GRUPO EDITORIAL DE PSICOFUNDACIÓN

Papeles del Psicólogo (2026) 47(2) 77-83

Papeles del Psicólogo
Psychologist Papers

https://www.papelesdelpsicologo.es/ • ISSN 0214–7823 • eISSN 1886–1415

PAPELES DEL PSICÓLOGO
PSYCHOLOGIST PAPERS

Revista del Consejo General de la Psicología de España

Article

Academic Narcissism: How Universities Also Chase Likes

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: November 1, 2025
Accepted: December 15, 2025

Keywords
Academic narcissism
Digital culture
University
Visibility
Recognition

ABSTRACT

This article examines the emergence of academic narcissism as a specific manifestation of cultural narcissism within the contemporary university context. Drawing on the concept of normative narcissism, we explore how the logic of visibility, self-exposure, and the pursuit of recognition has been integrated into teaching and research practices, transforming professional identity and modes of knowledge production. The culture of metrics, impact indicators, and digital presence has turned the university into a stage of representation, where prestige depends less on knowledge and more on exposure. Using examples from the Spanish context, the article discusses the effects of academic evaluation criteria on the generation of competitive dynamics, institutional envy, and a decline in cooperation. Finally, guidelines are proposed to redirect visibility toward a culture of purposeful recognition, grounded in quality, collaboration, and intellectual integrity.

El Narcisismo Académico: Cómo la Universidad También Busca *Likes*

Palabras clave
Narcisismo académico
Cultura digital
Universidad
Visibilidad
Reconocimiento

RESUMEN

El presente artículo analiza la emergencia del narcisismo académico como manifestación específica del narcisismo cultural en el contexto universitario contemporáneo. Partiendo del concepto de narcisismo normativo, se examina cómo la lógica de la visibilidad, la autoexposición y la búsqueda de reconocimiento se han integrado en las prácticas docentes e investigadoras, transformando la identidad profesional y los modos de producción del conocimiento. La cultura de las métricas, los indicadores de impacto y la presencia digital ha convertido la universidad en un escenario de representación, donde el prestigio depende no tanto del saber si no sobre todo de la exposición. A partir de ejemplos del contexto español, se discuten los efectos de los criterios de evaluación académica en la generación de dinámicas competitivas, envidias institucionales y pérdida de cooperación. Finalmente, se proponen orientaciones para reorientar la visibilidad hacia una cultura del reconocimiento con propósito, basada en la calidad, la colaboración y la integridad intelectual.

Cite this article as: Secades-Villa, R., & Pérez-Álvarez, M. (2026). Academic narcissism: How universities also chase likes. *Papeles del Psicólogo/Psychologist Papers, 47*(2), 77-83. https://doi.org/10.70478/pap.psicol.2026.47.09
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We live in an era in which the self has taken on unprecedented centrality. Contemporary societies, driven by digital culture and the imperative of visibility, have led to self-image and recognition becoming dominant values. In this context, the concept of narcissism has transcended its clinical origins and no longer refers solely to a personality disorder (Ronningstam, 2022) or an individual trait characterized by grandiosity, excessive self-focus, and a lack of empathy; rather, it has established itself as a sociocultural phenomenon that extends beyond the psychological realm. In recent years, scientific research on narcissism has increased significantly, broadening the scope of the concept and highlighting its relevance for understanding contemporary social dynamics. Since cultural narcissism was first described around 1980 (Lasch, 1979/2023; Lipovetsky, 1983/2006), it has continued to grow to the point where it is now a sign of the times. Cultural narcissism is characterized by a form of social organization in which values, practices, and identities revolve around the exaltation of the self, the self-image, and the pursuit of recognition. It is a spirit of the times that prioritizes visibility, self-expression, and personal success at the expense of community ties and collective projects.

