Initial post

by Etkin Getir - Saturday, 23 September 2023, 11:07 PM
Number of replies: 6

As an IT professional, Abi is bound by ethical rules that require him to act in the public interest (BCS, 2022). As falsifying data is unethical because it would lead to results that would mislead the public about the nutritional value of Viz, using some statistical techniques to present the product in a positive way, when in fact the overall value of the product is poor, would lead to manipulated results and is therefore also unethical. In the latter case, the general public will have a false opinion about the product.

From an ethical point of view, he is obliged to present the unbiased, true results of his analyses, which could be negative for the product. It's almost certain that the client would not be happy with these results and may even insist on a positive result at the expense of manipulating the analysis, but Abi should stand his ground no matter what. However, given the loose safeguards for such cases in today's professional world and job market, this would prove extremely difficult for Abi and he might even lose his job. The decision to provide only the truthful results brings us to the final question. It is obvious that the client would use the positive results and omit the negative ones if given both versions. However, Abi should act responsibly and he shouldn't allow the client to manipulate the public by giving only the truthful results.

It is also important to note that falsifying data or manipulating results can also lead to serious legal consequences, as it would create an unfair market advantage, as well as numerous health risks. In the real world, examples of misleading statistics or misuse of statistics are not uncommon and examples range from completely invented figures, such as those used by Reebok in its advertising campaign claiming that “by only walking with their shoe, one can work their calves 11% harder and tone their butt 28% more than other sneakers” (MediaSuppliers, 2010) to Colgate’s famous claim that “80% of dentists recommend using Colgate toothpaste” (Derbyshire, 2007). It is worth noting that the former resulted in a $25 million-settlement (FTC, 2011).

Within the context of this case study, I think the following clause from the BCS code of Conduct (2022) should be the guiding principle here: “You shall not misrepresent or withhold information on the performance of products, systems or services (unless lawfully bound by a duty of confidentiality not to disclose such information), or take advantage of the lack of relevant knowledge or inexperience of others.” The ACM Code of Ethics (2018) is also very strict on this point, emphasising the importance of “being honest and trustworthy” by not falsifying or fabricating data and refraining from making deliberately false and misleading claims.

Finally, according to ethical codes, an IT professional should take full responsibility for his work, so Abi should be held responsible for how the results generated by his program are used. Moreover, I think he should also make the necessary improvements in his program to prevent such misuse.

References:

Association of Computing Machinery (2018) ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. Available from: **https://www.acm.org/code-of-ethics** [Accessed 23 September 2023].

British Computer Society (2022) Code of Conduct for BCS Members. Available from: **https://www.bcs.org/media/2211/bcs-code-of-conduct.pdf** [Accessed 23 September 2023].

Derbyshire, D. (2007) Colgate gets the brush off for 'misleading' ads. Available from: **https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1539715/Colgate-gets-the-brush-off-for-misleading-ads.html** [Accessed 23 September 2023].

Federal Trade Commission (2011) FTC's $25 million settlement with Reebok challenges toning shoe ad claims. Available from: **https://www.ftc.gov/business-guidance/blog/2011/09/ftcs-25-million-settlement-reebok-challenges-toning-shoe-ad-claims** [Accessed 23 September 2023].

MediaSuppliers (2010) Sports Reebok Easytone Commercial. Available from: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UemsE4wQP6Y** [Accessed 23 September 2023].

In reply to Etkin Getir

Peer response

by Ashok Kumar Shanmugam - Monday, 2 October 2023, 12:49 AM

Hello Etkin, I appreciate your analysis. I concur with the aforementioned statement. The provided study is a thorough and logical examination of the ethical concerns that Abi encounters in his capacity as an IT professional.

The statement underscores the significance of adhering to the public interest, as delineated in BCS and underscores the need for information technology professionals to prioritise the well-being and confidence of the general public. The act of falsifying data is considered to be unethical due to its detrimental effects on research integrity and its potential to mislead the public on the nutritional worth of a product. The notable aspect of Abi's dedication lies in their commitment to provide impartial and accurate findings, especially in cases when the outcomes may be unfavourable to the client. (BCS, 2022).

The statement recognises the difficulty faced by Abi in maintaining ethical standards, emphasising the practical obstacles encountered in the contemporary professional landscape. The inclusion of legal ramifications and concrete instances of deceptive numbers in the discussion provides further backing for the argument, emphasising the possible legal and reputational hazards faced by Abi and his client. The aforementioned response is a comprehensive and logically structured examination of Abi's

circumstances, showcasing a profound comprehension of ethical tenets and offering pragmatic perspectives on effectively addressing this intricate quandary. (BCS, 2022).

