

Research Methods and Professional Practice

March 2022

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« Collaborative Learning Discussion 2



[Laura Rivella](#)

Initial post

41 days ago

3 replies



Last 20 days ago

I do not believe it is unethical to analyse correct data in a way that supports two or more different conclusions per se as an exercise. At the analysis stage and working with it it's not applied to the real world yet. It is what he would then do with that data, to whom he would show it, why he would show it, and how it would be used that could have unethical repercussions.

As far as being obligated to present both negative and positive results, I would look more closely at what the use and context of the word "obligated" refers to in the exercise question. Were Abi an ethical person, he would be obligated to present the negative analysis which is the one that refutes the claim that the cereal is nutritious. He would need to keep in mind ethical principles such as being honest and trustworthy and being mindful of the impact that his work will have. (ACM, 2018)

Abi is responsible for the use of his work by others because he is the one who has the power to give it meaning. There is a potential social impact since the results suggest that the cereal is harmful and would therefore go against the principle to avoid harm. (ACM, 2018)

In terms of alternative courses of action, Abi could either present only negative findings or chose not to present any findings and decline to take part in the project.

There are legal issues in that the claims of the cereal producer would be false and misleading therefore breaking several consumer protection laws both at an EU and UK level such as the EU unfair commercial practices directive (European Union, 2005) and the UK Consumer Rights Act (Gov.uk, 2015).

References:

ACM Association for Computing Machinery (2018) ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. Available from: <https://www.acm.org/code-of-ethics> [Accessed 18 April 2022].

European Union (2005) Directive 2005/29/EC of 11 May 2005 concerning unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices in the internal market. Available from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32005L0029> [Accessed 18 April 2022].

Gov.uk (2015) Consumer Rights Act 2015. Available from: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/15/contents/enacted> [Accessed 18 April 2022].

Reply

3 replies

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Post by [Laura Rivella](#)

28 days ago

Summary Post

The discussion was about a case study on accuracy of information in which a researcher and statistical programmer named Abi receives a project from a manufacturer to review the nutritional value of a new cereal. Abi collects the data he needs but soon discovers that what he collected seems to refute the claim that Whizzz is nutritious and may also indicate that the cereal is harmful.

Abi is now at a crossroads in that he could use statistics to support either side. We were asked to reflect on some ethical questions and encouraged to consider social, professional and legal ramifications as well.

In the analysis of Abi's case I maintained that analysing data in a way that supports two or more different conclusions as an abstract exercise is not unethical per se. However, I highlighted the ethical principles which would need to be kept in mind in a case like this such as the principles of honesty, avoiding harm and being mindful of the potential social impact that one's work will have. I further highlighted legal issues and applicable EU and UK consumer protection laws, which would protect consumers if Abi and the cereal company both chose not to pursue an ethical path.

My peers took a variety of different approaches which contributed greatly to the depth of the discussion, we managed to extensively cover both sides of the ethical case study.

Personally, I was pushed to think about the issue in a different light by Shiraj who began his argument by going all the way back to research ethics. By offering a definition of research ethics, focusing then on the proper way to conduct scientific research, he really made me think of the roots of the issue with Abi's case and not only of the consequences, which had been my primary focus when I wrote my intro post.

The contribution that Grace on the other hand, pushed me to consider different potential scenarios I could encounter in my work as a cybersecurity practitioner. With the way she tackled Abi's case she made me try to contextualise it in more IT and cybersecurity pre-dominant scenarios while maintaining a focus on the ethics.

[Reply](#)

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Post by [Man Sze Wong](#)[26 days ago](#)*Peer response*

Hello Laura,

After reading your initial post, I have learnt that if there is a misleading result from the producer then the misleading result will break the consumer protection laws both at an EU and UK level.

However, I think the further actions which Abi can take can also be mentioned in the initial post in order to let the readers know what the researcher can do if a similar situation occurs. Hope my recommendation is useful to you.

[Reply](#)

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Post by [Shoumik Chakraborty](#)[20 days ago](#)*Peer Response*

"Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council" states food labelling cannot be misleading or encourage additional consumption of the product (UK Gov, 2006). UK Gov (2006) also states the manufacturer can use the scientific research details over their product label.

Since Abi is an independent researcher so any positive insights he provides will directly affect the advertisement of the product. If Abi omits or correlates data to show the product is as per the claims this may harm the consumers which may create legal complexities for both the manufacturer as well as Abi in the future.

References

UK Gov. (2006) Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006 of the european parliament and of the council. Available from: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/eur/2006/1924/chapter/II> [Accessed 9 May 2022]

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