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A Needs Assessment for Developing a Master of Science in Research Ethics Program in Northern Nigeria



Introduction: The Vanderbilt Institute for Global Health facilitates expanding and coordinating global health research, technical assistance, and training initiatives at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. One initiative is between the Vanderbilt University Medical Center and Bayero University in Kano Nigeria which has partnered together to create a Master of Science in Research Ethics program. My primary internship project, focused on the intersection between public health and education, was to develop a needs assessment to determine the best practices to inform the creation of the program.

Methods: The needs assessment comprised of semi-structured interviews with nine Nigerian bioethics experts. Two authors read and coded each participant's interview to identify themes that represented participant's responses. Four primary themes with ten subthemes emerged. From there we developed a manuscript that summarized the findings and the impact this program could have on broader regional ethical research. Lastly, we submitted the manuscript to be published.

Results: Key findings from the needs assessment included that the program could fill a gap and strengthen capacity in research ethics, the curriculum must be developed with an interdisciplinary lens, and locally contextualized. We identified structural factors that can guide leveraging strengths of Bayero University while mitigating challenges and establishing the program.

Conclusions: The overarching goal of the research ethics program will be to enhance Nigeria's growing prominence in global biomedical research. The published manuscript has the potential to inform others of the lessons we learned regarding program creation. Public health and education should always be a team effort. University buy-in, a dedicated team, and clear planning are critical to seeing a program succeed. During manuscript writing, I learned the valuable process of perseverance and editing.