

In 2018, the Cambridge Analytica scandal revealed that data from 87 million Facebook users was harvested through innocent-looking surveys without consent. This data was used for targeted political advertising in the U.S. presidential campaign and Brexit referendum, influencing elections globally. This case highlights the misuse of surveys for political and financial gain, a practice common across digital platforms (CNBC, 2018).

The primary ethical concerns include the lack of consent and the manipulation of personal data for political purposes. Cambridge Analytica's targeted ads exploited psychological profiling, influencing vulnerable voters and raising questions about privacy, consent, and misinformation. As Berghel (2018) notes, technology should inform, not manipulate. With the rise of digital tools, political manipulation has become more targeted and efficient, demanding stricter ethical standards.

Another example is the study on CEO decision-making, where survey questions framed in terms of "strategic advice" or "friendship" influenced CEOs to make biased decisions when selecting board members (Seidel & Westphal, 2004). Such framing effects undermine the integrity of research by guiding decisions based on social influence rather than objective criteria. This can lead to biased corporate boards and limit strategic innovation.

Legally, the misuse of surveys may violate privacy laws like the GDPR, which protect personal data and require transparency. Socially, these manipulative practices erode public trust in digital platforms. Professionally, the integrity of

research is compromised, leading to skewed findings that may mislead decision-makers and damage the credibility of organisations.

The misuse of surveys, as seen in the Cambridge Analytica scandal and CEO decision-making biases, underscores the need for stronger ethical standards in data collection. To protect individual rights and maintain trust, organisations must implement clear regulations and prioritise transparency and consent in survey design.

## References:

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