Today, the global rise of so-called "geek culture" has provided many people with a conducive space to construct and display specific identities, contributing to the spread of cultural narcissism. Geek culture presents characteristics particularly appealing to individuals with narcissistic tendencies, such as the potential to be perceived as exceptional or cool and the opportunity to participate in fictional universes where reality is flexible and easily malleable (Campbell & Crist, 2022).

Parallel to this phenomenon, woke ideology—through its expressions of identity-based activism—fosters another scenario where public self-affirmation occupies a central place. Within this framework, identity becomes not only a personal trait but an element that must be socially recognized and validated, integrating itself as an essential part of individual well-being (Braunstein, 2024; Doyle, 2022). This dynamic, based on the need to make one's identity visible and obtain external confirmation of its legitimacy, places certain woke discourses within the same logic of cultural narcissism noted above.

Woke discourse promotes the emergence of a particular form of communal narcissism, a concept developed in personality psychology. Communal narcissism refers to individuals who maintain a grandiose self-image based on their supposed goodness, altruism, morality, and prosocial activism, in contrast to agentic narcissism, which is centered on status, success, or power (Gebauer & Sedikides, 2018). However, evidence indicates that communal narcissists are not objectively more or less prosocial than other narcissists. Their distinctive trait lies in the fact that they tend to perceive themselves as extraordinarily prosocial, exhibiting heightened self-aggrandizement of their communal virtues (Nehrlich et al., 2019).

Woke-style communal narcissism can be observed in phenomena known as posturing or virtue signaling—that is, the public display of politically correct stances intended to project supposed moral superiority and highlight how virtuous, progressive, or ethically irreproachable one is. Practices such as cancel culture, self-cancellation, self-censorship, or so-called "transphobophobia"—the fear of being accused of transphobia if one does not explicitly express adherence to transgender ideology (Errasti & Pérez-Álvarez, 2022)—are some examples of this type of communal narcissism-style moral performativity.

Academic communal narcissism can be understood as a form in which professors display an inflated self-image of social consciousness, ethical commitment, and woke sensibility. This posturing, or virtue signaling, is characterized by the pursuit of ethical, political, or symbolically progressive superiority taking precedence over knowledge, reasoned debate, and critical examination—true university virtues.

The problem with narcissism is no longer that it has become widespread and normalized, but rather that it is becoming normative, functional, and adaptive (Pérez-Álvarez, 2026). Normative narcissism is not limited to certain age groups, such as adolescence, nor to specific environments like social media (Casale & Banchi, 2020; Gnambs & Appel, 2018), corporations (Campbell et al., 2011), or politics (Hatemi & Fazekas, 2018; Post, 2015). The university is now an ecosystem of normative narcissism, affecting students, professors, and researchers alike. With regard to students, it suffices to point out four converging aspects of narcissism: the student as a customer who is always right, who must be flattered, and whose satisfaction becomes an indicator of institutional success; the university as a safe space, such that nothing contradicts their opinions, leading to cancellations and warnings about possible words and topics that could cause discomfort and even trauma; the policy of emotional well-being, whereby the institution assumes responsibility for protecting students from all forms of distress (Haidt & Lukianoff, 2018/2019); and, thus, institutionalized infantilization (Furedi, 2018; Hayward, 2024). As for this article, it will focus on academic narcissism as it pertains to professors and researchers, analyzing how the pursuit of recognition and visibility has transformed university identity and practices.

The "Academic Self." Academia as a Stage

We live in an era in which the self has become a personal marketing project. Social media not only allows us to communicate: it drives us to put ourselves on display, to measure ourselves, and to compare ourselves. Visibility functions as a symbolic currency that defines belonging and success. Every digital profile is a showcase, every post a way to demand attention. As Casale and Banchi (2020) point out, digital platforms reinforce traits of self-exposure and the pursuit of admiration, shaping environments where external validation becomes a psychological necessity. But this desire to be seen and recognized is not limited to the personal sphere: it also seeps into spaces that, traditionally, were meant to foster critical reflection. Among them, the university.

