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Scientific Consulting in Ukraine: Black Side

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The academic standing of scientists is often evaluated by looking at their publications, how frequently they're cited, and their involvement in research projects. In Ukraine, scientists feel pressured to have "strong" profiles, which has led to two kinds of scientific consulting. One type is traditional, offering expert advice and supporting actual research. The other is more problematic, focusing on generating outputs for bureaucratic needs, often at the cost of research integrity. The second type of consulting, along with services like selling research papers or manipulating citation counts, also includes selling language certificates, journal editorial board memberships, and university ranking boosts. These cases show a trend where research quality is less important than just having a set of outputs, making simple metrics more valuable than real contributions.

The "scientific consulting" trend in Ukraine is similar to the concept of paper mills, but it's different because it offers a broader range of services that go against research integrity.

The authors suggest the term "scientific consulting mill" to describe the services that help scientists and teachers obtain formal performance indicators, and they provide a detailed classification of these "suppliers" and their activities.

Based on the set of characteristics, the authors categorize the types of scientific consulting ("several colors of scientific consulting").

This research is based on a thorough analysis of "scientific consulting" company websites in Ukraine. These companies' services, marketing strategies, and self-descriptions were carefully examined. This analysis includes classifying "scientific consulting mills" and their features. The categories and features were developed by looking for service patterns, analyzing the implicit and explicit agreements between the companies and their clients, and identifying what differentiates these services from legitimate academic support.

Unfortunately, this issue hasn't been discussed much in academic papers about Ukraine, likely because these services are provided "officially" as an informational one with agreements between clients and providers. So, the authors are offering their classification of these services, hoping it will aid in combating this breach of academic integrity.