

Pressure and silencing in academia

This questionnaire aims to recognize how many of us – researchers at any career level - deal with external pressures in science. It is important to familiarize yourself with what external forms of pressure mean.

External pressure towards researchers refers to influences from outside (or even inside) their immediate academic or institutional environment that can affect their research practices, priorities, and well-being. These pressures can be coercive or persuasive and may stem from various sources, including funding bodies, regulatory agencies, professional networks, societal expectations, and market dynamics. In simple words – pressure which influences researchers with tools, such as threat of funding restrictions or criticism regarding results inconsistent with government or company policy etc.

In this questionnaire, we are not talking about academic disputes and pressures on the researcher's efficiency. However, sometimes inappropriate pressure can be made to look like an academic dispute, it's not always easy to tell.

The questionnaire has two parts:

Part I is for everyone to collect your concerns and ideas for improvements.

Part II is for those who have a personal experience on pressure including also the indirect pressure, that is seeing or hearing such experiences from someone else.

External pressure can appear in several ways:

- Silencing -e.g. suppressing or preventing someone from speaking out or expressing their opinions. This can occur through various means, such as intimidation, censorship, or social pressure, and is often employed to maintain control or avoid accountability.
- Harassing – e.g. discouraging or blaming emails or social media attacks towards the person or the research results or research ethics.
- Financial 'blackmailing' - e.g.the need to secure grants leading to aligning projects with the priorities of funding bodies, which may not always coincide with the researchers' personal research interests.
- Censorship – e.g.arguing that the research results should not be published because some stakeholder group might be offended.
- Discouraging – e.g.arguing that a research topic is irrelevant or harmful because it might affect the public opinions on the University/research group.
- Suppression – e.g.trying to influence how a research result is written or if it should at all be published because it might harm the reputation of some coauthors/university/research team.
- Compromised Research Integrity – e.g. pressure to publish or secure funding leading to engaging in questionable practices.

The results of the questionnaire will be handled by the INAR work well-being group as well as [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

PART I

Do you have personal experiences of pressure or silencing?

- * Yes
 No

What are your main concerns regarding these type of pressures? In other words, what should we as the INAR community discuss together?

Ideas how to make our community stronger in responding to such pressures?

PART II

Have you experienced any DIRECT pressure regarding your research work from

- Your peers (other scientists)
 Your supervisor
 Other superiors at the university
 External

PART II

Have you experienced any INDIRECT (via somebody/heard from secondary source etc.) pressure regarding your research work? Can you elaborate?

PART II

How did you handle the situations listed above? (choose all that apply)

- I tried to talk with the people pressuring me
- I stopped doing/heavily altered my activities in the things that led to the pressure
- I discussed with someone(s) outside academia (like friends or relatives)
- I discussed with peers in academia
- I discussed with a representative of the university body (like HR)
- I reduced my public activities or professional use of social media or similar
- Other

PART II

How did you react to the situation (like adverse effects on your health or social life)?