

Challenging power dynamics in academia: Unexpected Double Jeopardy in Migrating from Global North to South

GOPALAN SRINIVASAN

Centre for Space Sciences and Earth Habitability

Scientific research and study is a social enterprise relying on cooperation between the members of the community and institutions. The intersection of ethnic and racial identities of community members gives rise to power dynamic because of asymmetry in social power distribution [1-3]. This power play also exists between global north and south institutions. The colonial legacy has given global north institutions more resources and greater legitimacy in knowledge creation and dissemination. As a result knowledge is viewed as flowing from global north to south. The power play in academia can have disproportionate negative consequences on underrepresented minorities (URMs). Fostering an inclusive environment will require a supportive ecosystem with equitable resource sharing for pursuing research. While power imbalances manifest in different ways, there is limited awareness of challenges faced by underrepresented minorities as many do not report their own or colleague's experiences to employer for fear of retaliation. Previously the challenges faced by a scholar of male South-Asian origin in a global north institution following recruitment, e.g., inadequate resource allocation, active disruption to research, biased promotion / performance reviews were discussed [4]. As informal attempts to mitigate the situation failed, formal institutional dispute resolution mechanisms were taken up successfully [4]. As the backlash intensified opportunity for continuation and fresh review was declined for personal and family safety. The scholar faced double jeopardy as efforts to rebuild scientific career in his own country were scuttled by propagation of negativity by weaponizing the global north institution's annulled tenure review process. This vitiation prevented gainful employment in perpetuity, resulting in marginalisation. In order to mitigate the risks it is important to create awareness to address challenges, and create framework and guard rails in global south institutions to protect individuals from false narratives.

Ref [1] Ranganathan, M., et al., (2021). AGU Advances, 2, e2021AV000436. [2] Clancy, K. B. H., et al. (2017) J. Geophys. Res. Planets, 122, 1610–1623, [3] Hastings, M. G. (2021). AGU Advances, 2, e2021AV000514. [4] Srinivasan G. (2024) LPI IDEA Conference #2018.