



German version below!

Welcome to the Leibniz PhD Network Prevention of Power Abuse Survey 2025, and thank you for participating! This is a voluntary survey for all doctoral researchers working within the Leibniz Association.

Please be aware that this survey is in English. For legal reasons and to ensure everyone understands it, we will provide the information for data protection in both German and English language. Our privacy notice is also available in both languages, however only the German one is legally binding.

Declaration of consent according the Datenschutz-Grundverordnung (DSGVO)

Please take the time and carefully read our privacy notice. You can find it attached to the invitation mail to this survey and also via this link (click here).

Power abuse in academia can take many forms and have far-reaching and devastating impacts, leading to long-term psychological harm, career derailment, and erosion of trust in institutions of higher learning. It is crucial to raise awareness about power abuse in academia, because it undermines the fundamental principles of fairness, equity and respect that are essential for creating a safe and supportive learning environment. By shedding light on this issue, we attempt to create a healthier and secure work environment, where victims feel safe and empowered to come forward and report abuse. In addition, spreading awareness can help create more effective policies and procedures to prevent power abuse, while providing the necessary support network and resources for those who have experienced it. This survey aims to understand the mechanism of power abuse inside the Leibniz Association. Also, it lists available resources inside and outside of Leibniz to inform the doctoral researcher, as well as to find support in cases of power abuse. Creating a report with the anonymized data provided will lay a foundation for discussions and suggestions to implement further support structures and reduce the impact of power abuse in academia.

To be allowed to collect and handle this data, we need your consent (note the checkbox below). Please be aware that we also collect data that is rendered sensitive data according the DSGVO, including questions about your gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, migrational background and religion. You always have the option to to choose “I don’t want to answer this question”.

While filling the survey your IP-address is technically known to the survey collection service provider LimeSurvey GmbH and is deleted when you leave the website.



Section A: Sensitive question

German version below!

This survey contains questions that could be perceived as sensitive and very personal. You always have the option to choose “I don't want to answer this question”.

It is very important for us to ask these questions because they are key determinants for the well-being of doctoral researchers and the environments they work in. Power abuse is overall a very sensitive topic, therefore we can not perform this survey without sensitive questions.

Please be aware that we follow the DSGVO and make sure your data is protected! For more information, please have a look at our privacy notice. You can find it attached to the invitation mail to this survey and also via this link (click here).

By selecting “Yes, it is okay for me.” and 'Next', you accept the terms and conditions listed on the previous page and above, including the use of the provided data. More information regarding our data security policy can be found here (Pflichtinformation nach §13 und 14 DSGVO, attached).

Diese Umfrage beinhaltet Fragen welche als sensitiv und sehr persönlich angesehen werden können. Du kannst immer die Option „I don't want to answer this question“ wählen.

Wir erachten es jedoch als sehr wichtig diese Fragen zu stellen da sie Schlüsselfaktoren für das Wohlergehen der Promovierenden sowie deren Arbeitsumfeld darstellen. Machtmissbrauch ist ein sensibles Themenfeld und es ist uns nicht möglich eine Umfrage ohne sensible Fragen zu gestalten.

Sei versichert, dass wir den Schutz deiner Daten sehr ernst nehmen und den Maßgaben der DSGVO folgen! Weitere Informationen findest du in unseren Datenschutzhinweisen (hier klicken).

Mit der Wahl von „Yes, it is okay for me I agree with the data protection regulations for these sensitive questions!“ stimmst du der Teilnahme der Umfrage zu und willigst auch der Nutzung und Erhebung deiner Daten gemäß unserer Datenschutzhinweisen ein.

A1. Are you aware that the survey contains sensitive questions and want to participate?

Yes, I agree with the data protection regulations for these sensitive questions

No, I prefer not to take the survey



Section B: What is Power Abuse?

B1. What do you consider power abuse to be?

Section C: Power Abuse Definition

C1.

I confirm that I have read the following definition:

" "Power abuse" or "abuse of power" is commonly defined as using one's position of power (Dahl, 1957) to take advantage of a person in an inferior position for personal gain or to harm said person (UNESCO, 2020). It is strongly connected to the ability to control or punish a person in an inferior position if they do not comply (Hodes & Mennicke, 2019; Vredenburg & Brender, 1998). Harming the victim of power abuse can take the form of bullying (National Centre Against Bullying, 2020)."

