



Original Article

Perception of nurse academicians on academic publications: A cross-sectional study

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Abstract

Background: Academic publication is a cornerstone of advancing nursing science, as it provides evidence-based research that guides clinical practice and education. However, the pressure to publish for career advancement has led to concerns about behaviours such as the 'urge to publish' and 'panic publishing'. The perception behind these trends remains unclear. This study aimed to assess the perception of Indian nurse academicians on academic publications.

Methodology: This cross-sectional study surveyed Indian nurse academicians from Institutes of National Importance (INIs) of India who were selected convenient sampling technique. Data was collected through an online self-structured questionnaire. The survey covered socio-demographic details and perceptions for publishing in academic publications. Data analysis was performed using SPSS Version 26.0, with descriptive and inferential statistics. A significance level ($p < 0.05$) was used for statistical associations.

Results: Of the respondents, 66.8% were female, and 92.3% had published before [median 12 (IQR 7-38) articles], with 21.7% preferring PubMed-indexed journals. More than two-thirds of participants (64.7%) spent an excessive amount of time on the publication process. There were differences by gender as men were more prone to assess publication metrics ($p < 0.05$), ignore other facets of life for publishing ($p = 0.005$), and self-reported publication addiction-like behaviors (18% compared to 4% for women).

Conclusion: Academic publishing is a crucial but stress-inducing aspect of nurse academicians' careers. These findings underscore the need for a balanced approach that values quality over quantity in academic publishing. Institutions should promote ethical research practices, provide support to manage publication pressures and foster a more sustainable academic environment.

Keywords: Academia; Nurse Academician; Perception; Publications.

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Introduction

The world of academia and research is a complex fusion of teaching, research, and practice, with the aim of contributing to worthy change and understanding in the nursing profession [1]. Nurse practitioner and academician are required to develop a spirit of inquiry, generating and disseminating new knowledge through research, disseminating the findings and using evidence to advance practice, guide clinical practice, develop new methods of teaching and evaluation, and improve the quality of care for the healthcare consumer/partner [2].

Future policies and successful strategies to improve patient care and outcomes highly depend on nurses' contributions to scientific breakthroughs. The increasing focus on evidence-based practice has underscored the significance of thorough research [3]. The necessity for high-quality academic publication is a vital aspect of nursing science, wherein nurse academicians engage in publishing scientifically rigorous and impactful evidence-based research reports. These publications keep the nursing community updated with the latest advancements in nursing practice, education, and healthcare policy [4].

In this context, nurse academicians are encouraged to generate and publish the highest level of evidence to address clinical questions, improve patient outcomes, and stay updated with recent advances in nursing science. However, publications serve a vital role in helping nurse academicians 'academic pursuits, and career advancement and remain competitive in the academic and clinical arenas [5,6].

Those with high-quality publications are more likely to secure positions in academic nursing institutions, which are often highly sought after for their opportunities for professional growth and leadership [7]. This desire for academic success can lead to intense competition, sometimes resulting in a surge of publications, a phenomenon termed 'Publication Addiction' (PA). Publication addiction is described as a type of behavioral addiction, where the drive to publish becomes compulsive, often at the expense of quality [8]. While the term 'addiction' is debated, the author of this paper likened PA to the normalization of harmful behaviours, stating, "Although widespread, PA is masked by its normalization within academia, as alcoholism may be accepted in a brewery." The author also proposed criteria for PA that are similar to those utilized for substance use disorders [8].

The competition among nurse academicians further intensified this trend, with many nurse academicians engaging in 'panic publishing', leading to an influx of low-quality papers that overcrowded academic journals [9]. A concerning rise in retractions, highlighting the ethical and quality issues associated with rushed publications accompanied this phenomenon [10]. These trends underscore the intense pressure on nurse academicians to stand out in the academic arena through their publication records [11]. However, the motivations behind this behaviour, whether driven by genuine academic contribution or the need for career advancement remain poorly understood and warrant further exploration.

To date, there are no studies that assess the perceptions of nurse academicians regarding their academic publishing practices. Do they feel compelled to publish to remain visible in the academic world, or are they driven by the desire for job-related promotions and professional recognition? This study aimed to address this gap by assessing the perceptions of Indian nurse academicians in the context of academic publications.

