

"I'm thrilled to share": ego, social media, and the quiet distortion of scientific communication

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Summary. On professional social media, "I'm thrilled to share that our paper has just been published..." has become a ritualized form of self-promotion. This manuscript examines how such practices intersect with narcissism, algorithms, altmetrics and inequalities (notably gender), shifting attention from methodological quality to the researcher's visibility. It argues for a more reflexive use of social media in science, focusing on questions, methods, limits and implications for patients and policy, rather than on academic ego and visibility metrics.

"I'm thrilled to share": ego, social media e la silenziosa distorsione della comunicazione scientifica.

Riassunto. Sui social professionali la formula "I'm thrilled to share that our paper has just been published..." è diventata un rituale di autopromozione. Il manoscritto analizza come queste pratiche si intreccino con narcisismo, logiche algoritmiche, altmetrics e disuguaglianze (in particolare di genere), spostando l'attenzione dalla qualità metodologica alla visibilità dell'autore. Si propone una postura più riflessiva nell'uso dei social, centrata su contenuti, limiti e implicazioni della ricerca, più che sull'ego accademico e sulle metriche di notorietà.

In the lexicon of professional social media, the formula "I'm thrilled to share that our paper has just been published..." has become almost obligatory. A publication seems "complete" only once it has been translated into a post, complete with journal cover, impact factor, and ritual acknowledgements. This innocuous gesture is in fact a useful lens on a sensitive question: to what extent are we communicating science, and to what extent are we curating the author's image?

In digital spaces, the researcher is no longer only a producer of data, but also the curator of a public persona. The "I'm thrilled to share..." post is a micro-performance: it does not merely report a result, it reiterates status, networks, a narrative of uninterrupted productivity. The paper becomes a career signal at least as much as a contribution to knowledge. The issue is not enthusiasm per se, but the slippage from communicating as a result to managing a personal brand, within an environment that structurally rewards visibility and self-promotion¹⁻³.

Social platforms are designed to favor what is seen, reacted to, and quickly shared. In academia this operates on two levels. On the one hand, social attention becomes an additional layer of measurement – altmetrics, "reach," engagement – piled on top of citations and impact factors. On the other, career evaluation, even when it does not explicitly mention social media, starts to blend scientific production and "digital presence": who is visible, who is perceived as "influential," who appears constantly at the centre of the conversation. Studies on the relationship between social media and research impact broadly converge

on uncomfortably ambivalent conclusions: the active promotion of an article can increase its online trace and the attention it receives, but this does not automatically translate into deeper scientific impact⁴. Engagement is not the same as epistemic weight.

This logic is far from neutral. Work on inequalities in academia has repeatedly shown that self-promotion is not evenly distributed, nor is it interpreted in the same way for everyone. Women, scholars from less prestigious institutions, those with fewer resources or more demanding care responsibilities are often less inclined – and less rewarded – when they engage in the same publicly celebratory behaviors as their better-positioned colleagues⁵. The culture of permanent announcement risks functioning as an amplifier of existing asymmetries: those who are already central in networks and institutions can more easily occupy the digital space; those who are peripheral tend to remain so, even when the quality of their work is comparable or superior.

There is also a psychological dimension that we underestimate. Research on narcissism and leadership in organizational contexts consistently suggests a pattern: individuals who are more self-centered, confident in their own superiority and comfortable with self-promotion emerge more easily as leaders and are more often seen as "promotable," even when their objective performance is not better – and sometimes is worse – than that of more modest colleagues^{6,7}. The risk, transposed into science, is obvious: we begin to confuse performed confidence with credibility, visibility with value, rhetorical intensity with meth-

odological rigor. In such a scenario, the serial production of triumphant announcements becomes a competitive resource, somewhat independent of the substance of the articles behind them.

At this point, the key question is no longer whether individual researchers are “overdoing it” with their enthusiasm, but whether our collective use of social media is quietly shifting the centre of gravity of scientific culture. The normalization of “I’m thrilled to share” as the standard register of communication risks desensitizing us to real differences between studies: everything sounds like a “milestone,” a “game changer,” a “landmark paper.” Meanwhile, what should matter most – methodological robustness, transparency, reproducibility, and concrete usefulness for patients, practitioners, and policy – is relegated to the background, overshadowed by the performance.

This is not an argument for going back to a silent, closed science that never speaks to the outside. On the contrary, we need more public communication of research, not less. But we need it to be less centered on the ego of the author and more centered on the work itself. An announcement that starts from the clinical or policy problem, explains what the study adds, acknowledges limits and uncertainties, and situates findings within a broader landscape is very different, in tone and ethics, from a post that simply showcases logos, metrics and personal achievements.

Perhaps the critical threshold, before clicking “publish,” lies in a simple, uncomfortable question: does this post genuinely help someone to understand this research better – to interpret it, to use it, to challenge it – or does it mainly serve to reinforce my image as a successful researcher? The answer will never be perfectly pure; motives are always mixed. But the honesty with which we try to give that answer, and

the norms we cultivate as a community around these rituals of self-presentation, will determine whether social media becomes an ally of research integrity or yet another subtle mechanism through which ego and metrics distort what science is supposed to be.

Finally, a friendly footnote: this reflection is also implicit in self-critique. I, too, discover papers and stay up to date thanks to those “thrilled to share” posts in my feed; they are part of how I navigate the literature. The point, then, is not to cast stones at others from a place of purity, but to admit that none of us is without sin in this game of visibility – and precisely for that reason, to ask ourselves a little more often what, exactly, we are choosing to celebrate.

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