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Initial post

by [Mohammed Younes](#) - Saturday, 1 February 2025, 7:28 PM

I selected the "Abusive Workplace Behavior" (ACM, N.D.) because of its relevance among groups and teams. The ACM case study on abusive workplace behavior highlights significant ethical breaches by a technical team leader, Max, whose actions contravene multiple principles of the ACM Code of Ethics. Max's verbal abuse towards team members, particularly Diane, not only caused harm but also failed to maintain a safe and respectful working environment, violating Principle 1.1, which emphasizes avoiding harm and contributing to society and human well-being. Additionally, his failure to give proper credit to team members by removing their names from journal submissions and preventing them from appearing on stage breaches Principle 1.5, which mandates honoring property rights, including intellectual property. Furthermore, Max's unprofessional communication style contravenes Principle 2.2, which calls for high standards of professional competence and conduct.

The British Computer Society (BCS) Code of Conduct similarly outlines expectations for IT professionals to uphold public interest, integrity, and competence (BCS,2022). Max's behavior violates several key principles of the BCS Code:

Public Interest: The BCS Code states that members shall "have due regard for public health, privacy, security and wellbeing of others and the environment." (BCS, 2022: p. 2). Max's abusive actions compromise the well-being of his colleagues, thereby breaching this principle.

Professional Competence and Integrity: Members are expected to carry out professional responsibilities with due care and diligence in accordance with the relevant authority's requirements, and the interests of others (BCS,2022). Max's failure to credit his team members and his abusive behavior demonstrate a lack of integrity and diligence.

Duty to the Profession: The code requires members to "uphold the reputation and good standing of BCS, the Chartered Institute for IT." (BCS, 2022: p. 3). Max's conduct damages the profession's reputation and undermines professional standards.

From a legal perspective, workplace abuse can lead to claims of harassment or a hostile work environment, depending on the jurisdiction. In many countries, laws protect employees from such behavior, and organizations can face legal consequences if they fail to address these issues. Socially, such behavior fosters a toxic work culture, leading to decreased morale, productivity, and increased turnover. Professionally, it undermines trust and collaboration within teams, which are essential for successful project outcomes.

Academic literature supports the detrimental effects of abusive supervision. For instance, Tepper (2000) found that employees who perceive their supervisors as abusive are more likely to experience job dissatisfaction, stress, and turnover intentions. Furthermore, research by Avey, Palanski, and Walumbwa (2011) indicates that ethical leadership is positively correlated with employee job performance and organizational citizenship behaviors, highlighting the importance of adhering to ethical codes.

In conclusion, Max's actions starkly violate both the ACM and BCS ethical codes, with significant legal, social, and professional repercussions. This case underscores the critical importance of ethical conduct in maintaining a healthy work environment and upholding the integrity of the computing profession.

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- Tepper, B.J., (2000). Consequences of abusive supervision. Academy of management journal, 43(2), pp.178-190.

Peer response

by <u>Andrius Busilas</u> - Monday, 3 February 2025, 3:46 PM

Hi Mohammed,

Thank you for your interesting reading. Your post outlined the ethical assessment of Max's workplace misconduct, which aligns closely with ethical standards in corporate governance, particularly regarding leadership responsibility, honesty, and ethical organizational culture. This comparison is especially relevant when considering the ACM and BCS Codes of Ethics (BCS, 2022; ACM, N.D.).

Ethical leadership is the cornerstone of corporate governance. The UK Corporate Governance Code (FRC, 2018) underscores the importance of boards in promoting integrity, transparency, and accountability. Leaders are expected to cultivate environments that encourage respect, fairness, and ethical conduct, areas where Max has fallen short. His abusive actions, including verbal mistreatment and unfair attribution of work, violated the principles essential for a healthy, productive work environment.

When viewed through the lens of the ACM Code of Ethics, Max's behaviour infringes upon Principle 1.1 (avoiding harm), Principle 1.5 (honouring property rights), and Principle 2.2 (maintaining professional competence and conduct) (ACM, N.D.). In the corporate sphere, similar actions would be seen as governance failures, potentially resulting in legal repercussions for harassment, discrimination, or breach of fiduciary duties, depending on jurisdiction.

From a social perspective, Max's toxic leadership undermines team morale, trust, and cooperation, mirroring how unethical corporate leaders erode company culture and stakeholder trust. Professionally, his conduct tarnishes the organization's image, discourages top talent, and diminishes productivity – issues that corporate governance codes aim to prevent by emphasizing ethical leadership and accountability.

Ethical leadership is crucial in corporate and computing environments to maintain organizational integrity and employee well-being. Leaders must be held responsible not only for business outcomes but also for their methods, fostering environments grounded in respect, fairness, and ethical behaviour.