Materials and Methods

Study design and setting

The study adopted a cross-sectional design, utilizing an online survey as the primary data collection tool. Data collection occurred over a three-month period, spanning October and December 2024. The present study was carried out in 21 nursing colleges in India that are recognized as Institutes of National Importance (INIs) by the Government of India.

The Government of India confers the title of 'Institutes of National Importance' (INIs) to premier educational institutions such as All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) through an act of Parliament. As per the Ministry of Education, INI-status institutions play an essential role in nurturing and producing highly skilled professionals for the nation. Only a few colleges or universities are granted this prestigious recognition and serve as leading centres for academic excellence and research.

Study population and inclusion criteria

The research study population comprised Indian nurse academicians and educators actively involved in nursing education at Institutes of National Importance (INIs) in India. The participants were chosen from various nursing specialties, including but not limited to medical-surgical nursing, paediatric nursing, obstetric and gynaecological nursing, community health nursing, and psychiatric nursing. To be eligible, participants were required to have at least one year of teaching experience in any Institutes of National Importance (INIs) in India and nurse academicians who provided informed consent to participate in the research. Exclusion criteria include nurse academicians not currently working in nursing colleges recognized as INIs, nurse practitioners or clinicians not involved in academic roles, and those lacking awareness or understanding of academic publications.

Instrument for data collection

The current study employed a researcher-created questionnaire to assess perceptions and self-appraisal of Indian nurse academicians on academic publications based on previous research. To determine the questionnaire's validity and reliability, a group of faculty members remarked on the questionnaire's items, and the content validity ratio was determined. Then, the relevant content validity index was calculated, and it was found 0.83. A test-retest approach was utilized to measure the questionnaire's reliability ($r = 0.9$). The questionnaire was developed to gather detailed information on two key areas: (1) socio-demographic and professional details of the nurse academicians (e.g., age, academic qualifications, gender, years of teaching or research experience, and area of nursing specialization), and (2) nurse academician perception through a 16-items scale. A self-structured questionnaire was used to measure self-perceived publication addiction-like behaviours. Participants were asked to identify whether they engaged in these behaviours or not using a Yes/No dichotomy. Data was obtained after getting informed consent from each participant. A formal approval was taken from the concerned authority before data collection.

Sampling technique and sample size determination

Convenient sampling was utilised in this study to gather data. We calculated the required sample size for cross-sectional research using the " $N = N / (1 + ne)^2$ " method, presuming a 95% confidence interval (CI) and a 5% margin of error rate. Based on an approximate population of 577 nurse academicians working at INIs of India during data collection, a minimum of 237 nurse academicians was deemed sufficient to power the study and allow for more precise results. All nurse academicians working at INIs of India were contacted with the intention of participating in the study.

Ethical considerations

The study strictly followed the ethical guidelines set forth in the revised Declaration of Helsinki. Approval to conduct the research was granted by the Institutional Research Ethics Committee. Before enrolling in this study, all study participants provided informed consent. Investigators were briefed about the study's purpose, methodology, and their rights, including the assurance of anonymity and the confidentiality of their data. Additionally, participants were made fully aware that participation in the study was entirely voluntary and that they might leave at any time without incurring any penalties.

Statistical Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 26 (IBM Corp., Armonk, New York, USA), was used to analyse the data. The analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The participants' sociodemographic and professional characteristics, as well as their perceptions, behaviours, and self-assessment related to academic publications, were compiled using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, median, Inter quartile range, and standard deviation (SD). Inferential statistical methods, such as chi-square tests or t-tests, were employed to explore associations between variables. A p-value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results

During the study period, 235 Indian Nurse Academicians responded to participate and fill up the questionnaire.

Table 1: Socio-demographic background and publication-related characteristics of Nurse Academicians (n = 235).

