

COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSION 1:  
CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT  
PEER RESPONSES

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# MY PEER RESPONSES TO OTHERS

## Peer Response: To Hainadine Chamane (2024)

Hainadine, thank you for your insightful post into the application of ethics in cybersecurity, and for being the first one to post.

This is an interesting ethical topic between Rogue Services, a “black hat” hosting facility for malicious services, and a “white hat or red hat” destructive takedown worm. Black is malicious, white is protective, and reds are vigilantes (Filiol et al., 2021). White hat hacking is also known as “ethical hacking” (Sinha & Arora, 2020). I am curious as to whether you think their behaviour was white hat or red hat?

I found the Malware Disruption case study at first read confusing as to the ethical position of the worm’s creators (ACM, N.D.). There is an opportunity to articulate the difference more clearly between Rogue’s breaches and the worm’s nuance on principle 1.2 (avoid harm) and principle 2.8 (consistency with public good) (ACM, 2018).

Your use of a table provided a clear method of comparison. However, in mine I added a first column briefly describing the breach and whether it violated legal, social, or professional. You could also add whether the principle was for Rogue or the worm, as 2.8 is not a breach, but a choice. That would help me understand more clearly which activities were associated with what code and which party.

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## Peer Response: To Joy Ngugi (2024)

Joy, thank you for your considered initial post. We both selected the same topic, “Abusive Workplace Behaviour” (ACM, N.D.). We are in relative agreement in the mapping between the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) and the British Computing Society (BCS), although I also included Duty to Relevant Authority.

I would like to explore Diane’s superior’s behaviour further, beyond her inaction and ethics. Jean enables Max’s behaviour, which is essential to his continuation. Power is the underlying reason for bullying (LaVan & Martin, 2021). Furthermore, D’Cruz and Noronha (2021) observe that a bully has enough power to gain that senior management support, and continued support and lack of support structures for victims results in institutionalised bullying. Bancroft (2003) concurs that abusers thrive with support of peers and, especially, superiors. Crucially, Jean does not enable a psychologically safe environment which impacts performance, knowledge sharing and innovation of the individual, team, and company (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023).

Please note that the ACM adopted its ethics code in 2018, and both your comparison papers predate that date. On a second pass, I noted that the ACM Code uses the word “should”, while the BCS Code of Conduct uses the word “shall” (British Computing Society, N.D.; ACM, 2018). BCS wording is stronger, however, both ACM and BCS ask for notification of breach of code and state that compliance is a condition of membership. I am curious if loss of membership has been an effective deterrent to abuse in the workplace.

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## Peer Response: To Michael Botha (2024)

Thank you for your response, Michael.

The paper you cite by Milyavsky et al. (2017) analyses whether the advisee is arrogant when dismissing advice from an advisor. In the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) (N.D.) case study on abusive workplace behaviour, Max exhibited the following behaviour patterns towards Diane:

- Full press credit for teamwork
- Verbal attacks, personal attacks
- Yelling, berating
- Removing women's names on journal submissions
- Exclusion punishment

Furthermore, Jean, Diane's manager, gave her the advice to "Grow up and get over it." ACM (N.D.). Diane is receiving abuse from Max, not advice, and her superior is behaving unprofessionally.

In this case, these are ethical code breaches by an advisor and superior as identified under both the ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct and British Computing Society (BCS) Code of Conduct, rather than arrogance on part of the advisee (British Computing Society, N.D.; ACM, 2018).

There are no BCS or ACM ethics codes to suggest Diane is behaving unethically, rather she is the recipient of unethical behaviour. LaVan and Martin (2021) note, power is the root cause of workplace bullying, and reframing mechanisms to justify abuse include victim blaming and shifting responsibility to the victim. Both would apply to suggesting Diane is unethical by not reporting further. Her superior, Jean,

however, is behaving unethically by not acting further to provide psychological safety to Diane under the ACM Professional Leadership principles (ACM, 2018).



