

Hello Aleksandr,

Thank you for emphasising these critical points. I completely agree with your insightful observations regarding Abi's ethical challenges and proposed alternative solutions. Your suggestion to ensure transparency and accountability through peer review and publishing the full report is particularly notable. By openly sharing findings and methods, researchers can enhance trust and empower manufacturers to use the data responsibly. This resonates with Haven et al. (2022), who stress that detailed reporting and public sharing are essential to avoid audience misinterpretation and uphold the credibility of research conclusions. Additionally, your point about communicating ethical concerns to manufacturers is crucial. This approach aligns well with the ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (2018), specifically Principle 2.7, which emphasises the responsibility of computing professionals to foster public awareness.

It is also worth highlighting that honesty remains a cornerstone of the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, alongside reliability, respect, and accountability. This framework provides comprehensive guidelines to help researchers act ethically and responsibly, addressing issues like selective reporting and bias (ALLEA, 2017). By adhering to such codes and guidelines, computing professionals and researchers can safeguard their reputations while upholding their ethical and professional standards.

By ensuring transparency, embracing accountability, and following established ethical codes, researchers can contribute to a culture of trust and integrity in their fields, ultimately benefiting society.

*References:*

*ALLEA - All European Academies (2017) The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. Available at: <https://allea.org/code-of-conduct/> [Accessed: 20 December 2024].*

*ACM (2018). The code affirms an obligation of computing professionals to use their skills for the benefit of society. Code of Ethics. <https://www.acm.org/code-of-ethics> [Accessed: 27 October 2024].*

*European Code of Conduct (2023). The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/european-code-of-conduct-for-research-integrity\\_horizon\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/european-code-of-conduct-for-research-integrity_horizon_en.pdf)*

Hello Mario,

Thank you for your insightful perspective on this case. I appreciate how you emphasised public health as the primary concern, as it indeed outweighs other ethical considerations. Inspired by your comment, I thoroughly delved into research ethics to explore the trade-offs between ethical principles and financial interests in scientific activities.

Thomopoulos et al. (2023) underscore the complexity of the research environment within the food industry, noting that a wide range of ethical concerns arise even within narrowly defined studies. In response to these significant challenges, Cullerton et al. (2023) introduced the FoRK guidelines and toolkit. This

comprehensive resource assists health researchers in making informed decisions and mitigating risks when engaging with commercial food sector organisations.

However, an older but significant systematic review by Bes-Rastrollo et al. (2013)

warns of the inherent bias in industry-sponsored research. The review asserts:

"We assume that the scientific research that underlies our decisions about health-related issues is unbiased and accurate. However, there is increasing evidence that the conclusions of industry-sponsored scientific research are sometimes biased."

This highlights the ongoing tension between ensuring public health, fostering ethical practices, and advancing organisational benefits. Striking an ethical and practical balance remains critical to fostering trust and ensuring research integrity.

#### *References:*

*Bes-Rastrollo, M., Schulze, M. B., Ruiz-Canela, M., & Martinez-Gonzalez, M. A. (2013). Financial conflicts of interest and reporting bias regarding the association between sugar-sweetened beverages and weight gain: a systematic review of systematic reviews. PLoS medicine, 10(12), e1001578.*

*Cullerton, K., Adams, J., Forouhi, N. G., Francis, O., & White, M. (2024). Avoiding conflicts of interest and reputational risks associated with population research on food and nutrition: the Food Research risk (FoRK) guidance and toolkit for researchers. bmj, 384.*

*Thomopoulos, R., Bisquert, P., van Der Burg, B., & Engel, E. (2022). Good practices and ethical issues in food safety related research. Global Pediatrics, 2, 100016.*

Hello Samuel,

Thank you for your insightful comments and analysis. I appreciate how you've categorised the consequences of Abi's actions into ethical, legal, social, and professional dimensions, making it easier to understand the situation's complexity. Additionally, your focus on proactive solutions and recommendations demonstrates a clear commitment to addressing Abi's ethical challenges.

Your suggestion to include disclaimers and contractual agreements is particularly noteworthy. Furthermore, publishing in a peer-reviewed journal is another approach that piqued my interest. These strategies could indeed serve as safeguards to prevent misuse of Abi's analysis. However, I would like to expand on this idea. For instance, a disclaimer could help protect against reputational harm, clarifying that the findings should not be used selectively. A contractual agreement gives Abi more control over the use of their findings by the manufacturer, ensuring that the results are used responsibly and ethically.

On the other hand, publishing research in an open-access format can enhance accessibility, aligning with the European Commission's Horizon 2020 Open Access policy. Making the findings openly available provides transparency. However, this also means that Abi would need to be cautious about how their work is interpreted or misused by others. The policy supports a more democratic approach to research sharing but requires careful consideration of the risks involved in open dissemination (European Commission, N.D.).

These approaches, when combined, can provide both transparency and protection for Abi's work, ensuring that their ethical and legal responsibilities are upheld.

*Reference:*

*European Commission (n.d.) Open access. Available at: [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-research-and-innovation/our-digital-future/open-science/open-access\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-research-and-innovation/our-digital-future/open-science/open-access_en) [Accessed: 21 December 2024].*