Characteristics	Category	n (%)
Age in years (Mean ± SD)	---	37.3±6.2
Gender	Male	78 (33.2)
	Female	157 (66.8)
Professional qualification	Postgraduate	172 (73.2)
	PhD	63 (26.8)
Research experience in years (Mean ± SD)	---	7.9±4.8
How do you describe yourself?	Predominately Academician/ Researcher	104 (44.3)
	Predominately Nurse	16 (6.8)
	Both equally	115 (48.9)
Prior publication experience	No	18 (7.7)
	Yes	217 (92.3)
Publication preference	PubMed Indexed only	51 (21.7)
	Non-PubMed but Indexed	17 (7.2)
	Both	160 (68.1)
	None	7 (3.0)
Do you have Research Gate/ Google Scholar/ PubMed or any other research account?	No	44 (18.7)
	Yes	191 (81.3)
Number of Published papers [Median (IQR)]	---	12 (7-38)

Note: n=number of participants; SD=standard deviation; IQR= Inter quartile range.

The mean age of the study participants was 37.3 ± 6.2 years, with the majority being females (66.8%). During the study period, most of them held a post-graduate nursing degree (73.2%) which outnumbered those who had a PhD in Nursing (26.8%). Most of them described themselves equally as academician and nurse (48.9%) followed by predominately academician (44.3%). The mean research experience of the study participants was 7.9 ± 4.8 years. The majority, 92.3% of participants had prior publication, and most of them preferred both PubMed and Non-PubMed Indexed journals (68.1%). Most of the research participants said that they have Research Gate/ Google Scholar/ PubMed or any other research account (81.3%). The median number of published research papers was 12 with a 7-38 Inter quartile range (IQR).

Table 2: Perception of Indian Nurse Academicians with respect to academic research and publications (n=235)

Perceptions	Always n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Never n (%)
Frequency of checking publications in search engines.	2 (0.9)	46 (19.6)	187 (79.6)
Frequency of checking citations, RG score, H index	0 (0.0)	42 (17.9)	193 (82.1)
Comparison of publication count with others	13 (5.5)	119 (50.6)	103 (43.8)
Comparison of RG score, citations, H index, i10 index with others	13 (5.5)	99 (42.1)	123 (52.3)
Worry about others having more publications	12 (5.1)	75 (31.9)	148 (63.0)
Concern over others having higher H or I index	10 (4.3)	69 (29.4)	156 (66.4)
Sense of accomplishment from paper publication	133 (56.6)	79 (33.6)	23 (9.8)
Urgency to publish ideas before others	34 (14.5)	106 (45.1)	95 (40.4)
Close monitoring of paper submission progress	106 (45.1)	101 (43.0)	28 (11.9)
Devote excessive time to publishing	34 (14.5)	152 (64.7)	49 (20.9)
Anxiety over not having a new paper to submit	40 (17.0)	97 (41.3)	98 (41.7)
Worries about delays in acceptance	57 (24.3)	110 (46.8)	68 (28.9)
Urgency in sharing publications on social media	48 (20.4)	80 (34.0)	107 (45.5)
Pleasure to see the paper published	69 (29.4)	101 (43.0)	65 (27.7)
Efforts to control the urge to publish	25 (10.6)	118 (50.2)	92 (39.1)
Neglect other life priorities for publication	10 (4.3)	61 (26.0)	164 (69.8)

Note: n=number of participants

Most of the participants think that they never frequently check their publications in search engines (79.6%), similarly, they never check their citations, RG score, and H index (82.1%). The majority of participants stated that sometimes they compare their number of publications with others (50.6%) and compare their RG score, citations, H index, and i10 index with others (47.7%). The majority of study participants do not express concern about others' higher publication counts (63%) or citation metrics (66.4%). Most people (56.6%) feel a sense of accomplishment when their article is published with 45.1% of study participants sometimes feeling the need to publish before others take an idea.

Approximately half (45.1%) of respondents always closely follow the status of the submitted paper, making it regular practice. Most of them (64.7%) of respondents sometimes devote excessive time as a habit of publishing papers. Nearly half of the participants sometimes feel worried about publishing delays (46.8%) and the lack of new articles (41.3%). Less than half of them were never shared published work on social media (45.5%). Nearly half (43%) of respondents sometimes find publishing as enjoyable as other facets of life, although, 50.2% of participants sometimes feel the desire to publish a paper. Remarkably, the majority of participants (69.8%) never disregard other significant facets of life just for publishing.

