PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM FOR ONLINE SURVEYS/QUESTIONNAIRES (ADULTS)

Form #: **ICF 01a**

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| Notes for researchers (please delete this information box before submitting your informed consent form to the REC):   * *The structure/format of this information leaflet and consent form template is intended as a guideline only, for information that should be included in the information leaflet for potential participants in your online survey/questionnaire. Researchers may format, amend and/or shorten the form, provided that the required information is included in the letter to participants. Notes for researchers are included in italics below each heading and should be deleted once the relevant information has been inserted.* * *If the online survey will be advertised by means of electronic communication (e.g. email), please submit the text to be included in the email that will be distributed to potential participants, together with this ethics application. It is advisable that the email contains an abbreviated version of the information included in this participant information leaflet and consent form.* * *If the online survey will be advertised by means of electronic communication (e.g. email), it is the researcher’s responsibility to ensure that individual participants do not have the option of replying to all, thereby revealing their identities and/or responses to the email group. It is strongly suggested that email addresses are included only in BC (blind copy) on email correspondence.* * *Researchers must use Stellenbosch University’s recommended platforms for online surveys/questionnaires. Third-party applications like Google forms or SurveyMonkey are not recommended. The researcher should approach the Research ICT service desk at SU for guidance on using REDCap (*[*https://redcap.sun.ac.za/*](https://redcap.sun.ac.za/)*) or MSForms to administer online surveys. Please log a request for assistance via the Research ICT helpdesk at:* [*https://servicedesk.sun.ac.za/jira/plugins/servlet/theme/portal/22*](https://servicedesk.sun.ac.za/jira/plugins/servlet/theme/portal/22)*.* * *Please see Section 6 of the Social, Behavioural and Education Research Ethics Committee’s Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for more detailed information about requirements for Informed Consent (IC). You will find the SOPs here:* [*http://www.sun.ac.za/english/research-innovation/Research-Development/Pages/REC-Documents.aspx*](http://www.sun.ac.za/english/research-innovation/Research-Development/Pages/REC-Documents.aspx) * *If your study involves minors, please following this link to access* [***the template for online surveys for minors***](https://www.sun.ac.za/english/research-innovation/Research-Development/Pages/REC-Documents.aspx)***.*** *This form is then only covering assent – the consent given by individuals under the age of 18 years. You will need to obtain written signed informed consent from a parent or legal guardian if your study participants are under the age of 18 years.* |

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:** [*insert]*

**PROJECT ID:** [*insert study ID as it appears on the REC Application form]*

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/RESEARCHER:** [*insert]*

1. **INTRODUCTION**

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study which involves the completion of an online questionnaire. Please take some time to read the information below, which will explain the details of this research study

1. **WHO IS CONDUCTING THIS STUDY?**

This research study is conducted by [*insert your name and the names of other researchers involved in the study*].

The researcher(s) (is/are) from the [*insert your SU department*] at Stellenbosch University.

* *[Kindly provide details: state who ‘we’ relates to, that is, whether you are a student registered at Stellenbosch University for a specific degree or part of a research team (names of the team members) and so forth.]*

1. **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to stop completing the questionnaire at any time without consequence.

***[Sample text for anonymous surveys, please revise if not applicable:]*** *Please be assured that all questionnaires are anonymous—no identifying information will be collected or linked to your responses. Once you submit your completed questionnaire online, your responses cannot be withdrawn, as they will be completely unidentifiable and cannot be traced back to you.*

1. **WHY DO WE INVITE YOU TO PARTICIPATE?**

You are being asked to participate because…

* *Explain this question clearly using the inclusion criteria outlined in your proposal.*
* *Explain how/where the participant’s contact details were obtained (email, social media, website).*

1. **WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH STUDY ABOUT?**

## This study aims to… / What is the study about?

* *Explain in participant-friendly language what your study aims to do and why you are doing it. Imagine having a conversation with one of your participants. Write in plain English and use the active form; avoid passives as far as possible. This applies to all text that you add to this form.*
* *Explain who the study is being conducted by.*
* *Explain what sorts of questions participants will be asked in the survey/questionnaire.*

1. **WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF ME?**

## If you agree to participate, you will be requested to…

* *Explain this question clearly – including the types of questions that participants will be asked and the approximate length of time it is expected to take them to complete.*

***SAMPLE TEXT***

*If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire. The questionnaire will take approximately [insert estimated time, e.g., 10–15 minutes] to complete. It will include questions about your [insert general topics, e.g., experiences, opinions, or behaviours related to the study topic].*

*The following types of personal information will be collected:*

* *Age*
* *Gender*
* *Educational background*
* *Employment status*

*[Add any other general personal data relevant to your study]*

*Depending on the focus of the study, the questionnaire may also include questions that fall under 'Special Personal Information' as defined by the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), such as:*

* *Religious or philosophical beliefs*
* *Race or ethnic origin*
* *Trade union membership*
* *Political opinions or persuasion*
* *Health-related information*
* *Sex life or sexual orientation*
* *Biometric data (e.g., fingerprints, facial recognition)*
* *Information regarding alleged or actual criminal behaviour*

*Please note that all responses will be collected anonymously and used solely for research purposes. You are free to skip any questions you are uncomfortable answering*

1. **WILL I BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH?**

## The potential benefits of this research are…

* Explain all benefits objectively. If there are no personal benefits, then indicate that there are no direct benefits for participating and explain who would be likely to benefit from the findings of the research in the future, e.g. future patients.
* If there are rewards/incentives offered for completing the survey, explain this here. Also, explain the implications of supplying their name / email and how this will be delinked from their survey responses.

