

Knowledge Censorship in 21st Century Academia: An Overview with Attention to the Trends of Wokeism and Cancel Culture

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Abstract

Research is an activity aimed at uncovering reliable knowledge. Its goal is to enlighten and advance society by revealing facts and using them to promote healthy and sustainable social and technological progress. However, various social, political, and religious groups attempt to suppress these facts and restrict their accessibility to the wider community. The central thesis of this discussion is that while issues of censorship often emerge when dealing with sensitive information that may offend specific communities, the act of suppressing such knowledge ultimately hinders people from attaining a true and comprehensive understanding of the subject. This thesis will be supported by specific arguments grounded in concrete examples, notably the phenomena of wokeism and cancel culture. These examples will illustrate how the suppression of controversial ideas, under the guise of protecting communities, can lead to a lack of genuine discourse and an incomplete grasp of complex societal issues.

Keywords

Knowledge, Censorship, Wokeism, Cancel Culture, Social Justice

1. Introduction

Issues of censorship in academia typically arise with sensitive information likely to offend specific communities. Nonetheless, suppressing such knowledge prevents people from gaining true understanding. In the 21st century, notable suppressors or manipulators of knowledge include woke activists, institutions, and political entities who employ cancel culture as their preferred way of silencing dissident voices. Wokeism, or, alternatively, wokeness is a term used to describe a heightened awareness of social and political issues, particularly those related to

systemic injustice and inequality. Originally emerging from African-American Vernacular English, it has since been adopted more broadly to refer to engagement with and advocacy for social justice, with its usage and connotations varying by context. The erstwhile noble goals and intentions of the Woke movement have, however, become corrupted and thus led to an increase in academic censorship. This article aims to show that censorship, in any form and for any reason, is ultimately detrimental to the acquisition of knowledge and incompatible with the values and virtues of a free and open learning and research environment, which is, as will be argued in the text, essential, because it fosters critical inquiry, innovation, and the pursuit of truth without fear of suppression or retribution.

The following section will highlight the benefits of knowledge-sharing and the importance of trust and good faith in the process. The next part on censorship and academics explains why the academic sector in particular is vulnerable to censorship, highlights the various different forms censorship can take in the research sector, and gives concrete examples of cases worldwide. The section on wokeism explores the origin and eventual corruption of the idea of wokeness, while also analyzing how woke ideology has affected academic research, freedom of inquiry, and the dissemination of knowledge. Next, the chapter about cancel culture delves deeper into how cancel culture has stifled creativity, freedom of speech, and intellectual diversity within universities. Finally, the conclusion sums up the problems existing in academia today and attempts to suggest solutions to these current predicaments.

2. Importance of Knowledge and Its Sharing

Knowledge has become an essential asset for organizations and nations, making it crucial to gather and preserve accurate and unadulterated information. Traditionally, knowledge is understood as justified true belief, with an expanded view that includes social sources such as testimony and peer disagreement. It is widely accepted that knowledge can also be attributed to groups, organizations, and similar entities, where information must be integrated, organized, and contextualized within the framework of existing understanding to qualify as knowledge.

Knowledge sharing is a reciprocal process (Ramayah et al., 2014), and academic institutions are major venues for this exchange. In educational settings, sharing the right and proper knowledge with students enhances their academic performance (Sharabati, 2018). Higher educational institutions acquire new knowledge by studying existing information and adding to it (Mutahar et al., 2022). These authors point out that knowledge sharing improves effectiveness and competitiveness in academic institutions. Without knowledge sharing, organizations lack sound and healthy information (Akosile & Olatokun, 2020).

Fauzi et al. (2018) explain that academicians may be reluctant to share sound knowledge due to past experiences and a lack of mutual trust among scholars. Previous research highlights the importance of trust in the knowledge-sharing process. Annansingh et al. (2018) suggest that effective knowledge sharing re-

quires good faith. The role of instructors in this process is vital, as their support facilitates knowledge sharing. Instructors can encourage students to discuss freely and motivate them by offering rewards (Nava-Macali, 2017).