Table 3: Association between Gender and Perception of Indian Nurse Academicians with respect to academic research and publications (n = 235)

Statements	Categories	Gender n (%)		P-value / Chi-square
		M	F	
Frequency of checking publications in search engines.	Always	*0 (0.0)	*2 (100)	0.007/ 10.03
	Sometime	24 (52.2)	22 (47.8)	
	Never	54 (28.9)	133 (71.1)	
Frequency of checking citations, RG score, H index	Sometime	21 (50)	21 (50)	0.011/ 6.516
	Never	57 (29.5)	136 (70.5)	
Comparison of publication count with others	Always	*4 (30.8)	9 (69.2)	0.191/ 3.313
	Sometime	46 (38.7)	73 (61.3)	
	Never	28 (27.2)	75 (72.8)	
Comparison of RG score, citations, H index, i10 index with others	Always	8 (61.5)	5 (38.5)	0.032/ 6.868
	Sometime	36 (36.4)	63 (63.6)	
	Never	34 (27.6)	89 (72.4)	
Worry about others having more publications	Always	8 (66.7)	*4 (33.3)	0.023/ 7.527
	Sometime	20 (26.7)	55 (73.3)	
	Never	50 (33.8)	98 (66.2)	
Concern over others having higher H or I index	Always	6 (60)	*4 (40)	0.084/ 4.954
	Sometime	18 (26.1)	51 (73.9)	
	Never	54 (34.6)	102 (65.4)	
Sense of accomplishment from paper publication	Always	45 (33.8)	88 (66.2)	0.934/ 0.136
	Sometime	25 (31.6)	54 (68.4)	
	Never	8 (34.8)	15 (65.2)	
Urgency to publish ideas before others	Always	16 (47.1)	18 (52.9)	0.041/

	Sometime	27 (25.5)	79 (74.5)	6.368
	Never	35 (36.8)	60 (63.2)	
Close monitoring of paper submission progress	Always	33 (31.1)	73 (68.9)	0.603/ 1.012
	Sometime	37 (36.6)	64 (63.4)	
	Never	8 (28.6)	20 (71.4)	
Devote excessive time to publishing	Always	13 (38.2)	21 (61.8)	0.647/ 0.871
	Sometime	51 (33.6)	101 (66.4)	
	Never	14 (28.6)	35 (71.4)	
Anxiety over not having a new paper to submit	Always	15 (37.5)	25 (62.5)	0.342/ 2.145
	Sometime	27 (27.8)	70 (72.2)	
	Never	36 (36.7)	62 (63.3)	
Worries about delays in acceptance	Always	24 (42.1)	33 (57.9)	0.254/ 2.739
	Sometime	34 (30.9)	76 (69.1)	
	Never	20 (29.4)	48 (70.6)	
Urgency in sharing publications on social media	Always	16 (33.3)	32 (66.7)	0.064/ 5.507
	Sometime	34 (42.5)	46 (57.5)	
	Never	28 (26.2)	79 (73.8)	
Pleasure to see the paper published	Always	20 (29)	49 (71)	0.658/ 0.837
	Sometime	36 (35.6)	65 (64.4)	
	Never	22 (33.8)	43 (66.2)	
Efforts to control the urge to publish	Always	11 (44)	14 (56)	0.442/ 1/633
	Sometime	39 (33.1)	79 (66.9)	
	Never	28 (30.4)	64 (69.6)	
Neglect other life priorities for publication	Always	8 (80)	*2 (20)	0.005 / 10.73
	Sometime	21 (34.4)	40 (56.6)	
	Never	49 (29.9)	115 (70.1)	
Note: M=Male; F=Female; n=Number of participants; *Yates' correction.				

The gender of the Indian nurse academicians was found to be associated with many statements related to their perception with respect to academic research and publications. There is a significant gender difference found among female nurse academicians who never check their publications in search engines ($\chi^2=10.03$, $p=0.007$), and research profiles in RG/ Google Scholar ($\chi^2=6.516$, $p=0.011$). The male nurse academicians significantly engaged in comparing their author metrics such as RG score, citations, H index, and i10 index with the peer group ($\chi^2=6.868$, $p=0.032$), concerned about having fewer publications

than others ($\chi^2=7.527$, $p=0.023$), and they were feeling an urgent need to publish an idea before others do ($\chi^2=6.368$, $p=0.041$). It was interesting to note that male nurse academicians were more probable than females to consistently neglect other facets of their lives for publication, with a substantial association ($\chi^2=10.73$, $p=0.005$).

