

## Peer Review

# Review of: "Epistemic Humility vs. Credentialism: The Educational Paradox in Modern Healthcare"

Julia Schnepf<sup>1</sup>

1. Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience, Maastricht University, Maastricht, Netherlands

Overall, it is a very interesting article with highly suitable case studies.

My main point of criticism is that the article currently (more or less) assumes narcissism as a necessary condition for followers to adopt pseudoscientific views and reject the mainstream scientific opinion. I'm not sure whether the psychological research (cited here) is broad enough to make such a 'bold' claim. There may be additional factors that (also) explain this paradox (being educated and at the same time inclined towards pseudoscience). In communication science, for example, there is the communication style of questioning, which is also correlated with personality traits (e.g., openness). It could be, for example, that the educated cohort also includes some people who are not narcissistic, but who strongly question opinions, viewpoints, and study results. At the same time, extreme situations such as a pandemic with a deadly virus put people in a situation where many do not want to restrict their lives and freedoms. In such a situation, for example, it may be that those educated people who are highly scrutinizing are also (unconsciously) driven by the motivation to want to play down the bad event (pandemic) through increased scrutiny. Another variable that can play a role alongside narcissism is risk aversion.

To summarize, my main recommendation is to tone down the language of the comment, because at the moment it reads as if more or less "all educated people who reject the majority opinion" are ignorant and narcissistic. On the whole, I agree with the line of discussion, but I would still like to put a few relativizing thoughts into perspective. I don't want to relate these relativizing thoughts to the pandemic example, but if you look at it in a broader context, it is true that questioning and rejecting the majority opinion has sometimes led to central scientific paradigm shifts (e.g., the Copernican Revolution or Einstein's Theory of Relativity). I would like to see a more in-depth discussion of this aspect in the paper. Likewise, different

theories of truth could be briefly mentioned or discussed (constructivist versus consensus-based approaches to truth).

It would also be good to provide sources for the two case studies so that readers can understand when and how these cases took place.

#### References:

Browne, M. (2018). Epistemic divides and ontological confusions: The psychology of vaccine scepticism. *Human Vaccines & Immunotherapeutics*, 14(10), 2540-2542.

De Vries, R. E., Bakker-Pieper, A., Konings, F. E., & Schouten, B. (2013). The communication styles inventory (CSI) a six-dimensional behavioral model of communication styles and its relation with personality. *Communication Research*, 40(4), 506-532.

Liu, J., Kassas, B., Lai, J., Kropp, J., & Gao, Z. (2024). Understanding the role of risk preferences and perceptions in vaccination decisions and post-vaccination behaviors among US households. *Scientific Reports*, 14(1), 3190.

#### Declarations

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.