The Theory of Reasoned Action can be applied to the knowledge-sharing process. Introduced by Martin Fishbein in 1967 and later extended by Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980, Razak et al. (2014) designed a variation of the model to employ this theory in a knowledge-sharing context. According to the model, knowledge-sharing behavior depends on attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitude and subjective criteria influence a person's intention and willingness to share knowledge, thereby developing knowledge-sharing behavior. Knowledge sharing will cease if there is a lack of goodwill and intention, which may result from an individual's attitude (e.g., fear of cancellation or self-censorship) or external influences (e.g., political or social norms). The model will also fail when any group, mob, or political organization interferes with knowledge sharing.

In the following sections, several exemplary instances will be given for the breakdown of the knowledge-sharing process caused by the interference or disturbance of one or multiple components of this theory.

3. Censorship and Academics

Censorship can be defined as the suppression of information or exchange of information. According to Kuehn (2004: p. 335), suppression involves any activity that “seeks to prevent the creation of certain unwelcome data or theories, or, alternatively, to deter or block the dissemination of unwelcome data or theories that already exist, through pressure or restraints on [...] scientists”.

Censorship is typically imposed by government entities, private organizations, or powerful groups. Väliverronen & Saikkonen (2020) noted that governments often impose restrictions or censorship on scientific research. Other entities involved in censorship include industrial lobbies, political and social activists, think tanks, political groups, and even groups of ordinary citizens. For instance, environmental research faced censorship during George W. Bush's presidency in the United States, and academic research and empirical findings were suppressed under Prime Minister Stephen Harper's rule in Canada (Barnett & Wiber, 2018).

Another example of knowledge sharing hampered by external forces is the case of geophysicist Dorian Abbot (University of Chicago), who publicly criticized Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives in academia, arguing they prioritize identity over merit and harm scientific excellence. In 2021, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) invited Abbot to deliver a prestigious lecture, but the invitation was rescinded after students and faculty protested his views on DEI. Critics accused Abbot of “racism” and “harm”, despite his stated support for equitable opportunity (Sobey, 2021). The cancellation sparked debates about academic freedom, with critics arguing that institutions now prioritize ideological conformity over intellectual diversity. Abbot's case became emblematic of how dissenting views on DEI policies are silenced.

Academia is particularly vulnerable to censorship because it relies heavily on government funding for research. In the 21st century, researchers and academics constantly face pressure from various entities, and controlling research has become common. [Fischetti \(2019\)](#) outlines several tactics for censoring academic research, including cutting funds, destroying data, removing scientists and researchers from advisory boards, and altering studies or findings. These activities raise concerns among academics and scholars, who worry that future generations will be unable to understand many of today's critical issues if studies are suppressed.

Censorship and suppression in the research sector can take various forms, including economic and political control, organizational control, horizontal control, and public control. Studies are suppressed to achieve specific goals set by economic and political powers. For instance, powerful bodies may interfere with sampling and study designs or manipulate results. The main purpose of economic and political control is to suppress independent research. In organizational control, intimidation and self-censorship are common. Horizontal control aims to undermine the credibility of critics. Public control mainly involves trolling on social media with aggressive feedback, threats, or ethical complaints, leading to self-censorship ([Väliveronen & Saikkonen, 2020](#)).

[Warne \(2020\)](#) states that censoring unpopular ideas is a strategy for attacking academic freedom. He cites the policy of the [Journal of Intelligence \(2013\)](#), which states, "The journal will not consider manuscripts that present results or conclusions with mixed language, with misleading wording or with insufficient supporting data that may therefore lead to or enhance political controversies; and the editors will judge whether that is the case." This effectively means that research may be rejected if it is politically controversial, even if it meets quality and credibility standards. Warne explains that this policy indicates the suppression and censorship of knowledge.

