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].