Taken from: "Power abuse and anonymous accusations in academia – Perspectives from early career researchers and recommendations for improvement" - Jana Lasser, Lindsey Bultema, Anja Jahn, Michaela Löffler, Vera Minneker, Cornelia van Scherpenberg (Klick for the linked document)

This survey focuses on power abuse inside academia, which can be manifested in many ways. This statement regarding power abuse is not legally binding and is provided for informational purposes only. It does not establish enforceable obligations or agreements. Consult legal professionals for advice on legal matters.

Agree

Disagree



Section D: Facettes of Power Abuse

D1. While working at your institute, how often do you consider power abuse an issue in your research group?

- Never
- Less than once a month
- Once a month
- Several times a Month
- Once a week
- Daily
- I don't want to answer

D2. While working at your institute, how often do you consider power abuse an issue at your institute overall?

- Never
- Less than once a month
- Once a month
- Several times a month
- Once a week
- Several times a week
- Daily
- I don't want to answer
- Other

Other

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Section E: Your Experiences with Power Abuse

E1.

Did you experience one of the following? (Please answer here only with experiences you have had yourself. We will ask you in the next question presenting the same list if you have been a witness of these incidents.) If you have experienced another form of abuse that is not on the list, please share it under question – "Can you tell us your story/experience?"

Inappropriate comments during meetings (e.g., being of sexual or personal nature)

Feeling treated differently because of your gender

Feeling treated differently because of your place of origin

Being contacted outside your working hours with an urgent request to finish a working task outside your working time

Holidays were refused without a stated reason

Feeling like you need extra justification to take your holidays

Feeling guilty for taking vacations due to the perpetrator's behavior

The perpetrator did not fulfill his or her part of verbal or written agreements

The perpetrator sets impossible deadlines and workloads, then uses these missed targets as a pretext for abuse

The perpetrator refused meetings

The perpetrator interfered with your experiment forcing you to spend time redoing it

The perpetrator interfered with your scientific results forcing you to spend time redoing it without scientific reasoning

The perpetrator refused commenting on the thesis

The perpetrator refused to review your manuscript

The perpetrator refused submission of the thesis

The perpetrator refused submission of manuscripts without scientific reasons

The perpetrator used bullying to force you to give authorship role on a paper

Contracts were not extended without a stated reason

The perpetrator was going against institute guidelines

Feeling like you cannot complain about safety issues, because it will lead to repercussions during your PhD

Feeling like you cannot complain about contract issues to the works council, because it will lead to repercussions during your PhD

Feeling like you cannot complain about bullying, because it will lead to repercussions during your PhD

The perpetrator is not treating confidential information as such



- Feeling pressured to work more hours than your contract states
- The perpetrator doesn't allow you to go to conferences, while other researchers in your research group are able to go
- The perpetrator doesn't allow you to go to workshops, while other researchers in your research group are able to go
- The perpetrator prohibited or prevented the establishment of a collaboration with a researcher inside or outside the institute without scientific reasons
- You received verbal threats
- The perpetrator encouraged or used intimidation to get other colleagues of the institute to harass you (mobbing)
- The perpetrator encouraged or used intimidation to get other colleagues in the academic community to harass you (mobbing)
- You felt pressured to engage in sexual activity
- You were reminded that you can be replaced
- You were reminded that you can be fired
- You were reminded that your contract might not be renewed
- Passive-aggressive remarks about your work performance or perceived abilities
- You felt forced to buy essential work equipment (such as computers, licences, books etc.) at your own expense
- None of the above
- I don't want to answer

E2. Who did you identify as the perpetrator of the power abuse?

"Formal" supervisor refers to the main advisor of your thesis as present in your committee. "Direct" supervisor refers to the person you actually consult and discuss your project with on a more regular basis.

- Direct supervisor
- Formal supervisor
- Direct/formal supervisor (same person)
- Other doctoral researcher
- Other scientific staff
- Administrative staff
- None of the above
- I don't want to answer

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E3. Can you tell us your story/experience? (Please keep names and institutes anonymous. In the next question, you can choose if we will keep your story confidential or if we can use it making sure you are completely untraceable.)

E4.

Would you agree for us to use your story in further discussions to improve the situation of doctoral researchers in regards to power abuse? (names, personal information and institutions will not be disclosed in these discussions for your protection)

Yes
No, keep my story confidential

E5.

Did you experience one of the following as a witness? If you have witnessed another form of abuse that is not on the list, please share it under the following question – "Can you tell us your story/experience?" below.