[Warne \(2020\)](#) differentiates between the rejection and censorship of research. He argues that a manuscript should be rejected if it does not meet scholarly quality parameters, such as small sample sizes, invalid measurements, or serious errors like misinformation or poor language. Non-scientific parameters, such as page limits, budget, and legitimate limits on the journal's scope, may also influence whether a contribution is rejected. However, if research is rejected for non-legitimate reasons, it constitutes censorship. Such actions merely foster political interests and compromise research and expertise.

[Warne \(2020\)](#) shares an experience where a colleague's thesis was rejected on the grounds of potential political controversy. The rejection stated that the research might cause political disputes, implying that the interpretation and conclusions were politically controversial. The committee noted that the report was not rejected due to its quality, authenticity, or credibility, but because it did not fit the journal's policy on political issues.

Ironically, the journal's policy was inconsistent. In the same year, it published

an article favoring the male gender. Warne argues that rejecting truth to avoid controversy is problematic and concerning. It is an act one would expect from an undemocratic dictatorship. Such research findings can catalyze social change but are suppressed merely because they do not favor current politics. Rejecting good research to avoid controversy is not a valid motive for any journal editor. Editors should evaluate research based on its merit, not its potential to provoke debate. Science thrives on diverse perspectives and open discussion, and controversial research can lead to progress and innovation. Avoiding such work stifles intellectual growth and undermines the journal's ethical responsibility to promote knowledge.

Da Silva (2021) observed that academic journals face significant challenges in providing a free platform and encouraging debate while respecting differences of opinion. Socio-political factors have heavily impacted academic publishing. Ironically, the freedom of speech is sometimes used to shut down freedom of speech within the intellectual community (Motta, 2018).

Studies on cancel culture in academic settings show that online groups of students and even colleagues often demand the firing of professors who disagree with their opinions (Acevedo, 2022). The adverse impacts include professors resorting to self-censorship or leaving their teaching careers to seek opportunities elsewhere (Shields & Dunn, 2016). These threats seriously hinder universities and research institutions from promoting rational thinking and fostering the pursuit of truth and pure knowledge (Haidt, 2016).

Academic freedom and liberty are essential for fostering and celebrating diversity in educational institutions, as they bring together a wide range of viewpoints. Diversity in academia fosters a broader range of perspectives, which enhances creativity, problem-solving, and innovation. It encourages inclusive research that reflects varied experiences and ideas, leading to more comprehensive and impactful outcomes. Diverse academic environments also promote fairness, equality, and representation. However, individuals, including scholars, can be biased and judgmental. Academic freedom encourages diverse perspectives, but any group that pressures others threatens this freedom. Scholars in minority groups often resort to self-censorship out of fear of repercussions, which is dangerous for the educational field (Dummitt & Patterson, 2022). Studies of Canadian universities reveal that they are politically homogenous institutions where political parties influence university professors. Similar political imbalances are found in universities in the UK and the US.

Censorship in academia is rampant worldwide, including in democratic and liberal countries like America and Canada, communist countries like China, and conservative countries like Türkiye. Aktas et al. (2019) studied resistance and self-censorship in the Turkish academic sector, highlighting that academic freedom is crucial for democracy and necessary for accessing pure and authentic knowledge. Turkish academia has been under assault by political and religious powers, leading to blocked studies and censored knowledge (Ibid.).

The attack on academic freedom targets both individuals and universities. Uni-

versities struggle to escape these attacks due to financial dependence on the state and other funding organizations. The Turkish Higher Education Board (YÖK) helps the state control and monitor universities (Baser et al., 2017). Academics face significant challenges in resuming their scientific activities due to investigations and dismissals. They also face restrictions when attempting to publish research articles or books, making it difficult for dismissed academics to continue their work.

The Turkish government heavily regulates academia, with the Technological Council of Turkey monitoring whether academic journals publish articles by dismissed academics (Aktas et al., 2019). This has created a polluted educational environment where academic institutions are paralyzed and weakened, and the careers of many deserving academics have been destroyed. Thousands of academics have been fired and excluded from the literary circle, but alternative publishers and journals are emerging for banned academics. In such a challenging situation, the future of Turkish academic freedom is uncertain (Aktas et al., 2019).

