Unit 1 Collaborative Discussion 1

Summary

Over the past three weeks, the investigation of ethics guidelines for computing professionals raised several interesting points, namely their role in managing dysfunctional workplace behaviour (Villar, 2022). Though considering McNamara et al. (2018), it might seem that ethics guidelines do little to persuade computing professionals in their decision-making process. For example, the case study by Swanlow (2022) showed how various security vendors and government groups were directed to act in an unethical manner—the development of a targeted computer worm—to prevent "bad actors" from abusing guaranteed hosting agreements by the hosting provider.

Ethics guidelines are not merely applicable to computing professionals. They apply equally to other areas, too, such as artificial intelligence (Franzke, 2022), dentistry (Agarwal et al., 2022), climate engineering (Brooks et al., 2022) or even animal research (Ahn and Roh, 2022). I consider that such guidelines exist to moderate a person's behaviour concerning animate or inanimate objects, whether it be sensitive data (lifeless) or other people. From this perspective, it is identified that the depletion of a person's ego also tends toward a lack of self-control, which affects one's ability to act ethically (Yam, 2018). In part, this makes sense because depleting one's self-control resources makes it easier to succumb to temptations and, by association, engage in unethical behaviour. So, based on the case studies presented in this discussion, I agree that the idea of reduced self-control can lead to unethical behaviour, though I would add the role of personal or organisational reward gained as found in the ever-increasing use of dark user experience patterns.

How then should computing professionals tackle awareness of ethics in their field? Jewe (2008) finds that teaching ethics courses is questionable, and McNamara et al. (2018) find that ethics guidelines do not affect professionals' decisions. Therefore, though philosophical, it must be worth considering the impact of one's actions on others. Such considerations may prove to be the most remarkable manner to enforce (personal) ethics compliance; we would not want the same actions against ourselves. Philosophical thought aside, guidelines such as ACM (https://www.acm.org/code-of-ethics), establishing a code of conduct (Ethics.org, 2022) or adhering to a code of professional conduct (CIPD, 2022) can help steer computing professionals in the right direction. Though ethics guidelines or codes of conduct exist, establishing respect for animate entities requires regulation to guide computing professionals' behaviour. Fortunately, as van Rooyen (2022) notes, the EU recently published draft

guidelines against engaging with user experience tactics designed to manipulate users beyond well-informed behaviours (van Rooyen, 2022).

In summary, ethics guidelines arise because of a need: a need to safeguard people, their data, finances, and research. They are beneficial to all professionals in every industry to ensure fair and honest interactions with consideration for society.

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