For decades, the university was conceived as a refuge for thought, a space protected from market logic and the imperatives of visibility. Academic legitimacy was built on intellectual merit, contribution to knowledge, and membership in a community of peers. However, in recent years, that image has begun to crack. The advance of digital culture, the pressure to be productive, and the colonization of university life by quantitative metrics have radically transformed the academic ecosystem. Today, researchers, faculty, and institutions are pushed to stand out in an environment saturated with information and competition.

Academia is no longer merely a space for the production of knowledge; it has also become a stage for self-presentation, where

professional identity depends on public exposure. Digital platforms (X, LinkedIn, ResearchGate, Google Scholar, Academia.edu, or even Instagram and Facebook) serve as showcases where each scholar projects a carefully curated version of themselves. The university has incorporated the mechanisms of self-promotion and branding, in many cases replacing the ideal of collaboration with the logic of competition for attention (Bartram, 2020). Academics experience increasing pressure to engage in self-promotion, particularly as universities become increasingly market-oriented (Duffy & Pooley, 2017). These forms of self-promotion and branding manifest in behaviors that have become normalized in university life: the careful management of profiles on academic and professional networks; the public and recurring announcement of any achievement (accepted articles, grants, conferences); the circulation of photographs and messages intended to reinforce the professional identity; or self-presentation inflated through lists of merits in presentations and public activities. Practices such as the strategic use of hashtags to maximize visibility or the creation of personal narratives about productivity or the impact of publications also demonstrate the extent to which the logic of personal marketing has become embedded in contemporary academic culture. Ultimately, what is recognized is not the soundness of knowledge, but an apparent validity, grounded more in visibility than in substance.

This theatricalization of academic life is deeply linked to what Khamis et al. (2017) describe as the culture of "micro-celebrity": the ability to manage one's own visibility as a symbolic and professional resource. To the extent that prestige is increasingly associated with digital presence, scientific communication becomes intertwined with strategies for personal positioning in the digital world. Not only must the professor, researcher, or doctoral student produce knowledge, but they must also "produce" themselves as recognizable figures in the media-academic circuit.

The university, therefore, becomes a hybrid space where two mutually reinforcing dimensions converge: a place of intellectual creation and a stage of representation. Whereas the university institution was once defined by the production of knowledge and the pursuit of truth, today it is permeated by the same logics of self-exposure and visibility that dominate social media and digital culture.

Conferences, seminars, and academic social media operate as mechanisms of visibility where success is measured as much by the reach of the message as by its content. The pursuit of recognition, institutionally legitimized through rankings, impact indices, and digital reputation, reinforces the idea that academic value is inseparable from its capacity to circulate publicly.

This transformation has generated a subtle yet profound shift: from knowledge as a common good to knowledge as a personal brand. To the extent that the university adopts the codes of marketing, research becomes a narrative that must be "sold", and the professor becomes an agent of their own promotion. As Bartram (2020) points out, this process not only redefines academic identity but also alters the way knowledge is produced and shared, prioritizing rapid exposure over sustained reflection.

Thus, 21st-century academia increasingly resembles a global stage where visibility is confused with relevance. The risk is that the institution, in its effort to be seen, loses its capacity for critical inquiry. If the logic of applause replaces that of argument, the university ceases to be a place of thought and becomes a spectacle of prestige.

From Knowledge to Recognition

Academic narcissism takes the form of institutionalized, excessive ego. It is a mindset that values the appearance of productivity over the research process itself. Publishing quickly, racking up citations, maintaining a presence on ResearchGate or Google Scholar, or gaining followers on X and LinkedIn have become markers of prestige. As described by Khamis et al. (2017), the logics of self-branding and micro-celebrity, born on social media, have seeped into traditionally vocational professions, transforming academic identity into an ongoing marketing project. The contemporary scholar no longer merely produces knowledge; they produce their own image. The old ideal of disinterested scholarship is being displaced by a model where exposure equals success, where visibility matters as much as content. What matters is not just discovering and contributing new knowledge, but appearing in rankings, accumulating metrics, and collecting likes and accolades.

