

Collaborative Discussion 1: Research Methods and Professional Practice

by Maria Ingold

Initial Post

The Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) (N.D.) “Abusive Workplace Behaviour” case study discusses the breach of six codes from the ACM (2018) Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

Table 1 lists the key points violated in the case study, their respective ACM Code, and how they map to the British Computing Society (BCS) Code of Conduct.

TABLE 1 | Relevant ACM and BCS Codes

Case Study	ACM Code	BCS Code
Verbal abuse (<i>social, professionalism</i>)	General Ethical Principles Principle 1.1 Societal and human well-being	You make IT for everyone PUBLIC INTEREST 1) Due regard for well-being of others
Unprofessional communication (<i>professionalism</i>)	Professional Responsibilities Principle 2.2 Professional competence, conduct and ethical practice	Show what you know, learn what you don't PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AND INTEGRITY 5) Offer honest criticisms of work
Removal and blocking (<i>legal</i>)	General Ethical Principles Principle 1.5 Respect work and innovation	Show what you know, learn what you don't PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AND INTEGRITY 6) Avoid reputation damage by malicious action
Targeting women (<i>legal</i>)	General Ethical Principles Principle 1.4 Be fair and avoid discrimination	You make IT for everyone PUBLIC INTEREST 3) Without discrimination
Failed psychological safety (<i>social, professional</i>)	Professional Leadership Principles Principle 3.3 Manage to enhance working life	Respect the organisation or individual you work for DUTY TO RELEVANT AUTHORITY 3) Professional responsibility for those under your supervision
Failure to support ethical principles (<i>social, professional, legal</i>)	Professional Leadership Principles Principle 3.4 Apply and support Code policies and processes	Keep IT real. Keep IT professional. Pass IT on. DUTY TO THE PROFESSION 2) Develop, use, and enforce professional standards

Comparing the two codes, the ACM uses the word “ethic”, while the BCS does not. Furthermore, ACM seems more concerned with psychological safety, professional

leadership, and respect for the individual, while BCS appears to focus more on legal compliance. For instance, the BCS discrimination wording appears mostly designed to comply with the UK's 2010 Equality Act (Wadham, 2021). However, as the ACM is a global organisation, it makes sense that its wording is more general.

Psychological safety at work is key to facilitating performance, goal achievement, successful teamwork, knowledge sharing, and innovation (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023). While the abusive behaviour of the team lead violates ethical and professional principles, the enabling behaviour of the team manager perpetuates it. Bancroft (2003) describes abuse as coming from entitlement, control, and ownership, and notes that changing abusive behaviour requires calling it out by peers and superiors, as well as being held accountable with consequences. As raised by the ACM, having and enforcing ethical policies would help the team manager to enable psychological safety.

References

ACM (2018) *ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct*. Available from: <https://ethics.acm.org/> [Accessed 3 May 2024].

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Bancroft, L. (2003) *Why Does He Do That?: Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men*. Penguin Publishing Group.

Edmondson, A.C. & Bransby, D.P. (2023) Psychological Safety Comes of Age: Observed Themes in an Established Literature, *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 10(10): 55–78. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1146/ANNUREV-ORGPSYCH-120920-055217/CITE/REFWORKS>.

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