

# How the pandemic shaped academic identity: Stories of resilience and struggle

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Credit: Unsplash/Patrick Assalé

A new book shares the stories of Ph.D. students, early-career researchers, and established academics during the COVID-19 pandemic to shed light on the struggles faced by those in the industry.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted every aspect of our lives, and

[academia](#) was no exception. A new book titled "Research and Teaching in a Pandemic World" offers an insight into the [personal stories](#) of those within academia who were impacted by the pandemic.

The book provides an archive of firsthand accounts of people's pandemic experiences, highlighting moments of resilience and [personal growth](#), as well as trauma, grief, and loss.

Edited by a group of researchers from Monash University, Deakin University and the American University of the Middle East, the book focuses on how the pandemic affected individuals' ability to build their academic identity.

By allowing each author to narrate their own stories, the editors were able to identify how each individual's pandemic experience affected their own academic identity.

Through the stories of the chapter authors, the book reveals four key themes:

1. The pandemic exacerbated already existing inequalities in academia, with many authors feeling marginalized and undervalued.
2. Parenthood complicated matters for those in academia, as they struggled to balance home and work life, which often negatively affected their future career prospects.
3. The pandemic profoundly impacted the [mental health](#) and well-being of those in academia, leading many authors to question their academic career aspirations, although there were also stories of resilience and coping strategies.
4. Solitude was a recurring theme throughout the book. Connecting virtually to their research supervisors, their workplaces, or their students made Ph.D. students, early-career researchers, and more

established academics feel disconnected from academia.

"The sudden disruption to or disappearance of everyday activities left academics feeling helpless. We understand now, more than ever, how crucial human contact is in an increasingly interconnected world," said Dr. Cahusac de Caux, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the American University of the Middle East.

"Research and Teaching in a Pandemic World" provides space for individuals to explore their own experiences and what they have learnt through the process. It is a collection of stories which presents windows into the worlds of the authors and highlights the idiosyncratic impact of the pandemic on those in academia," said Dr. Lynette Pretorius, an Academic Language Development Adviser at Monash University.

"Throughout the [pandemic](#), its magnitude has, at times, felt overwhelming to comprehend. Reports on daily case numbers, job losses, extended lockdowns, and even worse, deaths, were common everyday information. Yet, it is important to take stock and remember that behind each of these figures is a person with their own unique story. Our goal with this book was to give some of these stories a voice within our own professional network, which is academia," said Dr. Luke Macaulay, Research Fellow at Deakin University's Center for Refugee Employment, Advocacy, Training, and Education (CREATE).

**More information:** Research and Teaching in a Pandemic World. The Challenges of Establishing Academic Identities During Times of Crisis. [link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-19-7757-2](https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-19-7757-2)

Provided by Monash University

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