The obsession with visibility and metrics can lead to extreme, ethically questionable, and even openly fraudulent practices. Among these are the fabrication of *ad hoc* studies, or the inflation of one's CV through the publication of articles in "zombie" or "predatory" journals (Biosca, 2025), so named because their primary objective is to profit by charging authors high fees without guaranteeing a rigorous peer-review process. The proliferation of these journals has contributed to undermining trust in science and distorting researchers' productivity indicators.

In this context, the pursuit of metrics becomes an end in itself, displacing traditional academic values such as critical reflection, methodological rigor, and research integrity. Within this logic, everyone seems to come out ahead: authors accumulate publications, journals generate revenue, and institutions and universities improve their rankings.

In this situation, the metaphor of the "fear of exile" proposed by Hafermalz (2021) is particularly relevant, helping to explain why digital presence is experienced more as an obligation than as a choice. Digital platforms function as spaces where scholars seek to secure their sense of belonging, avoiding being sidelined from the networks of recognition that govern evaluation systems. These infrastructures not only amplify achievements but also act as defensive mechanisms: technologies of affiliation that allow one to "not disappear" in the eyes of colleagues, disciplinary communities, and, above all, those who manage grants, accreditations, and job opportunities. Continuous visibility becomes indispensable, while absence or inactivity risks being interpreted as a withdrawal or a figurative exile within the academic field itself.

In this new ecosystem, academic activity (research, teaching, and publishing) is tainted by the need to put on a show. Every faculty member, researcher, or student is compelled to construct a public identity and project an image of competence, originality, or prestige. Digital platforms, which function as global showcases, turn the academic into a "performer" who must maintain their relevance in an environment saturated with constant discourse, metrics, and comparisons. Thus, the university becomes a theater of merit, where visibility partially replaces depth and where recognition is measured as much by citations and followers as by contributions to knowledge.

As Wong (2024) points out, the figure of the "PhD influencer" embodies this new model: researchers who document their academic

lives as content and whose popularity is measured by their ability to generate attention. Professional achievements are communicated in real time, and attempts are made to disseminate them publicly without meaning, without reflection, and without any purpose beyond visibility. Every article accepted or award won is announced with photographs and public acknowledgments on social media, in a sort of ritual of digital self-affirmation. What was once an intimate achievement in a professional career has now become a public act of self-affirmation. And even at conferences and seminars, this logic is replicated and self-exhibition becomes normalized: it is not uncommon for a presentation or a talk in a course to begin with a slide full of credentials, as if, before sharing ideas, it were necessary to display one's merits and achievements, as if authority derived more from fame than from thought. Academia thus adopts the codes of the influencer: the value of what is said depends on the recognition accumulated by the speaker.

In the digital age, the researcher's prestige and legitimacy have become intertwined with media capital. The logic of algorithms rewards frequency and exposure, not necessarily quality or originality. Morris et al. (2021) warns that the need to "be first" in science and the pressure toward promotional primacy fuel self-promotional behaviors that distort collaboration and research ethics. Being cited in an article or mentioned on social media acquires a similar symbolic value: both grant visibility, though not always knowledge. This culture of prestige transforms knowledge into a communicable product, more attentive to its form than its substance.

In this context, the culture of the CV, impact indicators, and digital reputation metrics create an environment where being visible is equivalent to existing. And in the process, the essential values of academic life are eroded: cooperation, intellectual humility, and critical thinking.