The Communist Party of China strictly monitors and controls the content published in newspapers, social media, websites, movies, television shows, and documentaries. University professors and their academic materials are also strictly monitored. Anything deemed objectionable or controversial against the government is suppressed. Until recently, this censorship was limited to Chinese university publications, but in recent years, the Chinese government has restricted access to content from universities worldwide.

Wong & Kwong (2019) studied academic censorship in China. In 2017, more than 300 research papers and reviews were removed from the Cambridge University Press website in China. Other prestigious publications, such as the *Journal of Asian Studies* and the *American Political Science Review*, were also censored in mainland China. Some articles were rewritten and republished with significant cuts and alterations. The Chinese government also blocked access to the US-based website LexisNexis because they refused to remove content. Chinese citizens now need a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to access LexisNexis articles, which the government is also restricting (Wong & Kwong, 2019).

According to Xiao (2011), the purpose of such censorship is to control the flow of information and deny access to Chinese citizens. One key factor behind academic censorship in China is the reliance of academic publishers on the state. All universities, regardless of their ranking, are controlled by the Chinese Education Ministry. Universities that do not follow the Communist Party's political ideologies are criticized and labeled as poor performers (Feng, 2017).

These examples show that academic censorship, whether in democratic, communist, or conservative countries, severely restricts intellectual freedom and the free flow of information. These cases highlight how political, religious, and state control can undermine academic integrity, silence dissenting voices, and hinder research, ultimately damaging the quality and independence of scholarly work.

4. Wokeism

According to [Shennan \(2021\)](#), being woke means being aware and well-informed about cultural and political issues, especially those affecting marginalized groups in society. The term originated from African-American Vernacular English. The [Merriam-Webster dictionary \(2024\)](#) defines woke as being “aware of and actively attentive to important societal facts and issues (especially issues of racial and social justice)”.

[Rose \(2020\)](#) argues that while woke originally meant being attentive to important issues, its usage has shifted. [Rose \(2020\)](#) notes that the term is often used “as a stick with which to beat people who aspire to such values, often wielded by those who don’t recognise how un-woke they are, or are proud of the fact” ([Rose, 2020](#)). The word appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary in 2017 and quickly became a buzzword. However, the concept has been in use since 2011 to raise awareness of racial biases against people of color. The term gained widespread attention following the alleged murder of Michael Brown and was further popularized by the Black Lives Matter movement after George Floyd’s death in police custody in 2020 ([Madrid Gil, 2023](#)).

Although wokeism initially had noble intentions, proponents have deviated from its core principles and values. Initially, the concept was about maintaining awareness of the oppression faced by social groups due to their race. Today, its scope includes gender, sexuality, and violence against women. In theory, woke culture aims to equalize people from diverse races, ethnicities, and sexual orientations. However, in practice, it often favors minorities without integrating them into the broader social mainstream ([Vezzosi, 2021](#)). Wokeism tends to view the world in binary terms, focusing only on oppressors and the oppressed, which disregards those who do not fit into these categories ([Peterson, 2019](#)). According to woke theory, conflicts escalate when genuine injustices are aggravated rather than resolved.

Woke culture is often seen as destructive and illogical. It is portrayed as a struggle for justice “in a world that allows everything and forgives nothing” ([Madrid Gil, 2023: p. 25](#)). It is incoherent and can lead to a culture of revenge. For instance, proponents of woke culture aim to rewrite established history, which they claim has been falsified.

Woke culture is also associated with canceling or denying freedom of expression to amplify the voices of minorities or the oppressed. In woke practice, discourses are manipulated. For example, the term inclusion, which should mean including everyone, often becomes associated with restricting speech. It is difficult to include everyone if people are not allowed to speak freely because their words might offend some. By prioritizing the feelings of certain groups, the woke approach often infringes on free speech. For true inclusion, speech must be free from restrictions ([Boghossian, 2022](#)).