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Peer Response

by <u>Amrol Miah</u> - Wednesday, 5 February 2025, 12:00 AM

Dear Mohammed,

Thank you for the post; it was composed with clarity and precision. The description of Max's behaviour is particularly intriguing and warrants further exploration.

The content of your post highlights several ethical violations committed by Max, particularly regarding section
Acm.org (2024) stipulates that the code of ethics and professional conduct, along with various ethical princi
code of conduct established by the British Computer Society (BCS). This framework underscores the necessity of upholding the

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public interest. Max failed to adhere to the standards outlined by BCS (2022), especially concerning professional competency and integrity, as detailed in sections 2.5 and 2.6. These sections stress the importance of respecting diverse perspectives, accepting professional critiques, and avoiding harm to another person's property and reputation. Max's verbal misconduct towards a colleague represents a form of abuse and a significant undermining of that individual's dignity, potentially resulting in psychological harm and damaging their standing within the organisation.

According to CIPD (2019), a workplace environment should cultivate a culture emphasising ethical values. Employees should be encouraged to act by what is morally right rather than merely adhering to established rules. Furthermore, CIPD (2019) observes that when organisations treat their employees with integrity, fairness, and compassion, they are more likely to demonstrate increased productivity and commitment. This favourable treatment fosters collaboration among employees, facilitating the achievement of business goals and objectives

Although Max's actions may be deemed inexcusable, examining whether his conduct was influenced by a working environment that fails to foster an ethical culture, wherein training, evaluations, and mutual respect are not embedded within the organisation's foundational values is necessary. While it is convenient to assign blame to individuals for their behaviour, it is imperative to critically assess whether such individuals are indeed shaped by their surrounding environment; this is supported by Buckley et al. (2001), who assert that a workplace devoid of an ethical culture may foster employee behaviours that undermine organisational objectives. Conversely, organisations that cultivate a culture founded on ethical values, such as trust, facilitate a cohesive environment that unites all workforce members.

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Peer Response

by Oi Lam Siu - Thursday, 6 February 2025, 5:19 AM

Hi Mohammed,

Thank you for providing a clear and well-structured analysis of Max's abusive workplace behaviour (ACM, n.d.). Your focus on the ethical breaches of the ACM and BCS Codes, particularly concerning respect, honesty, and professional integrity, aligns closely with the points raised in my own initial post. I value how you highlighted the damaging effect that abusive supervision has on team morale and productivity—studies like Tepper (2000) and Avey et al. (2011) show that hostile leadership increases stress, dissatisfaction, and turnover.

Moreover, your discussion of legal implications resonates with the Equality Act 2010, which emphasises safeguarding individuals from workplace harassment. The interplay between professional codes of ethics and legal frameworks not only protects employees but also upholds the profession's reputation (ACM, 2018; BCS, 2022).

It might be helpful to expand on possible organisational strategies to prevent such misconduct. For example, creating confidential channels for reporting and offering leadership training are proactive steps that could discourage unethical practices (Berry, 2004). Additionally, fostering an inclusive workplace culture built on trust and respect, reinforced by the BCS principle of public interest, can reduce abuses of power and bolster teamwork.

Overall, your post clearly shows how ethical leadership affects both employee well-being and organisational success. By incorporating these insights, we can adopt more holistic remedies to identify, address, and ultimately prevent abusive workplace behaviour.

Best regards,

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Helen

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by Anja Kosar - Thursday, 6 February 2025, 4:24 PM

Hello Mohammed,

Thank you for informative and well-articulated post. It supports and highlights the analysis of the "Abusive Workplace Behavior" case study very well, commending its comprehensive ethical and legal evaluation. The analysis effectively highlights the ethical breaches by Max and Jean, referencing specific principles from the ACM Code of Ethics. It also points out violations of the British Computer Society (BCS) Code of Conduct, emphasizing the importance of upholding public interest, integrity and professional competence.

Max's behavior demonstrates a pattern of bullying, including undermining others work, devaluing opinions and verbal abuse. Such actions foster a hostile environment. The British Computer Society (BCS) Code of Conduct also emphasizes public interest, integrity and competence (BCS, 2022). On the other hand, Jean, the team's manager, also demonstrates failures in her responsibilities. By dismissing Diane's concerns and normalizing Max's behavior, Jean failed to provide a supportive and safe environment to address the abusive conduct. This inaction violates ethical guidelines that require support for the well-being and dignity of team members. Jean's response also neglected her duty to uphold professional standards and protect employees from harm.

In these events, the company could face legal claims for harassment or creating a hostile work environment. Toxic work cultures lead to decreased employee morale, reduced productivity, and increased turnover, automatically having a negative impact on the company's productivity, resulting in reputational and financial damage (Peek, 2024).

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