

# Initial Post

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Initial Post

by [Oi Lam Siu](#) - Saturday, 1 February 2025, 9:31 AM

In analysing the ACM case study on Abusive Workplace Behaviour (ACM, n.d.), it is clear that the team leader, Max, violates several core tenets of ethical and professional standards. The ACM Code of Ethics emphasises the importance of fostering a respectful and inclusive environment, giving proper credit for contributions, and ensuring the well-being of colleagues (ACM, 2018).

Drawing parallels with the British Computer Society (BCS) Code of Conduct, the “Public Interest” principle appears violated, as Max’s actions compromise the psychological safety and dignity of his colleagues. Furthermore, by withholding rightful credit, the stipulations on “Professional Competence and Integrity” and “Duty to the Profession” are also disregarded (BCS, 2022). Such behaviour can erode trust and diminish respect for the computing profession as a whole.

Max’s personal attacks, punitive actions, and the removal of names from journal submissions not only undermine professional integrity, but also risk legal consequences if viewed as harassment or discrimination under relevant legislation, such as the United Kingdom’s Equality Act 2010 (Equality Act, 2010).

Under the Equality Act 2010, when workplace abuse targets individuals on the basis of protected characteristics (for example, sex or race), it may constitute harassment under Chapter 2. Section 26 of the Act defines “harassment” as unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment, which is prohibited conduct (Equality Act, 2010).

### References

ACM (2018). ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. Available from: <https://www.acm.org/code-of-ethics> [Accessed 1 February 2025].

ACM (n.d.) Case Study: Case Study: Abusive Workplace Behavior. Available at: <https://www.acm.org/code-of-ethics/case-studies/abusive-workplace-behavior> [Accessed 1 February 2025].

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Equality Act 2010, c.15. United Kingdom. Available from: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents> [Accessed 1 February 2025].

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Re: Initial Post

by [Panagiotis Mourtas](#) - Saturday, 1 February 2025, 8:16 PM

Peer Response

Hello Oil Lam Siu,

Your post is well-written, and you correctly analyze Max’s violations according to the ethical codes set by ACM, BCS, and the relevant equality legislation. You also effectively connect the potential legal consequences that could burden harassing behavior (ACM, 2018; BCS, 2022; Equality Act, 2010).



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However, given the topic of our discussion, unfortunately, we are focusing only on the perpetrator, while we should be addressing the victims much more, as they are psychologically affected by the severity of these actions. Such behavior can lead to anxiety, depression, and burnout among company employees, along with a range of other problems that come with these conditions (C. Maslach & P. M. Leiter, 2016).

Beyond the code of ethics, we know very well that there are many other laws and rules that a company must follow. Some of these are specifically designed to prevent and punish such behaviors or situations. Therefore, the greatest responsibility here lies with the company itself, which fails to adhere to any of these (Equality Act, 2010).

A proper leadership role should maintain and pass on a high standard of ethics to the other employees within a company. Leaders must support and ensure the well-being of their team while also fostering a supportive and safe environment (K., Radhika, 2018).

## References

ACM (2018) ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. Available from: <https://www.acm.org/code-of-ethics> [Accessed 1 February 2025]

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C., Maslach & P., M., Leiter (2016) Burnout: The Cost of Caring. Available at: <https://www.scirp.org/reference/referencespapers?referenceid=1162890> [Accessed 1 February 2025]

K., Radhika (2018) Leadership Theories and Practices. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323794733\\_Leadership\\_Theories\\_and\\_Practices](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323794733_Leadership_Theories_and_Practices) [Accessed 1 February 2025]

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## Peer Response

by [Ben Zapka](#) - Monday, 3 February 2025, 2:07 PM

Dear Oi Lam Siu,

Your analysis of the ACM case study on Abusive Workplace Behaviour effectively highlights the ethical violations committed by the team leader. I perceive your emphasis on psychological safety and the erosion of trust within the computing profession as particularly impactful. Additionally, your analysis clearly presents the linkage between the team leader's behaviour and legal frameworks such as the Equality Act 2010. This connection underscores the seriousness of the misconduct, extending its implications beyond professional ethics to potential legal consequences.

To further strengthen your analysis, consider incorporating strategies for fostering ethical leadership and mitigating abusive behaviours in professional settings. Research by Einarsen et al. (2011) highlights the importance of organisational culture in preventing workplace abuse. Implementing clear policies, providing training on ethical leadership, and establishing confidential reporting mechanisms can create a safer work environment.

Additionally, discussing the psychological impact of workplace abuse on employees could add depth to your analysis. According to Nielsen and Einarsen (2012), prolonged exposure to workplace bullying can lead to severe mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and decreased job satisfaction. This further emphasises the need for proactive measures to address and prevent such behaviour.

Lastly, while legal frameworks like the Equality Act 2010 are crucial, considering international standards and best practices could provide a broader perspective. The ISO 45003:2021 standard on psychological health and safety at work offers guidelines for managing psychosocial risks, which could be relevant in this context (International Organization for Standardization, 2021).

Concluding, while your initial post describes the associated reputational and legal problems associated with the scenario described in the case study, it could profit from evaluations of psychological causes this behaviour has on e  
analysis of work place related international standards. Your post, however, inspires some intriguing thoughts

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## References:

Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., Zapf, D., & Cooper, C. L. (2011). *Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace: Developments in Theory, Research, and Practice*. Second Edition. CRC Press.

Nielsen, M. B., & Einarsen, S. (2012) Outcomes of exposure to workplace bullying: A meta-analytic review. *Work & Stress* 26: 309-332. DOI: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263312489\\_Outcomes\\_of\\_exposure\\_to\\_workplace\\_bullying\\_A\\_meta-analytic\\_review](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263312489_Outcomes_of_exposure_to_workplace_bullying_A_meta-analytic_review)

International Organization for Standardization (2021) ISO 45003:2021 Occupational Health and Safety Management – Psychological Health and Safety at Work. Available from: <https://www.iso.org/standard/64283.html> [Accessed 03.02.2025]

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## Peer Response

by [Christopher Butterworth](#) - Wednesday, 5 February 2025, 10:47 AM

In her post about the Abusive Workplace Behaviour case study (ACM, n.d.), Oi Lam Siu has rightly pointed out some serious violations of the two ethical codes (ACM, 2018; BCS, 2022), naming sections but not citing their numbers. The post shows an understanding of ethical principles.

The post discusses principles which are found in both codes, such as respect, inclusivity, professional integrity, and duty to the profession, but whereas the ACM code has an emphasis on the workplace, the BCS code seems more interested in the professional and public interest aspects of the case.

Max's behaviour is seen as perhaps constituting harassment in UK law (Equality Act, 2010). I think this was a good angle to take in this case and it was good to see the legal definition of such harassment.

Max's behaviour in the case study is discussed, but not that of the manager, Jean, who failed to respond to Diane's concerns. The post would have been improved if this had been addressed.

Although management weaknesses were identified, the post would have been stronger if it had included suggestions for rectifying the situation, for example, reporting mechanisms, leadership accountability, or employee training. Guidance in these matters could have been gained from a perusal of a textbook such as *Ethics, Law and Professional Issues* (Whitty & Buchanan, 2012).

## References

ACM. (2018) ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. Available from: <https://www.acm.org/code-of-ethics> [Accessed 5 February 2025].

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Asimov, I. (1950) *I, Robot*. New York City: Gnome Press.

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Whitty, C. & Buchanan, W.A. (2012) *Ethics, Law and Professional Issues: A Guide for IT Professionals*. Andover: Cengage Learning.



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