Academic Envy: The Mirror of the Other

If narcissism drives one to show oneself, envy drives one to compare oneself. They are two sides of the same coin: the search for recognition in a system that rewards exposure. In contemporary academic culture, others' achievements can awaken feelings of inferiority and competition that often translate into excessive self-promotion as a compensatory mechanism. Instead of inspiring collaboration or admiration, the success of others becomes a reminder of one's own perceived inadequacy, fueling the need to make oneself visible so as not to disappear. Social media and digital metrics intensify this dynamic, as they transform academic achievements into public spectacles of validation. Thus, envy tends to manifest in contexts where comparison is constant and symbolic resources (such as prestige, attention, or reputation) are perceived as scarce, and it is particularly triggered when one's own status is perceived as threatened (Crusius & Lange, 2016). Therefore, excessive self-promotion does not always stem from ambition, but rather from the fear of disappearing from the public eye. Envy reveals the fragility of the self in an environment where one's worth depends on being seen by others.

Thus, excessive self-promotion stems not only from individual ambition but also from the psychological pressure of constant comparison. Against this background, restoring the genuine knowledge-creation function of academic work is essential to rebuild more cooperative university communities, where mutual appreciation replaces competition for being seen by others.

The Spanish Case: Leadership, Visibility, and the Paradox of Merit

In the Spanish context, this comparative logic is reinforced by the accreditation criteria of the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA), particularly regarding the positions of tenured professor and full professor[1]. In recent years, the agency has placed increasing emphasis on so-called academic leadership, a category that includes merits such as leading teams of teaching staff, coordinating research groups, or holding academic positions. Specifically, for accreditation as a full professor, ANECA stipulates that "applicants will be required to provide significant evidence of a track record of leadership" (ANECA, 2024). Currently, many professors have had their applications for full professorship accreditation rejected due to a lack or scarcity of the aforementioned academic leadership.

However, many of these merits do not depend directly on individual effort or academic performance, but rather on contextual or relational factors, such as the opportunity to access certain positions or power networks within the university. Since these types of responsibilities are, by definition, limited and not always accessible, their overrepresentation in the evaluation criteria is generating unproductive internal competition, tensions, and envy among faculty, as well as power dynamics that have little to do with academic excellence. For example, the mere fact of serving as a course coordinator generates disputes and personal conflicts, turning what should be a technical and collaborative academic role into a symbol of status and control within the university hierarchy.

Furthermore, this evaluative approach puts highly qualified researchers and faculty at a disadvantage simply because they have not held certain administrative positions or been part of institutional hierarchical structures. Just imagine if Manjul Bhargava, winner of the Fields Medal—the highest honor in the field of mathematics (the "Nobel Prize" of mathematics)—were to apply for tenure as a full professor in Spain. He would be unlikely to be granted it, since his world-class mathematical contributions would not compensate for his lack of merits in management, teaching innovation, or institutional leadership. He would not have coordinated courses, headed departments, or participated in local university committees. Manjul Bhargava is a professor at Princeton University (USA), the university ranked first in the Shanghai Ranking in the field of mathematics, but it would be highly improbable for him to hold such a position at the University of Oviedo, which ranks between 401 and 500 in that same ranking and field. In the Spanish university system, even genius requires a position.

In addition to leadership criteria for promotion to tenured professor and full professor, ANECA takes into account the quality of teaching, assessed largely based on student satisfaction surveys. This evaluation model is particularly striking in the Spanish context, as it is unique within the civil service as a whole. In no other area of the civil service (not in healthcare, the judiciary, labor inspection, or tax administration) does the promotion or evaluation of civil servants depend on the opinion or satisfaction of users. Only in universities is the power to influence a teacher's professional career transferred to students, who are implicitly regarded as customers.

This approach, designed to promote pedagogical improvement, ends up generating harmful and counterproductive effects on

1 "Tenured professor" is "*profesor titular*" and "full professor" is "*catedrático*" in Spanish.

faculty since, in practice, it incentivizes professors to orient their teaching toward pleasing students rather than toward learning. The need to obtain positive evaluations can lead to a complacent pedagogy, as the professor is pushed to moderate their authority, lower academic standards, excessively simplify content, or adopt "playful" and infantilizing dynamics that seek to win the student's favor rather than increase their knowledge or develop their critical thinking. As Furedi (2018) warns, this pedagogy of complacency also infantilizes the teacher themselves, who learns to shield themselves from academic conflict and to manage affections rather than knowledge. The classroom thus becomes an arena of approval where professional identity is regulated by the pursuit of recognition. Ultimately, teacher evaluation based on popularity reinforces academic narcissism: the teacher acts as a performer who needs to be liked in order to be validated.