- Inappropriate comments during meetings (e.g., being of sexual or personal nature)
- Doctoral researcher being treated differently because of their gender
- Doctoral researcher being treated differently because of their place of origin
- Doctoral researcher being contacted outside of working hours with an urgent request to finish a working task outside their working time
- Holidays being refused without a stated reason
- A doctoral researcher feels like they need extra justification to take their holidays
- A doctoral researcher feels guilty for taking vacations due to perpetrator's behavior
- A doctoral researcher feels the perpetrator did not fulfill their part of verbal or written agreements
- The perpetrator refused meetings with a doctoral researcher
- The perpetrator interfered with a doctoral researcher's experiment forcing them to spend time redoing it
- The perpetrator interfered with a doctoral researcher's scientific results forcing them to spend time redoing it without scientific reasoning
- The perpetrator refused commenting on the thesis of a doctoral researcher
- The perpetrator refused to review a doctoral researcher's manuscript



- The perpetrator refused submission of a doctoral researcher's thesis
- The perpetrator used bullying to force a doctoral researcher to give authorship role on a paper
- The perpetrator refused submission of manuscripts a doctoral researcher without scientific reasons
- Contracts were not extended without a stated reason to a doctoral researcher
- The perpetrator was going against institute guidelines
- Doctoral researcher feels like they cannot complain about safety issues, because it will lead to repercussions during their PhD
- Doctoral researcher feels like they cannot complain about contract issues to the works council, because it will lead to repercussions during their PhD
- Doctoral researcher feels like they cannot complain about bullying, because it will lead to repercussions during their PhD
- The perpetrator is not treating a doctoral researcher's confidential information as such
- Doctoral researcher feels pressured to work more hours than their contract states
- The perpetrator doesn't allow the doctoral researcher to go to conferences, while other researchers in their research group are able to go
- The perpetrator doesn't allow the doctoral researcher to go to workshops, while other researchers in their research group are able to go
- The perpetrator prohibited or prevented the establishment of a collaboration with a researcher inside or outside the institute without scientific reasons
- Verbal threats were used against a doctoral researcher
- The perpetrator encouraged or used intimidation to get other colleagues of the institute to harass a doctoral researcher (mobbing)
- The perpetrator encouraged or used intimidation to get other colleagues in the academic community to harass a doctoral researcher (mobbing)
- Doctoral researcher feels pressured to engage in sexual activity
- Reminding a doctoral researcher that they can be replaced
- Reminding a doctoral researcher that they can be fired
- Reminding a doctoral researcher that their contract might not be renewed
- Passive-aggressive remarks about a doctoral researcher's work performance or perceived abilities
- Doctoral researcher feels forced to buy essential work equipment (such as computers, licences, books etc.) at his/her own expense
- None of the above
- I don't want to answer

E6. Who did you identify as the perpetrator of the power abuse?

"Formal" supervisor refers to the main advisor of your thesis as present in your committee. "Direct" supervisor refers to the person you actually consult and discuss your project with on a more regular basis.

- Direct supervisor
- Formal supervisor
- Direct/formal supervisor (same person)
- Other doctoral researcher



- Other scientific staff
- Administrative staff
- None of the above
- I don't want to answer

E7. Can you tell us your story/experience? (Please keep names and institutes anonymous. In the next question, you can choose if we will keep your story confidential or if we can use it making sure you are completely untraceable.)

E8. Would you agree for us to use your story in further discussions to improve the situation of doctoral researchers in regards to power abuse? (names, personal information and institutions will not be disclosed in these discussions for your protection)

Yes

No, keep my story confidential

E9. Do you know whom to contact when you feel abused (where you can feel confident to report on your experiences)?

Yes

No

I don't want to answer

E10. Have you ever reported a case of power abuse?

Yes

No, although I experienced power abuse

No, I have never experienced power abuse

I don't want to answer this question

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E11. How satisfied or unsatisfied were you with the consequences of your report?

Very satisfied

Satisfied

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied

Unsure, the case is still ongoing

I don't want to answer this question

E12. Why did you not report the power abuse?

I wasn't sure whom to report it to

I didn't think it would be resolved

I felt the people whom I could report to were not sufficiently trained to deal with it

I was afraid of repercussions

I didn't think the abuse was severe enough

I could deal with it myself

I don't know

I don't want to answer this question

Other

Other

E13.

Would you like to tell us whom you were in contact with and how the process went?



Section F: Support Structures at Your Institute

F1. Does your institute have or provide access to one of the following?

