

Research Methods and Professional Practice March 2022

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« Collaborative Learning Discussion 2



Man Sze Wong

Initial post

26 days ago

3 replies



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The situation and the ethical concerns which need to be discussed for the collaboration discussion 2 have been shown as below :

“Abi is a researcher at an institute and also a statistical programmer. Abi has received a project from a manufacturer to review the nutritional value of a new cereal, Whizzz. Having collected the necessary data, he now needs to perform the appropriate analyses and print the reports for him to send to the manufacturer. Unfortunately, the data Abi has collected seems to refute the claim that Whizzz is nutritious, and, in fact, they may indicate that Whizzz is harmful.

Abi also realises that some other correlations could be performed that would cast Whizzz in a more favourable light. “After all,” he thinks, “I can use statistics to support either side of any issue.

Ethical issues :

- Clearly, if Abi changed data values in this study he would be acting unethically. But is it any more ethical for him to suggest analysing correct data in a way that supports two or more different conclusions?
- Is Abi obligated to present both the positive and the negative analyses?
- Is Abi responsible for the use to which others put his program results?
- If Abi does put forward both sets of results to the manufacturer, he suspects that they will publicise only the positive ones. What other courses of action has he?”

There are several types of ethical issues and which have been listed as below:

1. Do good and do no harm
2. Informed consent (Participants know the purpose, benefits, risks, and funding behind the study before they agree or decline to join)
3. Anonymity (You don't know the identities of the participants. Personally identifiable data is not collected)
4. Confidentiality (You know who the participants are but you keep that information hidden from everyone else. You anonymize personally identifiable data so that it can't be linked to other data by anyone else)
5. Avoid using deceptive practices

For the situation of Abi, he has to avoid using the deceptive practices and this means he has to present both the positive and the negative analyses so that the presented result will not be misleading and his practices will not be a deceptive practice. In addition, Abi is responsible for the use to which others put his program results because he has to obtain the informed consent from participants at the very beginning of his research. So, the use of the collected data and research result is limited to what have been mentioned in the consent only. For the last question, I think Abi has to present both of the positive and negative result to the manufacturer first. The negative result should also include the impact to the society. And then I think he should ask for the advice or suggestions from his manager or higher level of management. After he performed all the actions above, I think the responsibility for presenting the positive or negative result will be on the manufacturer.

Reference :

Anon.(n.d) Principles of research ethics. Available from : <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/research-ethics/> [Accessed 3 May 2022]

Reply

3 replies

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Post by **Shiraj Ali**

Peer response

26 days ago

Further to the above finding, while it is true that different studies of the same data sets can produce conflicting results, it is critical to note that the majority of ethical norms require truthful reporting. Professions and institutions have established ethical standards tailored to their objectives, but one could refer to the American Statistical Association's ethical rules (ASA). The ASA's principle A The ethical code of conduct emphasises professional integrity and accountability and requires an ethical statistician to apply valid, relevant, and proper technique and data without regard for bias or prejudice and in a manner that produces sound, interpretable, and reproducible outcomes (Ethical Guidelines for Statistical Practice, 2022).

Abi is only liable for how others utilise his study findings if his report knowingly omits facts. If the report is objective, comprehensive, and accurate, any conclusions drawn by others from the data provided in the report are the responsibility of the individual making the assertion. On the other hand, if discovered, hiding information or interfering with research data might have negative ramifications for Abi and his employer.

Reference:

Ethical Guidelines for Statistical Practice, (2022) ASA, [online] Available at: https://www.amstat.org/docs/default-source/amstat-documents/ethicalguidelines.pdf?sfvrsn=bdeefdd_3 [Accessed 1 May 2022].

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Post by [Christopher Debicari](#)

[25 days ago](#)

Peer Response

I enjoyed reading your post covering the ethics of reporting and informed consent. One aspect I would like to expand upon is asking managers or other superiors for advice when unsure how to handle a potentially difficult question of ethics. While I agree that such discussions are important, it is possible for managers to prioritize personal and company profits over ethics. If such advice is given, it is likely to violate several codes of ethics as well as ultimately harm both the individuals involved and the company as a whole if discovered. An extreme example of this is Enron, a former American company that went bankrupt after unethical and illegal business practices were investigated, leading to 20,000 people losing their jobs (Morahan, 2015). Ultimately each individual has to make a final judgment call based on a code of ethics, any applicable laws, and their own morals.

References:

Morahan, M. (2015) Ethics in Management. *IEEE Engineering Management Review* 43(4): 23-25.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1109/EMR.2015.7433683>

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Post by [Shoumik Chakraborty](#)

[20 days ago](#)

Peer Response

According to the Department of Health and Social Care (2021) states any consumable product information can not be falsified. In case Abi omits or alters any of the detail or tries to fabricate the results, it can lead to criminal trials against Abi.

Abi should provide the data outcome and leave the rest with Whizzz, how they want to showcase their result, thus removing any obligation that Abi has related to research data publication.

References

Department of Health and Social Care. (2021) Nutrition legislation information sheet. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nutrition-legislation-information-sources/nutrition-legislation-information-sheet--2> [Accessed 9 May 2022]

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