In light of the above, ANECA should revise its criteria for academic evaluation and promotion, placing greater emphasis on merits directly linked to intellectual excellence and contributions to knowledge. Leading research groups, teaching administration, or holding institutional positions should not take precedence over the assessment of original research, high-impact scientific output, or the development of new lines of study. Furthermore, teaching evaluation based on student satisfaction (an exceptional criterion within the civil service) generates counterproductive effects, as it incentivizes a complacent pedagogy aimed at pleasing students rather than promoting learning, whilst reinforcing academic narcissism and the figure of the professor as a performer.

Rethinking the Academic Self

Given this scenario, it is not a matter of rejecting visibility or longing for an ivory tower, but rather of rethinking the meaning of recognition. Being seen should not be an end in itself, but rather the natural consequence of rigorous and collaborative work. Reclaiming reflective slowness, unhurried writing, and genuine collaboration are all forms of resistance against the demand for constant brilliance. As Bartram (2020) emphasizes, only an academic culture that prioritizes authenticity over self-promotion can sustain its social legitimacy in the era of permanent exposure.

Academic narcissism forces us to look into an uncomfortable mirror: that of a university that reproduces the same impulses of self-exposure that dominate the digital sphere. The institution that historically was meant to foster critical reflection and the collective pursuit of knowledge now confronts its own image amplified by social media. In it, we recognize the tensions between the legitimate desire for visibility and the need for constant validation that characterizes the culture of performance. This broken mirror reflects an academia torn between its intellectual vocation and its dependence on public attention. The logic of constant exposure transforms the act of teaching, researching, and communicating. Academic authority, which once emanated from the substance of thought, is now confused with the ability to manage an audience. In this sense, the university becomes a microcosm of the digital society, a space where external recognition—likes, citations, mentions, metrics—replaces critical judgment and deep deliberation.

But the mirror also reveals deeper cracks. The pursuit of notoriety can distort the very aims of knowledge itself: apparent originality is prioritized over sound argumentation, immediate visibility over long-term impact. More time is spent promoting oneself on social media or elsewhere than on researching or thinking. At the same time, the pressure to publish and stand out fuels a culture of directionless productive anxiety, which, as Morris, MacGillivray and Pither (2021) warn, can erode the ethical and collaborative principles of research. In this context, intellectual humility becomes almost an act of resistance.

However, acknowledging these fractures does not mean condemning public exposure or idealizing a media-free past. As Bartram (2020) reminds us, social media offers genuine opportunities for dissemination, the democratization of knowledge, and transnational dialogue. The problem is not visibility itself, but its fetishization—when glamour supplants thought and media impact replaces rigor and hard work.

Perhaps the contemporary challenge lies in learning to inhabit that mirror without losing our critical perspective. It involves reclaiming a sense of academic community, strengthening shared reflection, and reclaiming the value of slowness in an age of immediacy. To be visible, yes, but from a place of substance, not vanity. To think, teach, and research not as forms of self-exposure, but as exercises in collective responsibility in the face of a society saturated with images and lacking in meaning.

In this context, it is essential to rethink the present and future of the contemporary university. Only by acknowledging its cracks can we rebuild it, remembering that the value of knowledge is not measured by its visibility, but by its ability to illuminate even when no one is looking.

Toward an Academic Culture of Purposeful Recognition: Guidelines for Meaningful Visibility

Transforming the current model of university visibility requires revising the mechanisms that sustain academic narcissism. It is not a matter of denying public exposure, but of reorienting it toward collective goals of improving knowledge. Visibility must be understood as a means for scientific communication, knowledge transfer, and community building, not as an end in itself.

