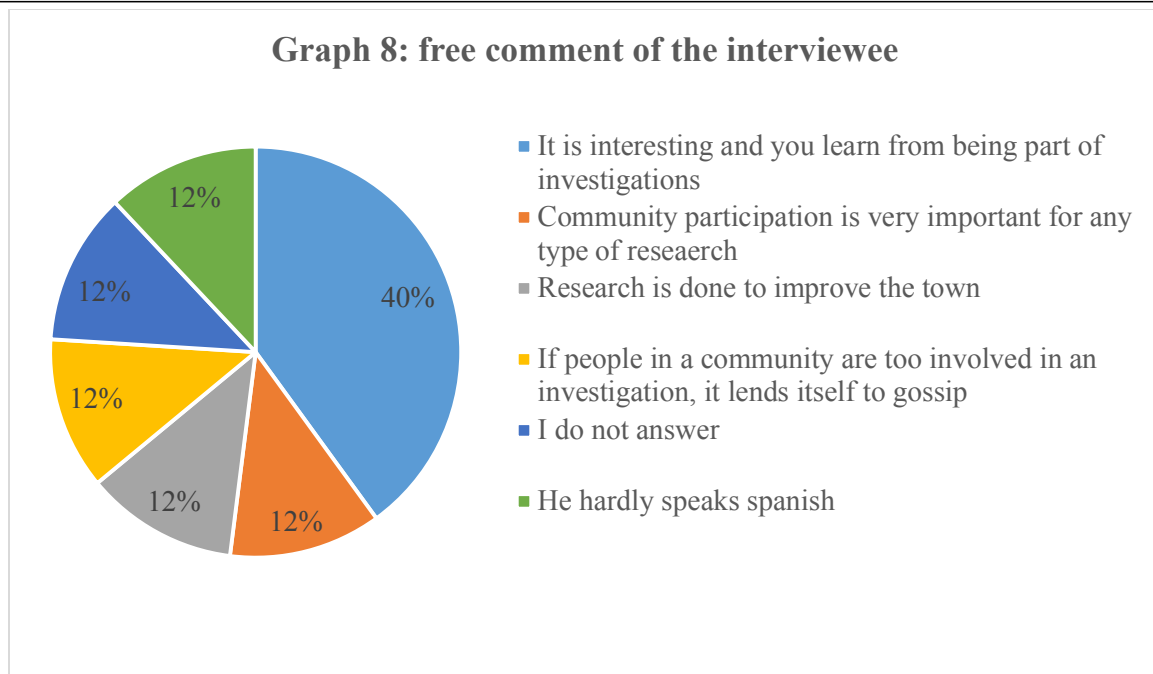
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Regarding graph 6, the questions that are not wanted to hear are half of the time those concerning private (personal life) or confidential (money) issues. From there, we find as unpleasant in one case those questions that are interpreted by the interviewee as offensive, and in another case those that are classified as malicious; in turn, another interviewee does not think that there are any kind of questions to avoid, while another person does not know what to answer about it.



Source: Own creation

Next, graph 7 expresses the opinion of the population interviewed regarding their intention to get involved in the development of an investigation. It is stated that the need to request authorization from community representatives, and to involve people from the community in the conception of the research, in the gathering of information and in the writing of the results, 3 out of 4 interviewees agree on that this is important. What was given more importance is that the results of the research are known to the community in 7 out of 8 interviewees; and the aspect of the research that was considered less relevant was the need to ask community members what kind of research they want,



Source: Own creation

Finally, in graph 8 the free opinion that the interviewee would like to express in this research is revealed. In this regard, it is striking that 7 out of 8 interviewees did want to provide their ideas. In turn, where there were coincidences in 3 of the 7 declared cases, it is in considering it pleasant to be part of the investigations because this is an interesting experience and one from which they can learn.

DISCUSSION

According to the information collected in field work, it is emphasized in the first place that there is a fairly positive perception regarding the development of an investigation, and this taking into consideration that there is experience among the inhabitants of the community in collaborating with these kinds of scientific activities. The general appreciation is that scientific research is interesting and an opportunity to learn; It is striking that people in the community like to answer questions about subjects they are proficient in, so it can be interpreted that above all they like to delve into what they already know.

Another aspect that stands out is that they do not want to be part of research or answer questions where the topics to be discussed are controversial or personal (religion, politics, income or private life), which tells us that there are taboo subjects in rural communities that, Although they are known implicitly, it is not considered pertinent to outsource them, since they can be counterproductive, either because their knowledge can affect individuals or the community in general, or because it can lend itself to gossip.

Finally, the community makes clear its desire to get involved in the entire research process: its social relevance, the development of the preliminary project, the gathering of information, the development of conclusions and the dissemination of what has been published to the community.

This interest in participation was emphasized even when they were asked to comment freely on the subject of the data collection instrument.

CONCLUSIONS

Recapitulating the information consulted in the theoretical framework, in the university context it becomes essential to develop ethical research protocols in social disciplines, where informed consent becomes crucial. The most committed way of ensuring that the population has timely and truthful information about the contents of an investigation is precisely by involving the study subjects in scientific reflection, with society being the one that must demand which type of science should be developed. The academy.

With regard to the indigenous population, which is a minority that in Mexico historically has been repeatedly violated in its most essential rights, and that such discrimination has resulted in a high and very high degree of social marginalization, the Informed consent through involvement in all phases of research is essential; especially because there are cultural differences between the majority mestizo population with respect to ethnic minorities, having to give a particular observance that the issues addressed are not offensive or harmful.

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