Words and vocabulary are not only restricted or manipulated but also cor-

rupted, rendering them powerless to reveal reality. This manipulation victimizes truth and facts, leading to irrationalism. Effective communication requires clear and agreed-upon terminology, but when dialogues are compromised through linguistic manipulation, chaos ensues, obstructing justice. Such compromised dialogues frustrate individuals who wish to express themselves freely, as reality is suppressed to accommodate irrational and emotional ideologies. Truth is systematically overshadowed by superficial narratives, which then gain power.

Woke proponents emphasize that a speaker's racial and ethnic identity determines the acceptability of their speech. According to [Meseguer \(2020\)](#), white people are consistently portrayed as problematic, being seen as violent and aggressive in both speech and silence (cited in [Madrid Gil, 2023](#)). In woke culture, tolerance becomes a tool to suppress views that contradict those of woke groups, making constructive dialogue and meaningful communication impossible. This, in turn, erodes the ability to empathize with others, leading to the ruthless application of cancel culture ([Mering, 2021](#)).

[Pache \(2022\)](#) discusses woke culture within the research context, noting its rapid spread throughout American educational and research institutions. This has led to the exclusion of several deserving and talented professors and has become a concern for many researchers and academicians. According to Pache, wokeism is a system of thought that fights for ideological conceptions under progressive presumptions. These ideas and ideological concepts become so sensitive and taboo that researchers refrain from studying such controversial topics to avoid jeopardizing their academic careers ([Pache, 2022](#)).

[Rom & Mitchell \(2021\)](#) confirmed that while wokeism is primarily related to social sciences, it has also spread to political science, natural science, and technology.

Mathematician Theodore Hill (Georgia Institute of Technology) submitted a paper proposing an evolutionary explanation for why males often exhibit greater variability in traits like intelligence. The paper was rejected by multiple journals, with reviewers explicitly citing concerns about potential misuse to justify gender disparities. One editor reportedly warned that the topic was “inflammatory” and could “harm women”. After media scrutiny, the paper was eventually published in the *Journal of Interdisciplinary Mathematics* ([Hill, 2020](#)). Critics argued that the initial rejections reflected ideological bias against exploring biological explanations for sex differences, prioritizing political correctness over scientific inquiry.

In 2017, Google engineer James Damore was fired after circulating a memo arguing that biological differences might partially explain gender disparities in tech roles. Damore cited peer-reviewed studies on sex differences in personality traits and occupational preferences ([Damore, 2017](#)). Critics labeled the memo “anti-diversity,” while supporters argued it raised valid scientific questions.

Peter Boghossian, an ethics and philosophy professor in the United States, observed that students were reluctant to engage in discussions with people who did

not share their principles and values. Some students even criticized professors for teaching German and French philosophers because they were Europeans and whites. Discussing the term “racial consciousness” is also taboo, and professors who attempt to do so face sharp criticism (Pache, 2022).

Wokeism is present in almost every cultural, social, and national setting and has a significant influence, particularly in the research and knowledge domains. European universities are relatively open and free to discuss controversial topics as a common way of transmitting knowledge. Pache (2022) refers to the medieval tradition of *disputatio*, where the struggle of ideas stemming from debates brings dynamism to academia and engages students. In contrast, in America, the publication of certain studies is effectively prohibited due to woke culture. Recognizing this issue, McMahan et al. (2021) started the *Journal of Controversial Ideas* (2021) to publish articles rejected under wokeism. The editorial of the first issue states, “Some students have demanded that speakers holding views they consider offensive be prevented from speaking at their university and that professors holding views the students consider objectionable should be sanctioned or even dismissed” (McMahan et al., 2021: p. 2). The authors argue that this extremist view allows woke students to control knowledge simply because they find it objectionable, which is a direct attack on pure knowledge.

Almost all fields suffer from the adverse consequences of woke culture. According to Pache (2022), the management field has been relatively protected from the woke attack, though it has influenced some practices (Middleton & Turnbull, 2021). In the future, textbooks by reputed writers and professors may be rewritten, and original theories erased under woke extremism if deemed discriminatory.