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## PEER RESPONSES TO ME

### Peer Response: From Hainadine Chamane (2024)

Hi Maria,

Your topic is fascinating as it concerns the behaviour of individuals in a work environment. Your analysis of the ACM case study by ACM Ethics (2018) on abusive workplace behaviour was insightful. By comparing it to the relevant codes of the ACM (2018) and BCS (2022), you have highlighted some critical differences, emphasising ethics, psychological safety, and legal compliance. I agree that psychological safety is essential for fostering a healthy work environment, and accountability plays a crucial role in addressing abusive behaviour. We need a solution-oriented approach to enforcing ethical policies, as stated by the European Commission (2021).

The global study conducted by Ferrère et al. (2022) is a testament to the universal importance of psychological safety in the workplace. This shared belief encourages employees to take interpersonal risks and is crucial for an organisation's ethical climate. Leaders and compliance officers can leverage this understanding to promote timely changes, encourage misconduct reporting, and ensure team effectiveness, well-being, and moral culture, regardless of geographical location.

Your post highlights some thought-provoking areas for further exploration. The study by Weinbaum et al. (2019) underscores the complexity of ethics, shaped by historical events, ethical lapses, scientific advancements, and cultural values. Seth (N.D.) rightly points out the inadequacy of the ACM Code of Ethics in defining ethical goals for computing systems, leading to unjust outcomes. To address this, ethical

principles should encompass both terminal and instrumental values (Openstax, N.D.).

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## Peer Response: From Michael Botha (2024)

Hi Maria,

Thank you for your post. The case described seems to portray the popular narrative of the arrogant high achiever (Milyavsky et al., 2017). Do you think “Diane” would be unethical by not taking the case of “Max’s” abuse further?

References:

Milyavsky, M., Kruglanski, A., Chernikova, M., Schori Eyal, N. (2017). Evidence for Arrogance: On the Relative Importance of Expertise, Outcome, and Manner. *PLoS ONE* 12(7). DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0180420.

## Peer Response: From Alex Mutebe (2024)

Hi Maria,

In particular, in the areas of public interest, professional competence and integrity, duty to appropriate authorities, and duty to the profession, TABLE 1 clearly demonstrates how Max's actions and the team manager Jean's response contravene both the BCS and ACM Code of Conduct. In order to preserve the integrity and confidence of the profession, it is imperative that all IT professionals abide by the code of conduct, as implied in your final paragraph (Maria, 2024).

It is important to note that the BCS Code of Conduct has stricter requirements and is enforced by disciplinary action, which can lead to membership expulsion (BCS, 2022). According to McNamara et al. (2018), explicitly instructing IT professionals to consider the code of ethics in their decision making has had no observed effect. Hainadine (2024) makes the case that laws that are both legally obligatory and in accordance with the ACM and BCS standards of conduct ought to be strengthened.

In this case study, research should be done to establish if there are other laws that Diane can especially employ in the UK to obtain justice without going against the BCS principles. Maria, do you believe that the BCS code of conduct is sufficient to ensure that UK IT professionals follow it?

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## Peer Response: From Joy Ngugi (2024)

Hello Maria

Your analysis of the "Abusive Workplace Behaviour" case study is comprehensive and well-structured, effectively mapping the key points of the ACM Code of Ethics to the corresponding BCS Code of Conduct. This comparison clearly highlights the ethical breaches and their implications.

Like you, I also chose this case study and came across some intriguing facts during my research. A survey by Oak Engage (2023) on 2,000 employees from different industries revealed that 75% had experienced a toxic workplace culture, with 87% of these individuals agreeing that it had negatively affected their mental health.

Similarly, the American Psychology Association's (APA) (2023) reports that more than 1 in 5 workers have experienced harm to their mental health. This underscores the significant impact that unethical workplace behaviour can have on individual performance and psychological well-being.

The APA report also highlights that employees who perceive their workplace as fair and supportive are more likely to report better mental health and job satisfaction (American Psychological Association, 2023). This aligns with the ethical principles of both the ACM and BCS, which emphasise the importance of a respectful and supportive work environment (ACM, 2018; BCS, 2022). Implementing policies that promote mental health awareness, regular ethical training for management, and proactive measures to address workplace toxicity can play crucial roles in fostering a healthier workplace environment.

Further research could explore the effectiveness of such interventions in improving workplace culture and reducing instances of abusive behaviour. Additionally, examining case studies of organisations that have successfully implemented these practices could provide valuable insights into best practices for promoting ethical conduct and psychological safety in the workplace.

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