



Research Methods and Professional Practice June 2023

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Initial Post

by Beatrice Mutegi - Friday, 11 August 2023, 9:46 AM

Knowledge Base

Discussion Topic - Case Study: Accuracy of information

Abi is in a morally complex situation due to his research's results challenging the nutritional value of Whizz cereal. The ethical concerns and possible courses of action, along with the legal, social, and professional impacts of those choices are as follows:

Firstly, (CEPR, 2021) states that research should be done with integrity and transparency, therefore he should ensure integrity is achieved by presenting both the negative and positive results instead of changing data values so as to support his conclusions. Consequently, undermining ethical standards can tarnish Abi's professional reputation and the manufacturer's image (Turilli & Floridi, 2009).

Since Abi suspects that the manufacturer might misuse the results to mislead the public, Abi can consider: collaborating with colleagues to discuss and resolve issues so as to enhance ethical studies (Sanjari, et al., 2014). Abi can also suggest an independent third party to review and validate the analysis and ensure that they follow his ethical practices (User research community, 2018).

These actions could encourage product reformulation and healthier purchases (Grummon, et al., 2020).

However, Abi should also apply the concept of moral intensity, like considering magnitude of consequences, - before making any decisions concerning the matter (Craft, 2012). For instance, if he publishes the methodology and findings openly to allow the public and other experts to evaluate the results independently, potential risks and challenges like breach of privacy and confidentiality, unprofessionalism, legal consequences, etc. - might follow (Turilli & Floridi, 2009) (ACM, 2018). Though this can be mitigated by anonymising, censoring or removing all sensitive data before publicizing it (User research community, 2018).

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Peer Response

by Laura Saxton - Saturday, 12 August 2023, 1:58 PM

Beatrice -- thank you for this engaging post. Adding to your discussion of the "magnitude of consequences" (Mutegi, 2023) concerning confidentiality and public disclosure, I wonder your opinions concerning the ethical implications of whistle-blowing insomuch as the person leaking classified information must show "wrongdoing [of an actor or organisation] or someone covering up wrongdoing (Hollinrake, 2023).

Under these constraints, if Abi were to make public his full research findings such would be contingent upon illicit actions by Whizzz manufacturing to qualify for legal immunity. If Abi knows there is a possibility that his full data may be used to circumvent negative results, and any public disclosure is dependent upon malicious action from the company, then Abi may be in violation of the ethical requirement for tech personnel to "have due regard for public health [...] and well being of others" (BCS, 2022) if he provides the full data to the manufacturer.

A better course of action may be to provide the original results to the manufacturer and cooperate with any requests or concerns the manufacturer has regarding the data they receive. This would eliminate the need for malicious action to disclose a possible public health event.

References

BCS (2022) Code of Conduct for BCS Members. Available at: <https://www.bcs.org/media/2211/bcs-code-of-conduct.pdf>

Hollinrake, K. (2023) Government Reviews Whistleblowing Laws | Business Regulation. gov.uk. [Available Online]: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-reviews-whistleblowing-laws>

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Re: Initial Post

by Mahamad Ibrahim - Thursday, 17 August 2023, 4:18 AM

Thank you Mutegi for your post, it was interesting.

The emphasize that is made by Mutegi (2023) imply that it is crucial to maintain integrity when working with statistical data to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and ethical use of information. Upholding integrity in statistical analysis is fundamental to informed decision-making, progress, and providing better health choices to individuals.

On the contrary, a question might arise on how the situation could be in case of lacking integrity?

Lacking integrity when providing inaccurate statistical results can have significant consequences, particularly in fields where data analysis and statistics play a crucial role. For example, an individual decides to purchase a certain product that has a specific nutritional value that fits his health goals and might help in his diet program, after a while he discovers that this product is not valuable as it should be. As a consequence, the product will lose its credibility what will affect future decisions to be made by the customer (Jensen, 2014).

The way Abi is supposed to act is a determining factor of his professional career, loss of Professional Standing, in professional settings, such as research or academia, integrity is highly valued. Lacking integrity by providing inaccurate statistical results can lead to severe professional repercussions, including damage to Abi's reputation, loss of employment, and exclusion from professional networks or collaborations. This can hinder career advancement and limit future opportunities.

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Peer Response

by Nomusa Majola - Saturday, 19 August 2023, 5:38 PM

Thank you Beatrice for a well articulated article addressing Abi's ethical dilemma regarding his research on the nutritional value of Whizz cereal. Your discussion examines the ethical concerns associated with presenting research findings transparently, the potential impacts on Abi's professional reputation, and the manufacturer's image

The discussion is informed by various scholarly references including (CEPR, 2021) and (Turilli & Floridi, 2009) to support the argument that research should be conducted with integrity and transparency and further display the impact this has on professional reputation. Collaborating with colleagues and involving an independent third party for validation adds depth and substance to your argument (Sanjari, et al., 2014) and (User research community, 2018) respectively.

To strengthen the article, consider incorporating additional sources that discuss the potential consequences of Abi's actions in greater detail. Explore sources that delve deeper into the legal and social implications of presenting both negative and positive results. For instance, (referencing relevant legal codes or scholarly articles)

could offer insights into the legal ramifications.

Additionally, expand on the concept of moral intensity by incorporating sources that provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors Abi should consider. Referencing (Craft, 2012) is a good start, but also explore sources that discuss real-world case studies or scenarios where ethical decisions have had significant consequences.

The paper emphasises the negative implications of open publication without exploration of the potential positive impacts, such as encouraging product reformulation and healthier consumer choices (Grummon et al., 2020).

Overall, the article offers valuable suggestions for Abi's ethical dilemma. Strengthening the piece with additional sources that provide in-depth insights into legal, social, and practical aspects will make the discussion more comprehensive and well-rounded.

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Peer Response

by Tomas Bohus - Sunday, 27 August 2023, 4:36 PM

Thank you for the thoughtful analysis, Beatrice. You raise important points on preserving research integrity through transparency and collaborating with colleagues. I agree validating results and anonymizing data help navigate dilemmas. Here are a few additional perspectives to consider:

While public disclosure may serve justice, Abi faces risks - breaching confidentiality agreements and non-retaliation laws often favour organizations over individual employees (Lubalin & Matheson, 1999). As a junior contractor, Abi has limited power to compel the manufacturer toward openness without sacrificing his career.

The issues reflect systemic pressures - misaligned incentives, confidentiality policies, and conflicts of interest - that constrain moral agency (Keith-Spiegel et al., 2006). Before judging Abi, prevailing structures that prevent acting on ethical convictions warrant examination.

Reforms like whistleblower protections, worker organizing, independent ethics bodies, and public interest policies could help shift power imbalances undermining integrity (Resnik, 2015). But currently, resistance often demands exceptional personal sacrifice.

While moral intensity and harm magnitude should guide Abi's actions, the realities of his precarious position warrant empathy. Even well-intentioned individuals can falter against institutional forces. Systemic change along with moral courage is key to research ethics.

References

Keith-Spiegel, P., Sieber, J., & Koocher, G. P. (2006). Responding to research wrongdoing: A user-friendly guide. *Ethics & Behavior*, 16(2), 167-190.

Lubalin, J. S., & Matheson, J. L. (1999). The fallout: What happens to whistleblowers and those accused but exonerated of scientific misconduct?. *Science and engineering ethics*, 5(2), 229-250.

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