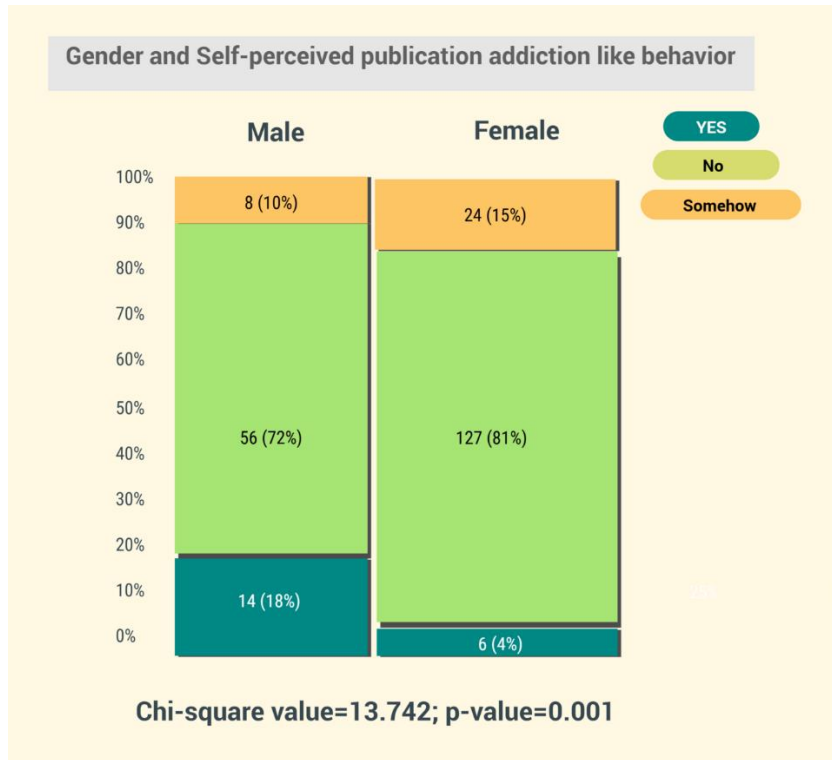


Figure 1: Association between self-perceived publication addiction-like behavior and Gender (n=235).

Self-perceived publication addiction-like behavior and its association with gender

A statistically significant association is shown in Figure 1, which clarifies the association between gender and self-perceived publishing addiction-like behaviour ($\chi^2=13.742$, $p=0.001$). Nearly 18% of male nurse academicians identified themselves as addicted-like behavior to paper publication, 10% as somehow addicted-like behavior and 72% perceived themselves as not addicted-like behavior. Whereas only 4% of females perceived themselves as having addicted-like behavior to paper publication, 15% as somehow addicted-like behavior, and 81% did not identify any addiction-like behavior to publication.

Discussion

The "Publish or Perish!" phenomenon is a pervasive issue within the nursing academia, which comes with significant pressures and implications. Therefore, this research aimed to assess the perceptions of Indian nurse academicians regarding their academic publication activities. The results of this study shed light on the perceptions and self-appraisal of Indian nurse academicians regarding their academic publishing practices, especially in the context of the growing pressure to publish for career advancement. The findings highlight a complex interaction between professional motivations, ethical concerns, and the psychological impact of the "publish or perish" culture in academia.

The study reveals that while academic publishing is viewed as essential for career progression and professional recognition, it also induces significant stress and, in some cases, leads to unethical practices such as inflated authorship and simultaneous submissions [11].

While there are no studies assessing nurse academician perception in academic publications for us to compare our findings with, studies on medical professional perception and other behavioural addiction studies exist, identifying a similar perception. One of the key findings of this study is the high prevalence of prior publications among the participants, with 92.3% having published before, and a significant proportion preferring PubMed-indexed journals. This reflects the importance placed on high-impact publications in the academic community, particularly in nursing, where evidence-based practice is paramount. However, the pressure to publish has led to behaviours such as "panic publishing," where the focus shifts from quality to quantity, resulting in an influx of low-quality papers and, in some cases, retractions [12]. This is consistent with previous research that has highlighted the ethical dilemmas and quality issues associated with rushed publications [13].

