

Participant remuneration

a quick guide to payment of research participants

Participants should be compensated according to the TIE principle: Time Inconvenience Expenses

This infographic was created to provide guidance on participant remuneration for undergraduate and honours student researchers. Participant remuneration is linked to the principle of respect for participants. Researchers should ensure that research participants are adequately compensated for their time and inconvenience and reimbursed for their research-related expenses, with an amount and method of payment that does not present an undue influence.

1 TIME

Research participants should be adequately compensated for their time

Researchers should estimate the amount of time participants will spend engaged in research activities for each research visit.

Compensation should be at unskilled labour rates

Current (2022) minimum wages in South Africa for unskilled labour starts from approximately R25 per hour. Researchers should not just consider direct costs but should be fair in valuing participants' time, inconvenience, and effort.

Compensation is for what the actual 'work' of research participation is worth

Research participation does not necessarily require special skills or training, so remuneration is not for what the participant's actual time is worth, but it does entail expending some effort.

Participants should be compensated whether or not they are employed

Even if participants are not formally employed, it could be considered that participation may compete with efforts to find other similar economic opportunities and that participants forgo such opportunities while engaged in the research study.

2 INCONVENIENCE

Participants should be compensated for inconvenience

In some studies, participants will be required to undergo certain procedures that may cause inconvenience or discomfort. Consideration should be given to compensating participants for this inconvenience, over and above time payments.

Researchers to determine inconvenience attached to research procedures

Researchers are asked to judge whether participants will undergo certain inconvenient or uncomfortable procedures during research visits.

The compensation amount should reasonably reflect the extent of inconvenience

For example, the inconvenience attached to answering a simple and unobtrusive questionnaire may be lower than a blood draw or intensive research procedures.

3 EXPENSES

Research participants should be reimbursed for their expenses

Direct costs incurred by participants while participating in the research (e.g., data costs, travel to site) must be reimbursed. The costs of being away from their place of work should not be considered

Virtual or telephonic data collection

Where participants will incur data or airtime costs - as in the case of online interviews - provision should be made for covering these expenses.

Researchers should consult with community representatives

The costs of participation could be established in consultation with community representatives who may be familiar with expenses for, for example, travel, parking, meals or childcare.

Calculating travel reimbursements

Based on 2022 rates prescribed by AA South Africa and Stellenbosch University, it is recommended that R4 per km travelled is paid. The travel cost is broken down into 3 categories (0-25, 26-50, >50 km). E.g. a participant falling in the first category will receive R200 travel compensation (R4 x 25 km x 2 [return trip]).

4 Evaluating compensation

Questions for researchers to ask themselves

Is the form of remuneration appropriate for the participant group?

Is the compensation reflective of Time, Inconvenience and Expenses (TIE) as outlined above?

Can the compensation be justified as fair in a defensible manner based on the TIE criteria?

Is the TIE compensation likely to represent an appropriate incentive for participants in the particular study?

* Remember...

Child/adolescent participants

Compensation to child/adolescent participants must be age appropriate.

Parents / caregivers

Compensation should also be offered to the child's parent / caregiver for time and expenses incurred accompanying the child on research visits.

Prorated compensation

Should the participant withdraw or be expected to complete a number of activities, TIE compensation for participants must be prorated and not wholly contingent on completion of the study by the participant.

Undue influence

Neither the amount nor method for compensation must present the potential for undue influence.

Sources

- SAHPRA (2022). Guideline for participant time, inconvenience and expense (TIE) compensation model. South African Health Products Regulatory Authority, South Africa.
- HREC (2019). Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures v5. HREC, Stellenbosch University.
- NHREC (2012). Payment of trial participants in South Africa: ethical considerations for Research Ethics Committees. National Health Research Ethics Council, South Africa.