

Mapping Drivers, Capacities and Needs for Research Ethics in the Middle East and North Africa

Hello and welcome! Thank you for your interest to participate in this survey. The purpose of the survey is to obtain your insights on applied research ethics in the region. This survey will take approximately 30 minutes and includes 45 questions. Your views are important to us. Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with us and we hope you enjoy taking the survey.

The following questions will determine if you are eligible to take part in this study:

1- Are you over 18 years of age?

Yes

No

2- Were you **actively** engaged in research with human subjects/participants in the last five years?

Yes/No

Activement (for French)

هل كنت/نت فاعلة/فاعلة في إجراء البحوث مع أفراد مشاركين في البحث في السنوات الثلاث الماضية؟

Human subjects/participants are defined as: “living individual about whom an investigator conducting research obtains data through intervention or interaction with the individual or identifiable private

Information” (US code of Federal Regulations 46.102)

I. Demographic Characteristics

In the following section, we will ask you some questions related to your educational level, university affiliation, current contract, and main field of research.

1- Gender

1.Female

2.Male

American University of Beirut
Institutional Review Board
16 May 2023
APPROVED

- 3. Other (give people the option to write)
- 4. Prefer not to answer

2- What is the highest educational level that you attained?

- a. Doctoral degree/ PhD or equivalent degree
- b. Master's degree
- c. Medical doctor
- d. Bachelor's (Non-medical)
- e. Vocational training
- f. Other, please specify

3- Where did you receive your highest academic degree? Please specify country :

- Country?

4- What type of academic institution are you currently employed at ? (tick all that apply)

- Public University
- Private University
- Government Research Center
- University research center
- Independent research center
- Other, please specify

5- What type of employment contract do you currently have?

- Full time
- Part time
- Consultancy basis /casual
- Hourly
- Other

6- What is your current job title?

- Researcher
- Research associate
- Postdoctoral researcher
- Assistant Professor
- Associate Professor
- Full Professor
- Lecturer/ Instructor

- Other, please specify

7- In which country/countries do you conduct research?

[Drop down of countries – select multiple]

8- Which of the below is your main field of research?

Medicine	
Computer Science	
Social Sciences	
Economic sciences	
Political sciences	
Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology	
Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmaceutics	
Agricultural and Biological Sciences	
Arts and Humanities	
Business, Management and Accounting	
Engineering science and technology	
Nursing	
Dentistry	
Immunology and Microbiology	
Economics, Econometrics and Finance	
Multidisciplinary	
Health Professions	
Public Health	
Psychology	
Neuroscience	
Other, specify	

9- For How many years have you been involved in academic research with human participants?

[Number] years

10- How many days, on average, per week are you involved in the research process??

- < 1 day per week
- 1-2 days per week
- 3-4 days per week
- >4 days per week

11- Why do you conduct research? (tick all that apply)

- To produce knowledge and improve my field of research
- To produce knowledge that can help my community
- I enjoy doing research/personal motivation
- Pressure to publish to get promoted/remain employed
- Pressure to obtain external funding
- Pressure to compete with other researchers
- Research is part of my job description
- Other, please state why

II. Research Methods and Research Ethics Training and Guidelines:

In the following section, we will ask questions to understand your perception of your satisfaction in the following areas/fields: training in research methodology, training in research ethics, research guidelines and guidance.

12- To what extent do you feel satisfied with your research skills?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know

Training in research methodology:

13- Have you ever received training in research methodology?

- Yes
- No

14- If yes, what is the modality of the last training? (tick all that apply)

- Internet-based/online certificate
- Workshop/conference
- Course
- Diploma training
- On-the-job training
- Others

15- If yes, when did you receive the last training in research methodology? (tick all that apply)

- Undergraduate studies
- Graduate studies
- Postgraduate studies
- Tenure at university
- Other, please specify

16- What is your level of satisfaction with the content of the research methodology training you last received:

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know

Prefer not to answer 16a. If dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, please mention the reasons: (tick all that applies)

- The content of the training was too specialized and not useful for my field of research
- The content was too general and broad
- The training was theoretical
- Other: please specify

17- Are you interested in attending training workshops on research methodology in the future?

