

Collaborative Discussion 2 – Research Methods and Professional Practice – Summary Post – Michael Geiger

The case study Accuracy of information about the researcher Abi, who is confronted with the challenge that the research data of the cereal Whizzz to be examined by his client indicate a potentially harmful product, shows the tension and the associated ethical and legal conflicts in research.

It is obvious that both parties involved, the cereal manufacturer as well as the commissioned researcher, have an interest in the research on Whizzz leading to a positive evaluation of the product. However, everyone involved is not only subject to ethical, but also legal and social responsibility (American Association for the Advancement of Science, 2014). Deliberate distortion of the results can not only result in permanent reputational damage, but also legal consequences ranging from fines to imprisonment for the researcher (Jaber, 2019). In addition to public damage to their reputation, companies are also threatened with severe fines, so they should also have an interest in scientifically correct and ethical research.

While it can be argued that the interpretation of research results may vary due to interfering factors such as methods, factors of time and space, as well as internal and external conditions, the ultimate goal should be the pursuit of scientific truth (Eisman & Lorenzo, 2007; Iso - Ahola, 2020).

The forms of research misconduct, falsification, fabrication and plagiarism (FFP) described as the 'unholy trinity of scientific writing' form the basic expectations of well-founded scientific research (Zietman, 2013). In addition, a large number of states have established guidelines on misconduct in research at national level. In the UK, these guidelines are provided by the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO, N.D.).

Central aspects of responsible research are transparency with regard to all participants, interest groups and funding in order to prevent bias in any implementation (Rowe et al., 2009). But also transparency in relation to the research methods, the implementation, the data collection and their evaluation is of the highest priority to prevent bias (Chan et al., 2014).

In summary, it can therefore be stated that the case study highlights the need for ethically responsible behaviour and the importance of transparency in any context related to scientific research. Research should be impartial, financially independent and unaffected by any form of manipulation. However, research often takes place within the area of tension between interest groups, which can have a not inconsiderable influence due to funding, especially in the private sector. In order to prevent erroneous behaviour, the central forms of research misconduct, falsification, fabrication and plagiarism (FFP) as well as the national guidelines should be followed at all times in order to avoid reputational damage and legal consequences and, in particular, to meet ethical and social responsibility.

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