1. **ARE THERE ANY RISKS IN MY TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?**

## The potential risks involved in participating in this research are…

## Identify any risks objectively – particularly with respect to protecting participant confidentiality.

* Explain what will be done with their data and how this will be managed to protect participants’ confidentiality (e.g. by anonymising or de-identifying the data), as well as any limits on confidentiality.

SAMPLE TEXT

“All survey data will be kept in a password-protected electronic format on secure servers at ……………………… at Stellenbosch University, for a minimum of ……… years, and only the research team will have access to this information. (Also state where electronic version of the information will be stored and in what format, length of storage and access. It is recommended that you use SU One Drive or platforms recommended by Stellenbosch University's IT department)

* Your anonymous responses may be used for future research or shared with other researchers without additional informed consent from you, but your identity will never be disclosed."  
  *Explain that participants should be aware that the online survey is not being run from a "secure" https server of the kind typically used to handle credit card transactions, so there is a small possibility that responses could be viewed by unauthorized third parties (e.g., computer hackers).*
* *Caution participants against revealing their identities by replying all on group email correspondence.*

**POPIA Compliance – Your Rights***:*  
*In accordance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), you have the right to:*

* *Be informed about the collection and use of your personal information.*
* *Access the personal information you have provided.*
* *Request corrections to any inaccurate or incomplete information.*

*The data from your participation may be reviewed by individuals responsible for ensuring ethical research conduct, such as members of the Research Ethics Committee. These individuals are also bound by confidentiality agreements. Your data will not be shared with anyone outside the research team unless you provide explicit permission.*

*Your anonymous responses may be used for future research or shared with other researchers without additional consent, but your identity will never be disclosed.*

1. **HOW DO I CONTACT THE RESEARCHERS?**

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact the researcher, *[Researcher’s name and surname]* at *[enter your SU contact information],* and/or the study supervisor *[Supervisor’s name and surname]* at *[Supervisor’s SU contact information].*

* [*Please use your SU email address and contact information for contact purposes. We advise our researchers not to use their personal contact details for their own protection and to ensure adequate boundaries between personal and professional activities*]

1. ETHICS APPROVAL

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research at Stellenbosch University (Project ID#…). The study will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of South Africa’s Department of Health- South African Ethics in Health Research Guidelines: Principles, Processes and Studies (NDoH 2024).

1. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS:

***You have the right to decline answering any questions, and you may exit the survey at any time without providing a reason***. Participation is entirely voluntary.

In accordance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), you have the right to be informed about the collection and use of your personal information. This includes the right to access the information you have provided and to request corrections if any of it is inaccurate or incomplete.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints regarding your rights as a research participant, or if you wish to exercise your rights under POPIA, please contact the Research Ethics Committee at [applyethics@sun.ac.za; 021 808 9183.

**SECTIONS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR CONSENT FORM WHERE APPLICABLE**

*Please delete this section if it does not apply to your study.*

**PERMISSION TO HAVE ALL ANONYMOUS DATA SHARED WITH JOURNALS:**

*Please carefully read the statements below (or have them read to you) and think about your choice. No matter what you decide, it will not affect whether you can be in the research study.*

When this study is finished, we would like to publish results of the study in journals. Most journals require us to share your anonymous data with them before they publish the results. Therefore, we would like to obtain your permission to have your anonymous data shared with journals. In accordance with the POPI Act, the researchers will take care to ensure that your is not identifiable (personal information is not linked to the data shared).

**PERMISSION FOR SHARING INFORMATION WITH OTHER INVESTIGATORS:**

*Please carefully read the statements below (or have them read to you) and think about your choice. No matter what you decide, it will not affect in anyway.*

In order to do the *research* as we have discussed, we must collect and store information (data) from you. Other investigators from all over the world can ask to use the data in future research [*please indicate if the data will be shared from South Africa, where the data will be stored and who will have access to it]*. To protect your privacy, we will replace your name with a unique study number. We will only use this code for your data and information about you. We will do our best to keep the code private. It is however always possible that someone could find out about your name, but this is very unlikely to happen given the precautions taken to protect this very important information. Therefore, we would like to ask for your permission to share your information (data) with other investigators.

***For each statement, please choose YES or NO by CLICKING in the relevant box)***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Statement** | **YES** | **NO** |
| 1. I agree to have my anonymous data shared with journals during publication of results of this study. |  |  |
| 1. My information may be shared with other investigators **in South Africa or outside** **South Africa** *(in other countries) (please adapt accordingly)* who are able to conduct further analysis in *… [describe the field of your study].* |  |  |
| 1. I agree that my information (data) may be stored for future research in a field related to … *[describe the field of your study]* |  |  |

***YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM TO KEEP FOR YOUR RECORDS***

* *There should be an option for participants to download the information leaflet and consent form. If it is not possible to provide a downloadable pdf document, please provide instructions for how to take a screenshot so that participants have the option of keeping a copy of the information provided on the survey front page.*

By clicking START SURVEY *(modify if the click to continue button is called something else, like NEXT)* you are confirming that you are:

1. 18 years and above;
2. Have read and understood the above explanation about the study; and
3. You agree to participate.
4. You also understand that your participation in this study is strictly voluntary.