Research Methods

**Collaborative Discussion Two**

**Question:**

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.”

* 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?

You should also highlight legal, social and professional impacts of any choices made. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers here and you may introduce local, as well as international, legislature in your responses.

**Initial Post**

It would be unethical for Abi to deliberately change the data values to support the claim that Whizz is nutritious. Of course the organisation would want the end conclusion to be that the cereal should be claimed as nutritious and expect that Abi also ensures that the conclusions point to this direction. However, Abi should be obligated to present both the positive and negative analyses and then it is up to the manufacturer what they would like to publish, and Abi should not be responsible for whatever they choose to publish.

Alternatively if Abi decides it is important for the public to be informed of the negative and positive analysis he has the option of publishing his results in news articles, or in research papers.

On the other hand the issue arises, if the manufacturer, by their own will, decide not to publish the negative analysis of the nutrition values but Abi does decide to publish the result elsewhere, this could be seen as breaking the code of conduct “1b) *The Data Scientist has a duty to act so as to protect the privacy and confidentiality of data, respecting the ownership of proprietary data, and in not exposing data that might cause any harm to individuals or legal entities”* (Code of Conduct, 2022). This is because by publishing the results elsewhere Abi is deliberately not protecting the organisations data, which in turn will ruin the reputation of the organisation.

Reference

Code of Conduct. (2022). *Code of conduct - Oxford Munich Code of Conduct*. [online] Available at: <http://www.code-of-ethics.org/code-of-conduct/> [Accessed 15 March 2022].

**PEER RESPONSES**

Peer Response to Charlotte Wilson

I agree with your point about being wary about the confidential agreements in place as the code of conduct also states that the confidentiality of data should be protected and data should not be exposed which would cause harm to the organisation. (Code of Conduct, 2022).

Another point to add is that if Abi publishes the negative view about the cereal he might endure huge financial losses for example from breaching the code of conduct and also from lawsuits involving breach with contract agreements, Abi would need to pay compensatory payments. (ISACA, 2016).

However from an ethical point of view I believe it would be wrong for Abi if he does not make the effort to inform the public of both parts of the analysis.

Reference

Code of Conduct. (2022). *Code of conduct - Oxford Munich Code of Conduct*. [online] Available at: <http://www.code-of-ethics.org/code-of-conduct/> [Accessed 15 March 2022].

ISACA. (2016). Data Privacy Protection Approach | ISACA Journal. [online] Available at: <https://www.isaca.org/resources/isaca-journal/issues/2016/volume-6/an-ethical-approach-to-data-privacy-protection> [Accessed 20 March 2022].

**Peer response to Freya Basey**

I agree that Abi should present both sides of the argument to Whizz. I also believe that after Abi’s analysis, Whizz should be transparent with both negative and positive sides of the argument This is because even though the tobacco industry, from 2016, are obliged to display the negative side effects of smoking on the cigarette packets in a pictorial format in the EU. (ACH, n.d.)

The tobacco industry still generated an income of 218.61 billion dollars in the EU in 2018. (Europe Cigarette Market Size, 2019)

So, perhaps if Whizz is worrying enduring financial losses from displaying the positive and negative analysis the Tobacco industry can be used an example as people continue to purchase cigarettes even after being displayed with the side effects.

References

ACH. (n.d.). Warning Labels - Action on Smoking and Health. [online] Available at: <https://ash.org.uk/category/information-and-resources/packaging-labelling-information-and-resources/warning-labels/#:~:text=Since%2020%20May%202016%20all,the%20library%20of%20pictorial%20warnings.> [Accessed 20 March 2022].

Europe Cigarette Market Size, a., (2019). Europe Cigarette Market Size, Growth | Industry Report 2026. [online] Fortunebusinessinsights.com. Available at: <https://www.fortunebusinessinsights.com/industry-reports/europe-cigarette-market-101375> [Accessed 20 March 2022].<https://www.statista.com/statistics/248964/revenues-from-tobacco-tax-and-forecast-in-the-us/> [Accessed 20 March 2022].

**Peer Response to Kin Wong**

I agree that Abi should try his best to present both negative and positive analysis and confirm with other researchers about the data and ask them to re-examine it. When Abi presents the analysis to Whizz, they can perhaps improve upon their ingredients to make it more nutritious, as you have mentioned, nutrition is a priority for social development. So perhaps withholding the negative analyses from Whizz will prevent the manufacturer from making the cereal nutritious for the consumers.

**SUMMARY POST**

In summary the discussion was about the choice the researcher should make regarding the statistical results presented to the manufacturer and what impact this choice would make ethically as well as legally.

It was agreed upon that it would be that the best choice for the researcher to present to the manufacturer that the cereal is in fact not nutritious. (Tselapedi, 2022)

Likewise majority of peers in the discussion forum collectively agreed that the researcher should inform the manufacturer of both the positive and negative analyses but has the duty to publish the negative analysis elsewhere too such as a research publication (Mengesha, 2022)

Kin mentions that if the researcher is worried about the accuracy of the statistical results he can request an independent consultant who can re-examine the data appropriately (Wong, 2022)

However an issue that I mentioned in my initial post was that by doing so he might be breaking the code of conduct 1b, as deliberately publishing the results when the manufacturer decides not to can cause harm to the manufacturer (Code of Conduct, 2022). However, on the other hand Kufner (2022) suggests that the researcher could sue the manufacturer for not taking into consideration the legal framework for European statisticians. (Eurostat, 2010)

In conclusion the researcher has the moral and ethical responsibility to present both the negative and positive analysis to the manufacturer, whatever the manufacturer decides to publish is not Albis’ responsibility, however he should take the opportunity and publish the negative results in research papers or news articles.

Reference

Code of Conduct. (2022). Code of conduct - Oxford Munich Code of Conduct. [online] Available at: [Accessed 15 March 2022].

Eurostat (2010) Legal framework for European statistics – The Statistical Law Available from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-statistical-books/-/ks-31-09-254 [Accessed 15th March 2022]

Kufner, J. (2022) Peer Response. Available from: https://www.my-course.co.uk/mod/hsuforum/discuss.php?d=300929 [Accessed 25th March 2022]

Mengesha, Y. (2022) Peer Response. Available from: https://www.my-course.co.uk/mod/hsuforum/discuss.php?d=300429 [Accessed 25th March 2022]

Tselapedi, S. (2022) Peer Response. Available from: https://www.my-course.co.uk/mod/hsuforum/discuss.php?d=300929 [Accessed 25th March 2022]

Wong, K. (2022) Peer Response. Available from: https://www.my-course.co.uk/mod/hsuforum/discuss.php?d=296319 [Accessed 25th March 2022]