Reference

British Computer Society (BCS). (2022). *Code of Conduct for BCS Members.* Available at: https://www.bcs.org/media/2211/bcs-code-of-conduct.pdf [Accessed 29 October 2023].

Initial Post

by Kwok Wai Yau - Sunday, 1 October 2023, 9:35 PM
Number of replies: 3

Abi, a researcher and statistical programmer, faces an ethical dilemma regarding a cereal project. The data suggests that the cereal, Whizzz, may not be as nutritious as claimed, potentially even harmful. Abi contemplates whether it's ethical to present the data in a way that supports different conclusions (ACM, 2018, Section 2.3; BCS, 2022, Principle 3).

Firstly, it is unequivocally unethical for Abi to manipulate or alter the data. This would compromise the research's integrity and could lead to severe professional and legal consequences. Selective reporting, wherein only favorable analyses are presented, is also unethical as it distorts the truth and misleads stakeholders (ACM, 2018, Section 2.5; BCS, 2022, Principle 3).

Abi has an ethical obligation to present both positive and negative analyses. This ensures transparency and enables the manufacturer to make an informed decision based on the complete dataset. Additionally, Abi bears responsibility for how others might use his program's results. While he can't control external dissemination, he must provide accurate information to minimize potential misuse (ACM, 2018, Section 1.2; BCS, 2022, Principle 2).

Abi has several alternative courses of action. Firstly, he should discuss his concerns and findings transparently with the manufacturer. Documenting his analyses, methodologies, and results is crucial for record-keeping and protection in case of ethical or legal issues. Seeking guidance from colleagues, mentors, or an ethics committee within his institute can provide valuable perspectives (ACM, 2018, Section 1.3; BCS, 2022, Principle 1).

In case of potential legal implications, seeking advice from legal counsel is advisable. Legal, social, and professional impacts weigh heavily in this situation. Acting unethically could lead to severe legal consequences, damage trust in the scientific community, and harm Abi's professional reputation (ACM, 2018, Section 2.7; BCS, 2022, Principle 4).

In conclusion, Abi's best course of action is to conduct unbiased analyses, thoroughly document his findings, and communicate transparently with the manufacturer. Upholding ethical standards is crucial to maintain the integrity of the research process and safeguard Abi's professional standing (ACM, 2018, Section 2.1; BCS, 2022, Principle 4).

Reference

Association of Computing Machinery (ACM). (2018). *ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.* Available at: https://www.acm.org/code-of-ethics [Accessed 27 September 2023].

British Computer Society (BCS). (2022). *Code of Conduct for BCS Members.* Available at: https://www.bcs.org/media/2211/bcs-code-of-conduct.pdf [Accessed 27 September 2023].

PermalinkReply

Peer response

by Ashok Kumar Shanmugam - Monday, 2 October 2023, 12:36 AM

Hello Kwok, I appreciate your thoughtful analysis. Ethical concerns are examined and discussed in this remark in a clear and concise manner. I think there are subtleties that need to be investigated further.

Abi, a researcher and statistical programmer, is grappling with an ethical dilemma regarding a cereal project. The data suggests Whizzzz may not be as nutritious as claimed, potentially harmful. Abi must decide whether to manipulate or present the data in a way that supports different conclusions. He has an ethical obligation to present both positive and negative analyses, ensuring transparency and allowing the manufacturer to make informed decisions. Abi also bears responsibility for how others might use his program's results. (ACM, 2018, BCS, 2022)

Abi has several options: discussing his concerns transparently with the manufacturer, documenting his analyses, seeking guidance from colleagues or an ethics committee, or seeking legal counsel for potential legal implications. Upholding ethical standards is crucial to maintain the integrity of the research process and safeguard Abi's professional standing. In conclusion, Abi should conduct unbiased analyses, thoroughly document his findings, and communicate transparently with the manufacturer. (ACM, 2018, BCS, 2022).

Reference:

Association of Computing Machinery (ACM). (2018). ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. Available at: https://www.acm.org/code-of-ethics [Accessed 29 September 2023].

British Computer Society (BCS). (2022). Code of Conduct for BCS Members. Available at: https://www.bcs.org/media/2211/bcs-code-of-conduct.pdf [Accessed 29 September 2023].