Žižek (2021) labels woke culture a pseudo-activity, arguing that despite its stated goal of social change, nothing actually changes. Critics emphasize the importance of keeping science free from woke interventions (Howie, 2022).

Luk (2021) describes woke culture as a lightning rod for both left and right ideologies, calling it a modern cultural war and an effective weapon for both sides. The journey of woke culture from a welcoming creed to a toxic word in the United States, Canada, and Europe illustrates how woke campaigns began alienating moderate supporters. The weakness lies in its one-dimensional and extreme belief that those not active in the woke group are wrong and not awakened. This judgmental and biased stance draws a line between the two sides, attacking moderates for not being extremists.

5. Cancel Culture

Cancel culture is a concept that emerged between 2010 and 2020. It involves a group or mob boycotting or ostracizing someone for expressing an unacceptable opinion (Yar & Bromwich, 2019). The Urban Dictionary defines cancel culture as a practice primarily carried out online by “narcissists” and “immature individuals” (Urban Dictionary, 2020). According to Norris (2020), it is a polarized term that “can be defined broadly as attempts to ostracize someone for violating social

norms”. Cancel culture originated from social media platforms like Black Twitter and hashtags such as #canceled. Black Twitter is a space where Black people discuss issues and share experiences (Rose, 2020).

Proponents of cancel culture argue that historically, ethnically and racially marginalized groups have been silenced and nullified by white male-dominated society. Critics, however, contend that cancel culture promotes ideological conformity, restricts freedom of speech and expression, and leads to self-censorship, thereby harming the free flow of knowledge. They describe cancel culture as ‘mob rule,’ where hasty judgments result in severe consequences for individuals (Norris, 2020; Dummitt & Patterson, 2022).

Cancel culture often follows the same pattern: “A celebrity or other public figure does or says something offensive. A public backlash, often fueled by politically progressive social media, ensues. Then come the calls to cancel the person—that is, to effectively end their career or revoke their cultural cachet, whether through boycotts of their work or disciplinary action from an employer” (Romano, 2020).

One of the popular terms related to cancel culture is Social Justice Warriors (SJWs), groups engaged in virtual and real-life battles over controversial issues. SJWs like to see themselves as people who express and promote socially progressive views. However, critics of the movement more often than not see SJWs as a group of people who claim to be fighting for social justice but are really merely attempting to validate their ego, looking for special treatment or attention. Heron et al. (2014) share this view, suggesting that SJWs’ true objective is personal validation rather than genuine social progress. Initially, the term had a positive connotation, but it took on a negative one when used derogatorily on Twitter in 2011 (Ohlheiser, 2015). SJWs often see themselves as civil rights activists, but in reality, they are often at the forefront of canceling activities. They are criticized for policing others’ behavior and imposing their values on others (Rose, 2020).

A guest essay in *The New York Times* noted that “anyone with a public-facing persona must [now] contemplate the prospect of having her reputation savagely destroyed” (quoted in Fairbanks, 2022). As a result, individuals must navigate this reality cautiously. Fairbanks suggests that authors must take careful steps to avoid cancel culture when publishing content, particularly by avoiding sensitive topics like race. Even when arguments and opinions are sensible and rational, writers risk being attacked and ultimately canceled.

Alvarez Trigo (2020) addresses cancel culture in academia, where students demand censorship of certain content in their syllabus. This culture victimizes scientists, journalists, writers, and researchers. An open letter in *Harper’s Magazine*, signed by various intellectuals, complained about the pressures of cancel culture. Many academics live in constant fear of career repercussions for expressing opinions that might clash with current woke and cancel culture (McWhorter, 2020).

Many argue that cancel culture is a political weapon used to force individuals out of their jobs and demand total submission to prevailing values and principles. The motives behind canceling social media posts are not always noble but can

disseminate biased and misguided information (Hodge & Hallgrimsdottir, 2019).