- Ombudsperson
- Human Ressources
- Works Council
- Equal Opportunity Officer
- Graduate School
- PhD Representatives
- Psychological Counseling
- I am not aware of any of the above
- I don't know
- I don't want to answer this question
- Other

Other

F2. Which of the following do you know the function and responsibility of?

- Ombudsperson
- Human Resources
- Works Council
- Equal Opportunity Officer
- Graduate School
- PhD Representatives
- Psychological Counseling
- Leibniz Advice Centre
- I am not aware of any of the above
- I don't want to answer this question



F3. Were you informed when starting your PhD about one or more of the following guidelines?

- Institute Code of Conduct
- Institute Guidelines on Good Scientific Practice
- University Code of Conduct
- University Guidelines on Good Scientific Practice
- Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice in the Leibniz Association
- Guiding Principles for Our Actions in the Leibniz Association
- DFG Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice
- I was not informed of any guidelines
- I don't want to answer this question
- Other

Other

F4. Do you have any suggestions on how to prevent power abuse?

Section G: Working Conditions

In this section, we ask you about your salary or income, possible contract extensions, your working hours or the amount of holidays that are entitled to you.

G1.

How is your doctoral research currently financed ?

- Contract (internal from my Leibniz institute or research museum)
- Contract (external or guest contract)
- Internal stipend



External stipend - scholarship from Germany

External stipend - scholarship from abroad

I am not receiving any scholarship or payment at the moment - "unemployed"

I don't know

I don't want to answer this question

Other

Other

G2. Please select all options that apply. Why you are currently unpaid?

It is my choice

My funding extension was not granted

The funding ran out

I don't want to answer this question

Other

Other

G3. Are you currently collecting unemployment benefits ("Arbeitslosengeld")?

Yes

No

I don't want to answer this question

G4. Right now, what is your monthly net income for your work at your research organization in euros?

Explanation: Net income is the amount of money transferred to your bank account every month. Do not count any bonuses such as a Christmas bonus etc. Scholarship holders and freelancers: deduct tax and health insurance. Income not related to work in the institute/doctoral research should not be included.

less than 500

500-700

701-1000





1001-1100

1101-1200

1201-1300

1301-1400

1401-1500

1501-1600

1601-1700

1701-1800

1801-1900

1901-2000

2001-2100

2101-2200

2201-2300

2301-2400

2401-2500

2501-2600

2601-2700

2701-2800

2901-3000

3001-3100

3101-3200

3301-3300

3301-3400

3401-3500

more than 3500

I don't want to answer this question

I don't know

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G5. What was or is the longest duration of your contract or stipend related to your PhD project?

less than 6 months

6 months to 1 year

1-2 years

2-3 years

3-4 years

more than 4 years

I don't have a contract

I don't know

I don't want to answer this question

Other

Other

G6. How many contract/stipend extensions did you get during your PhD?

I am still on my original contract

1

2

3

4

5

More than 5

I don't know

I don't want to answer this question

G7.

Would it be possible for you to extend your current contract/stipend for the following reasons?

More time needed to complete the PhD project

Parental leave



Wrap-up phase after completion of the PhD project

Health issues

I don't know

I don't want to answer this question

Other

Other

G8. Are you financially responsible for anyone else?

Yes

No

I don't want to answer this question

G9. Do you get external financial support to cover your living expenses? If yes, who is assisting you financially?

I took out a loan for my time as a doctoral researcher

Parents

Other relatives

Partner(s)

State - Kindergeld

State - Unemployment benefits

State - "Wohngeld"

Other job

I do not get external financial support

I don't want to answer this question

Other

Other

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G10. How strongly do you depend on this external financial support to cover your living expenses?

Not at all

Slightly

Moderately

Strongly

Completely

I don't want to answer this question

G11. How many holidays per year can you take according to your contract or stipend?

My funding does not specify the number of holidays

1-5 days

6-10 days

11-15 days

16-20 days

21-25 days

26-30 days

>30 days

I don't know

I don't want to answer this question

G12. How many hours per week are you expected to work according to your contract? Please round the answer to the nearest hour.

Example: A 50% contract according to TV-L demands you to work 20h or 19.5h depending on the state you work in.

I don't know

I don't want to answer this question

0

1

2

3

4

5

6





- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
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- 33
- 34
- 35

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- 36
- 37
- 38
- 39
- 40

G13. How many hours per week do you usually work?

- up to 10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-45
- 46-50
- 51-55
- 56-60
- over 60
- I don't want to answer
- I don't know

G14.