- a. Yes
- b. No

18- If yes, suggest some topic for the training

What is the modality of the suggested training? (tick all that apply)

- a. Hands-on-practice
- b. Virtual Workshop
- c. Self-Paced

Training in research ethics:

19- To what extent do you feel your research **ethics** skills are adequate for you to: (Likert scale):

	To a great extent	Somewhat	To very little extent	To no extent at all	Don't know
lead a research study					
Follow ethical research practices in your study					
Interact ethically with research participants, e.g. follow informed consent principles.					
Resolve ethical dilemmas in your study if they arise					

20- Have you ever received training in research ethics?

- Yes
- No

21- If yes, where did you receive the last training:

dropdown menu of countries

22- If yes, when did you receive the last training in research ethics? (tick all that apply)

- Undergraduate studies
- Graduate studies
- Postgraduate studies
- While working in my current role
- Other, please specify

23- If yes, what is the modality of the last research ethics training you received?

- Internet-based/online certificate
- Workshop/conference
- Course
- Part of a research study
- Other, please specify

24- If yes, what is your level of satisfaction with the content of the research ethics training:

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know
- Refuse to answer
 - a. If dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, please mention the reasons:
 - The content of the training was too specialized and not useful for my field of research
 - The training was mandatory and not of interest to me
 - The content was too general and broad
 - The training was theoretical

25- Are you interested in receiving research ethics training in the future?

- Yes
- No

If yes

a. Suggested topics: _____

b. If yes, what is the modality of the suggested training? (tick all that apply):

- hands on
- Virtual workshops
- Self-paced

Guidance and Guidelines:

26- Does your institution require an ethics review process for research with human participants/subjects?

Human subjects/participants are defined as: “living individual about whom an investigator conducting research obtains data through intervention or interaction with the individual or identifiable private information” (US code of Federal Regulations 46.102)

- Yes
- No

27- To what extent are you familiar with the ethics procedures that govern conducting research involving human subjects/participants in your field?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- Extremely Don't know

28- To what extent are you familiar with the ethics procedures practiced at your institution?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- Extremely
- Don't know

29- When faced with an ethical dilemma or question about applied ethics, do you approach anyone for assistance or advice?

1. Yes
2. No
- 3.

30- If yes to 29, who do/would you refer to for guidance when/if you face an ethical dilemma or have a question about applied ethics : (tick all that apply)

- Supervising professors
- Colleagues/peers
- Senior researchers

- Principal investigator
- Head of department
- Dean/dean of research
- Institutional Review Board (IRB)/Research Ethics Committee (REC)
- External ethics committee
- None
- Other, please specify

31- When faced with an ethical dilemma or question do you refer to guidelines, books, or other resources?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Prefer not to answer

30. If yes to 29, what resources do you refer to?

- Guidelines from university
- Guidelines from journals
- International guidelines (for example: Helsinki, Belmont, International conference on harmonization of guidelines for Good Clinical Practice, Universal Declaration of Human Rights)
- Guidelines at the national level
- Research books
- Other, please specify

III. Resources Available for you to Conduct your Research:

In the following section, we will ask questions about the resources available to you while conducting research.

32- What sources of funding are available to you? (tick all that apply):

- University internal funding
- Government/National research funds
- Private sector companies
- Multilateral and bilateral donor funding
- Local NGOs
- International NGOs
- Out of pocket
- Other international funding
- Other, please specify.

33- What other resources are available for you to conduct your research? (tick all that apply)

- Supportive infrastructure (for example, library resources, research office, adequate equipment)
- Technical and staff support (for example, research assistants)
- Access to international peer review journals
- Training for scientific research
- Sufficient time to conduct research
- Clear and accessible policies for guiding research
- Accessible research Ethics Committee information
- Active research networks and research collaborations
- Incentives for research (recognition for researchers, financial incentives, promotion guidelines)

IV. Concerns/Challenges:

In the following section, we will ask about your perceptions vis a vis challenges while conducting research

34- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

(For each of the statements, the participants will have options such as: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree, Don't know/refuse to answer)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
d) Local researchers such as myself are not invited to conduct local research					
e) The quality of research in my country is suboptimal					
f) Societal trust in scientific research is generally low in my country					
g) Policy makers in my country rarely use research results to inform policy making					

h) I have valuable ideas for research and do not find appropriate funding					
i) People in charge of allocating research funds don't see my field of research as a priority					
J) There is inadequate funding for my field of research					
k) There are insufficient funds to help me publish my research					

34- In your opinion which of the following impact research integrity for you, if at all?