Cancel culture incites anti-social and anti-cultural activities, such as attacks on historical monuments or statues. These attacks are common in the United States and Europe. For example, the “Equestrian Statue of Theodore Roosevelt” was recently removed from the American Museum of Natural History in New York City after 80 years. The statue depicted Roosevelt on a horse, flanked by a Native American and an African man (Treisman, 2022).

In Paris, a statue of Jean-Baptiste Colbert was spray-painted red and the words “state negrophobia” were written at the base of the monument to protest his role in regulating slavery in French colonies. Statues have been toppled and attacked throughout Europe, including the United Kingdom and Belgium, as protesters target historical figures associated with slavery (BBC News, 2020).

However, one cannot change history by removing statues and monuments or erasing historical evidence. Historical views were relevant to their specific times. Cancel culture aims to erase historical facts by imposing new narratives, effectively reconstructing history (Madrid Gil, 2023).

According to Madrid Gil (2023), cancel culture “stifles creativity, kills fiction, ruins entertainment, destroys humour, impoverishes political debate, erases history, replaces the structure of meritocracy [...] with that of group identity”. She describes cancel culture as a “cancer on democracy”, lacking transparency and accountability.

The foundation of cancel culture is often hatred and resentment. Brague (2021) compares cancel culture to the Bolshevik revolution, where hate and resentment contaminated the movement (cited in Madrid Gil, 2023: p. 36). SJWs seek to impose a single worldview through cancel culture. While it is widely acknowledged that black slavery and atrocities against indigenous people were grave crimes, this does not justify continued racial antagonism in a retaliatory form.

Woke and cancel cultures have created a climate of fear in academia, leading many intellectuals, scholars, and experts to practice self-censorship in response to public censorship and cancel culture. In this environment, individuals may avoid exploring controversial topics or expressing dissenting opinions to protect their reputations and careers. Cancel culture plays a significant role by punishing those who deviate from certain ideological norms, often leading to public shaming, social ostracism, or professional consequences. As a result, the atmosphere of fear stifles open debate, critical thinking, and intellectual diversity, undermining the core values of academic freedom and inquiry.

6. Conclusion

Universities play a crucial role in promoting knowledge and intellectual freedom. However, when corrupt and manipulative forces control free speech, constructive debate ceases. Academia is in a critical stage, plagued by disturbing incidents of censorship that threaten scientific research. Radicalism and conflict escalation pose existential threats to academic research, which is constantly suppressed, chal-

lenged, minimized, or retracted. In addition to this, the systematic degradation of individuals through cancel culture and censorship not only destroys their work but also tarnishes their personal reputations.

This conclusion is meant to serve not only as a diagnosis of the current threats to academia but also as a call to action for addressing these issues to foster a more resilient and effective model of knowledge acquisition. By identifying the detrimental effects of censorship, cancel culture, and ideological extremism, this diagnosis underscores the need for systemic reforms to restore constructive debate and intellectual freedom in universities.

Potential concrete solutions to the current problematic issues could include open data mandates, which would require public access to datasets and methodologies for studies with policy implications (e.g., race, gender, or policing). This would reduce accusations of politically motivated suppression. Other measures to implement could be whistleblower protections, promotion of intellectual humility, depoliticization of peer review, and critical thinking curricula to train students to evaluate evidence independently, even when findings conflict with their values.

In a healthier model of knowledge acquisition, academia must embrace an environment where diverse perspectives are valued and debated openly, free from fear of suppression or personal attacks. Calling attention to the issues plaguing academic institutions is a crucial first step in designing antidotes—strategies that can safeguard the integrity of research, protect individuals from reputational harm, and encourage innovation without the chilling effects of self-censorship.

Moreover, this diagnosis intends to stimulate the search for practical solutions, such as promoting transparency in academic publishing, fostering inclusive discourse that does not sacrifice critical rigor, and creating protective frameworks for scholars facing undue pressure. By acknowledging these challenges, this should serve as both a warning and a foundation for dialogue about rebuilding academia as a space where knowledge thrives through freedom, collaboration, and mutual respect.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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