Would you like to tell us anything additional regarding your working conditions or financial situation?



Section H: Demographics

In this section, we will ask general questions about yourself and your doctoral project.

H1. Have you participated in the last N2 survey in Februray 2024?

Yes

No

I don't remember

I don't want to answer this question

H2. Which Leibniz section are you associated with?

You can search your institute in the list of the institutes grouped by section here: Leibniz-Sections

Section A - Humanities and Educational Research

Section B - Economics, Social Sciences, Spatial Research

Section C - Life Sciences

Section D - Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Engineering

Section E - Environmental Sciences

I don't want to answer this question

H3. Which gender do you identify most with?

Female

Male

Gender diverse (Gender-fluid)

Non-binary

I don't want to answer this question

Other gender representations:

Other gender representations:



H4. Which sexual orientation do you identify most with?

- Heterosexual
- Homosexual
- Bisexual
- Asexual
- Queer
- I don't want to answer this question
- Other

Other

H5. When did you start your PhD?

Explanation: The start of your doctoral research is either the start of your first contract/stipend or your enrollment in a university as a doctoral researcher, whichever is earlier.

- Before 1980
- 1980
- 1981
- 1982
- 1983
- 1984
- 1985
- 1986
- 1987
- 1988
- 1989
- 1990
- 1991
- 1992
- 1993
- 1994

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- 1995
- 1996
- 1997
- 1998
- 1999
- 2000
- 2001
- 2002
- 2003
- 2004
- 2005
- 2006
- 2007
- 2008
- 2009
- 2010
- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014
- 2015
- 2016
- 2017
- 2018
- 2019
- 2020
- 2021
- 2022
- 2023

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- 2024
- 2025
- I don't know.
- I don't want to answer.

H6. When do you expect to submit your PhD Thesis?

- Before 2024
- 2024
- 2025
- 2026
- 2027
- 2028
- 2029
- 2030
- 2031
- 2032
- 2033
- 2034
- 2035
- After 2035
- I don't expect to finish my Doctorate.
- I don't know.
- I don't want to answer.

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H7. I identify my ethnicity as:

To get a better picture on the diversity of your organization we're asking questions regarding your ethnicity. Please select the option(s) that you feel best represent(s) you. We hope this can shed light on issues certain groups could be facing (within the organization). Please be assured that your data will be treated confidentially and used in an ethical way.

- European/European descent
- Latino/Hispanic
- Middle Eastern
- African



Caribbean

South Asian

East Asian/Southeast Asian

Pacific Islander

Northeast Asian

I don't want to answer this question

Other

Other

H8. What is your citizenship? Should you have multiple citizenships, please select the one you feel best represented by.

German

European Union (EU)

Outside the European Union (EU)

I don't want to answer this question

H9. Were your parents born in Germany?

Yes, both of my parents were born in Germany

Only one of my parents was born in Germany

No, none of my parents were born in Germany

I don't know

I don't want to answer this question

H10. Were you born in Germany?

Yes, I was born in Germany

No, I was born outside of Germany

I don't want to answer this question



H11. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Yes, I have an officially recognized disability (under 50%)

Yes, I have a "Schwerbehindertenausweis" (handycapped pass)

Yes, but it is not officially recognized in Germany

No

I don't want to answer this question

Section I: The End

I1.

Anything regarding the survey you would like to tell us?

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Thank you for your response. If at any point in time you feel you need help with a power abuse case (being victim or a witness), or any other case that makes you feel uncomfortable in your workplace, don't hesitate to contact us. The conversation will be kept confidential. You can use the following contact email address:

ppa.leibnizphd@outlook.com

Here are some resources that are useful if you are a victim or witness of power abuse:

Leibniz PhD Network - "Who to contact in case of conflict?"

**Ombudsgremium für die wissenschaftliche Integrität in Deutschland -
Jahresberichte - Annual Reports**

**DFG - Advice and Mediation in the Event of Conflicts in the Area of Good Research
Practice**

Leibniz Association - Gute wissenschaftliche Praxis und Ombudswesen

Leibniz Association - Leibniz Advice Centre

Netzwerk gegen Machtmissbrauch in der Wissenschaft e.V.

editage insights - "Bullying in academia: Why it matters, and what you can do"

For any questions, comments and concerns, you are welcome to contact us via email (spokesperson@leibniz-phd.net or ppa.leibnizphd@outlook.com) or to get in touch with us directly.