The research also reveals gender disparities in the perception and behaviour related to academic publishing. Male nurse academicians were more likely to compare their publication metrics (e.g., RG score, citations, H index) with their peers and expressed concern about having fewer publications than others have. This finding is aligned with previous studies that have noted gender disparities in academic publishing, where men are often more competitive and driven by metrics [14,15]. Additionally, male respondents were more likely to neglect other aspects of their lives in pursuit of publications, suggesting a higher propensity for "publication addiction" (PA) among men. This is further supported by the self-perceived publication addiction data, where 18% of male participants identified themselves as addicted to publishing, compared to only 4% of females. This could be because of the institutional and societal pressures that are deeply embedded in it and relate professional legitimacy to productivity metrics. Academic hierarchy, gendered expectations, and cultural narratives that may depict males as "breadwinners" or leaders can all put pressure on male academicians to prioritize quantitative outcomes above work-life balance.

The concept of "publication addiction" (PA) introduced in this study is particularly noteworthy. While the term "addiction" is debated, the behaviours associated with PA, such as compulsive publishing and neglecting other life aspects, are concerning [8]. The study's findings suggest that PA may be more prevalent among male nurse academicians, who are more likely to prioritize publishing over other important life activities. This aligns with the broader literature on behavioural addictions, where certain behaviours, such as gambling or excessive internet use, become compulsive and detrimental to well-being [16].

The study also highlights the need for institutional support to manage the pressures associated with academic publishing. While publishing is crucial for career advancement, the current system often prioritizes quantity over quality, leading to stress and unethical practices [17,18]. Institutions sought to consider implementing policies that promote ethical research practices, provide mentorship and support for early-career researchers, and foster a more balanced approach to academic publishing. This could involve measures such as setting realistic publication expectations, recognizing the value of quality over quantity, and providing resources to help researchers manage the pressures of publishing [19].

The results of this study have many implications for the academic and medical communities in India. The strong emphasis on publishing for career advancement and recognition underscores the necessity of a balanced approach that values both the quantity and quality of publications. Academic institutions and regulatory bodies should consider measures to reduce the undue pressures of publishing, such as recognizing diverse contributions to medical science and fostering a supportive research environment. Moreover, addressing the psychological impacts of publication pressures is crucial. Encouraging collaborative research and fostering an ethical culture of publishing practices can also mitigate the negative impact of PA.

One of the key strengths of this study is its focus on an underexplored area—the perceptions of nurse academicians in India regarding academic publishing. The study provides insight into the motivations and pressures driving academic publishing among nurse educators, which is essential for understanding the broader implications of the "publish or perish" culture. The use of a self-structured questionnaire, validated for content and reliability, ensures that the data collected is robust and relevant. Additionally, the inclusion of nurse academicians from Institutes of National Importance (INIs) in India adds credibility to the findings, as these institutions are recognized for their academic excellence and research contributions.

Another strength is the study's exploration of gender disparity in publication behaviours. This aspect of the research contributes to the expanding literary body on gender disparities in academic publishing and highlights the need for targeted interventions to address these disparities.

Despite its strengths, the study has several limitations. Firstly, the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to establish causal relationships between variables. The use of self-reported data may also introduce bias, as participants may over-report positive behaviours or underreport unethical practices. Additionally, the study's focus on nurse academicians from INIs may limit the generalizability of the findings to other nursing institutions in India or globally. The sample size, while adequate, may not fully capture the diversity of experiences among nurse academicians, particularly those from smaller or less prestigious institutions, and the use of convenience sampling might have resulted in selection bias. Another limitation is that the study did not explore the role of institutional policies or support systems in mitigating publication pressures, which could be an important area for future research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research highlights the complex interplay between career advancement, professional recognition, and the pressures of academic publishing among Indian nurse academicians. The findings emphasise the necessity for a balanced approach to academic publishing that prioritizes quality over quantity. Institutions should consider implementing supportive initiatives, such as mentorship programs, ethical research training, and policies that recognize diverse contributions to nursing science. Addressing the psychological impacts of publication pressures and promoting a culture of collaboration and ethical publishing practices are essential steps toward fostering a more sustainable academic environment.

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