

## **Introduction**

In the case study, Abi was responsible for analysing the nutritional values of a new cereal named Whizzz. Whilst reviewing the collected data Abi encounters an ethical dilemma as whilst their finding suggests Whizzz is less nutritious than claimed and may even be harmful there are statistical approaches, they could employ to highlight correlations that portray the product in a more favourable light. This scenario raises questions about the ethical use of data, the responsibilities of researchers and the potential consequences of their decisions. In this post, I aim to explore these issues from ethical, legal, social and professional perspectives while providing recommendations for Abi.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Maintaining integrity in research is of the utmost importance as ethical standards demand honesty and transparency. Manipulating or selectively reporting data to support a specific outcome even if it is technically accurate is unethical. Doing so could distort the truth, mislead stakeholders or undermine public trust in scientific research. This idea is reinforced by the British Psychological Society's Code of Human Research Ethics which states "researchers are obligated to ensure their work does not mislead or harm" (British Psychological Society, 2014).

Abi must consider whether they have a moral obligation to present both the positive and negative aspects of their findings. Selectively using statistics to highlight one particular outcome may be perceived as "cherry-picking" which compromises the credibility of the data and leads to a distorted representation of reality (Benos et al., 2007). Ethical research requires a balanced presentation of results to ensure objectivity and transparency.

## **Legal and Professional Responsibility**

There are plenty of legal and professional considerations that Abi must consider. For example, in the United Kingdom misleading claims about products are subject to legal scrutiny due to the Unfair Trading Regulations (UK Government, 2008) which prohibits deceptive advertising practices that could harm consumers. As a result of this, if the manufacturer uses Abi's findings selectively to promote Whizzz as nutritious while disregarding evidence to the contrary, Abi may be found complicit in the eyes of the law.

Abi must adhere to codes of conduct established within their field, which prioritise responsibility, accuracy, and the prevention of harm. Allowing the misuse of their analyses could damage Abi's reputation, the institution's creditability, and the broader scientific community. Therefore, Abi has a responsibility to ensure their work is used ethically and responsibly by the manufacturer.

## **Social and Professional Impact**

Abi's decisions carry significant social implications concerning public health and trust in research. Misrepresenting the nutritional value of Whizzz could mislead consumers into making dietary choices that harm their health and has the potential to damage public confidence in the scientific process and negatively impact the credibility of researchers and institutions. Research has shown that the spread of biased or misleading research findings erodes trust in scientific research, hindering its ability to effectively serve society (Ioannidis, 2005).

Abi is accountable for the outcomes of their work even if they are not directly responsible for how the manufacturer uses their findings, they have a duty to advocate for their ethical application of their results. By adopting a proactive approach Abi can help to mitigate the risks associated with the misuse of their analyses.

## **Recommendations**

To tackle the social, ethical and legal challenges present in the case study Abi should take several steps. Firstly, they must present both the positive and negative findings from their analyses to ensure transparency, objectivity and honesty. Secondly, Abi should communicate to the manufacturer the potential ethical and legal risks associated with selective reporting. Thirdly Abi should consider publishing their findings in a peer-reviewed journal to ensure accountability and transparency. Lastly, Abi should include any disclaimers or contractual agreements to help prevent the misuse of their analyses.

## **Conclusion**

Abi's situation highlights the connection between ethical responsibility, legal accountability, and societal impact in research. By maintaining transparency, advocating for the ethical use of data, and considering the wider implications of their actions, Abi can fulfil their professional obligations while protecting public trust and safety. Ultimately, a commitment to ethical principles will enhance Abi's integrity as a researcher and contribute to the credibility and value of scientific inquiry.

## **References**

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