

Peer Response 1

Thank you, Jaafar, for your clear and thoughtful post. The ethical issues around Abi's situation are complex, and you presented them in a balanced and well-informed way. I also appreciated the professional sources you used to support your analysis.

Many of the important points were already raised in Marwa's response, including the risks of selective reporting and the need to protect public trust. I agree with those points and would like to add a few additional perspectives.

It might be valuable to examine the role of organisational culture and ethical leadership in supporting professionals like Abi. According to Kaptein (2011), a strong ethical culture within organisations reduces the likelihood of unethical behaviour and encourages individuals to act in line with moral standards. In situations where commercial pressures are present, such an environment can help professionals remain guided by ethical principles.

You could also consider addressing the option of whistleblowing, particularly if internal reporting does not lead to responsible action. Whistleblowing refers to the act of exposing unethical or harmful practices within an organisation, either internally or externally. According to Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran (2005), whistleblowing behaviour is shaped by both individual and organisational factors, and can be influenced by the likelihood of retaliation and the perceived effectiveness of reporting mechanisms. In Abi's case, if the manufacturer misuses the report and internal avenues are ineffective, reporting the issue to an external regulatory body may be an ethically justifiable course of action to protect public health.

Finally, the idea of moral courage is also important. As Lachman (2007) explains, professionals sometimes face difficult decisions where doing the right thing involves personal or professional risk. Recognising this can help us understand how hard these situations are, and why support from professional organisations is so necessary.

I hope these reflections offer useful additions to your thoughtful discussion of the ethical challenges in Abi's case.

References:

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Peer Response 2

Thank you, Murthy. You addressed the ethical dilemmas in Abi's situation with clarity and supported your points with strong references. Your explanation of the risks associated with practices such as p-hacking and selective reporting was particularly insightful. I also appreciated your distinction between legal compliance and ethical responsibility, which is essential in professional decision-making.

I agree with Sultan's response and found the suggestion to consider how data ethics varies across industries especially thought-provoking. One way to develop that idea further would be to examine the different expectations for transparency in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, food manufacturing, or technology. For example, in the pharmaceutical industry, researchers are often required to register clinical trials and publish their results, whether positive or negative, to avoid selective reporting (De Angelis et al., 2004). In contrast, nutrition and food product research may not be subject to the same formal standards. This contrast highlights how ethical responsibilities can fall more heavily on individuals like Abi when external regulations are weaker or less clearly defined.

In addition, it may be useful to reflect on the psychological process of moral self-justification. In some cases, professionals may convince themselves that a biased or selective decision is acceptable because they believe their intentions are good. This process is sometimes described as moral licensing. According to Merritt, Effron and Monin (2010), such thinking can undermine ethical judgement over time and lead to

normalisation of questionable practices. In Abi's case, the belief that the product is mostly beneficial could result in downplaying the importance of reporting harmful findings.

Another important factor is how data is communicated. Even when results are reported in full, the framing and presentation can strongly influence how the findings are interpreted. Mäntymäki et al. (2022) emphasise that ethical data communication is not only about accuracy, but also about ensuring that information is presented clearly, proportionally, and in a way that minimises the risk of misunderstanding. Ethical reporting, therefore, includes not only transparency in content, but also responsibility in how data is visualised and conveyed to decision-makers or the public.

Finally, your emphasis on the wider consequences of ethical lapses is well placed.

When research influences health-related decisions, the impact of misleading or incomplete reporting can extend far beyond a single study. This is why the responsibility to communicate findings honestly and clearly is so significant in cases like Abi's.

Thank you again for your thoughtful contribution to this important discussion.

References:

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Peer Response 3

Thank you, Sultan, for your clear and comprehensive analysis of Abi's ethical dilemma. I particularly appreciate how you outlined the risks of reporting bias and emphasised the importance of full transparency in research. Your integration of legal, ethical and professional frameworks, such as Resnik's (2024) emphasis on honesty and the UK Consumer Protection Act (Nollet, 2024), greatly strengthens the argument and highlights the complexity of the issue.

Like Marwa, I agree that your discussion on reporting bias is especially compelling. It is easy to overlook how harmful selective reporting can be, even when no data is technically falsified. The way you presented it demonstrates that omission can be just as misleading as direct manipulation. While Linga highlights the importance of stakeholder analysis, I would add that Freeman and McVea's (2001) interpretation of stakeholder theory further expands this perspective by encouraging researchers to consider the broader ethical implications for consumers, regulators and society as a whole.

I would further suggest that Abi consider using data visualisation techniques to present both the positive and negative findings in a clear and balanced way. For example, employing side-by-side bar charts, dual-axis graphs or colour-coded matrices can assist in communicating complex results fairly (Kelleher and Wagener, 2011). These

methods not only preserve transparency but also help non-specialist audiences interpret the findings without being influenced by framing effects. Pullinger (2013) highlights the value of clear and honest statistical communication, particularly when findings relate to public health.

Your post provides an excellent ethical foundation. By complementing it with practical communication strategies such as responsible data visualisation, Abi could act with integrity and ensure that decisions based on the research are informed and fair.

Thank you again for encouraging such a thoughtful and constructive discussion.

References:

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