At the institutional level, it is necessary to rethink evaluation and recognition systems. Quantitative metrics (number of publications, citations, or digital impact) should not constitute the sole criterion for assessment. It is essential to integrate qualitative indicators that consider contributions to knowledge, teaching, mentoring, and social transfer. As Hicks et al. (2015) argue, responsible evaluation must balance quality and quantity, promoting integrity and the diversity of approaches in scientific production. A university policy guided by these principles can mitigate the logic of performance and foster a culture of merit based on the meaningful impact of knowledge.

As the Spanish case demonstrates, ANECA's accreditation criteria for associate professors and full professors have, in recent years, prioritized merits related to academic leadership, management, and holding institutional positions. While these functions may contribute to the functioning of universities, their treatment as key indicators of excellence has overshadowed the evaluation of research and knowledge creation. In practice, this focus has had a counterproductive effect: the time spent on administrative and institutional representation tasks tends to limit the time and continuity necessary for developing a solid, high-

quality research career. This situation is particularly concerning when it affects talented young professors, who are forced to devote a considerable portion of their time to administrative and bureaucratic tasks in order to meet accreditation requirements. Instead of being able to focus on research or building international scientific networks, these scholars find themselves prematurely immersed in management dynamics that contribute little to their intellectual development. In this way, the system not only squanders their creative potential but also risks discouraging future scholars and perpetuating a university culture in which promotion depends more on institutional visibility than on the intrinsic value of the knowledge generated.

In this regard, it is particularly concerning that professors serving on competition panels adopt this approach uncritically and convey to young academics the idea that they must be competent in everything, including management functions, which, rather than contributing, often hinder their scientific development.

Therefore, it is essential to review the criteria for academic evaluation and promotion so that recognition is based on scientific relevance, contribution to knowledge, and the coherence of the research trajectory. University administration should promote academic merit and foster a system that rewards intellectual excellence without disincentivizing research work. Ultimately, university policy should be guided by principles of balanced evaluation and foster a culture of merit based on the significant impact of knowledge, while also reducing tensions, envy, and senseless internal competition among faculty members.

Furthermore, there is an urgent need to promote ethical and communicative training in the digital culture. Contemporary academic literacy involves not only knowing how to publish, but also learning to communicate without falling into narcissistic self-promotion. Institutions can foster good practices in scientific dissemination based on transparency, collaboration, and social responsibility. The challenge is not to increase visibility, but to do so better: to build a public presence that maintains intellectual rigor and honesty in attention-driven environments (Duffy & Pooley, 2017).

On a personal and ethical level, it is necessary to foster a pedagogy of "digital humility": using social media to share knowledge, not to show off, construct personas, or go viral; to engage in dialogue, not to compete. Scientific communication should be oriented toward openness and collaboration, prioritizing clarity, honesty, and responsibility over self-promotion. Responsible scientific communication requires critically examining its relevance, novelty, and significance, as well as the true motivation behind its dissemination. This exercise—asking whether the dissemination serves a legitimate academic purpose or merely a need for self-promotion—acts as a self-regulatory mechanism that prevents unnecessary visibility and fosters a more sober and reflective intellectual practice. Each academic can ask themselves, before publishing or disseminating: Does this add value to knowledge, or does it merely feed appearances and vanity?

Likewise, avoiding the superfluous inflation of public self-presentations—by listing awards, fellowships, or current and former academic positions—would constitute an exercise in professional integrity and allow us to restore the centrality of what should be the core of all academic communication: the ideas themselves.

Finally, the challenge lies in redefining the ideal of academic prestige. In the face of the logic of performance, immediacy, and visibility devoid of content, it is necessary to recover the value of reflection, cooperation, and intellectual coherence. The university must remain a space for critical thinking, not mere visibility. Only an academic culture that recognizes knowledge for its transformative capacity—and not for its media exposure—will be able to sustain its legitimacy in the age of permanent exposure.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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