- Pressure to publish
- Pressure to obtain external funding
- Limited time for research
- Artificial intelligence (ex ChatGPT)

35- Which of the below are ethical dilemmas you have encountered while conducting your research (tick all that apply)

- Coercive recruitment of participants for the study
- Collecting sensitive information from people
- Engaging with vulnerable populations
- Conflict of Interest and interference by the funding body
- Difficulties in taking informed consent
- Threat to personal security
- Cultural conflicts
- Lack of benefit to community
- Conflicting priorities between researchers and the research participants
- Issues with data safety
- Academic misconduct by other researchers
- Other, please specify?

36- Perceived prevalence of scientific misconduct in the workplace

How frequently do you believe the following occur in your workplace? (Frequently, seldom, occasionally, never, don't know)

- Disagreement about authorship
- Selective dropping of data from "outlier" cases
- Plagiarism
- Falsifying data
- Falsification of biosketch, resume, reference list
- Pressure from study sponsor to engage in unethical practices
- Intentional protocol violations related to procedures
- Intentional protocol violations related to subject enrolment
- coercion of potential subjects
- coercion from sponsor (ex pharma or device company) to engage in unethical practices

Challenges with the Institutional Review Board (IRB)/ Research Ethics Committees(REC) review process:

37- Have you applied for ethics approval for research with human subjects/participants in the last five years:

Yes

No

38- If yes, which of the below are challenges in the ethics review process that you have experienced: (tick all that apply)

- Ethics review process delays the study
- Multiple submissions and documents are needed
- Review process is time consuming
- IRB/REC interferes in the methodological aspects of research
- IRB/REC guidelines are unclear
- IRB/REC guidelines are inaccessible
- **IRB/REC guidelines are unavailable**
- IRB/REC requirements do not apply to social science and behavioural research
- Other, please specify.

39- What of the below challenges have you faced with the Institutional Review Board/Research Ethics Committee (tick all that apply):

- Inadequacy of knowledge of Institutional Review Board (IRB)/ Research Ethics Committee (REC) reviewers about different research methodologies
- Ambiguity regarding how to communicate with IRB/REC office

- Poor communication between the different IRB/RECs (for ex. Hospital IRB/REC & government IRB/REC)
- IRB/REC influence from sponsors and political powers
- None
- other

Contextual Challenges:

40- To what extent do you agree with the below statements

(For each statement select the most appropriate response: Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree or disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't know/refuse to answer)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Political atmosphere in my country affects choice of research topics					
Some research topics face rejection due to country political reasons					
Dissemination of research findings may be censored					
Research priorities are defined at national level					
Research topics are repetitive and descriptive					

Challenges with International research/collaborative research:

41- Did you conduct research with international collaborators in the last 5 years?

- Yes
- No

42- If yes, to what extent do the below statements apply to you in international collaborative research studies.

	To a great extent	Somewhat	To very little extent	To no extent at all	Don't know
Research agenda/topic is imposed by collaborators					
International research agendas are not relevant to the local context					
Ethics guidelines adopted by collaborators are not suitable for the local context					
Research ethics training requested by collaborators is not available in my native language					
Research budget is controlled by external					

international collaborators					
Local researchers are not acknowledged as authors					
results are only published in international journals written in foreign languages and are unavailable in local languages					

V. Implications: What needs to be done to improve the research experience in your country?

In the following section, we will ask questions about your perception of how to improve the research experience in your country and the Arab Region.

43- Which of the below are needed to improve the research experience in your country? (tick all that apply):

- Link research outcomes to policies
- Increase collaboration within institutions (multidisciplinary teams)
- Increase collaboration between institutions to avoid research waste
- Allow more time for academics to conduct research
- Increase awareness of general public about research
- Develop national guidelines for conducting research
- Supportive political atmosphere at country level
- Increase researcher awareness of the importance of research
- Increase collaboration with industry partners
- Create independent research centers not affiliated to government
- Increase funding to conduct social science research

- Engage with local communities to develop research studies that meet their needs
- Address research misconduct
- Other

44- We are interested in enhancing the application of research ethics relevant to Arab culture/context. What do you recommend this entails?

45- We are interested in enhancing collaborative research in the Arab Region/World. What do you recommend this entails?