

□ Ego (Academic Definition)

Ego refers to the internalized sense of importance, identity, and self-worth — which in academic and clinical environments often becomes entangled with titles, recognition, authorship, and perceived intellectual superiority.

While a healthy ego can support confidence and leadership, an inflated or fragile ego often leads to dysfunction, rivalry, and resistance to criticism.

⚖ Types of Ego in Academia

- **Constructive ego** – Drives responsibility, persistence, and high standards.
- **Inflated ego** – Demands attention, authorship, or deference regardless of merit.
- **Fragile ego** – Reacts poorly to feedback, competition, or visibility of others.
- **Collective ego** – Institutional identity based on prestige, resistant to reform.

□ In Practice

A senior surgeon insists on being listed first author on a paper they barely contributed to — not out of need, but out of *ego maintenance*.

□ Risks and Dysfunctions

- Obstructs collaboration.
- Undermines junior researchers and trainees.
- Fuels academic theater and performative leadership.
- Turns critique into conflict.
- Blocks innovation out of fear of being overshadowed.

□ Related Terms

- [Careerism](#)
- [Academic Theater](#)
- [Gatekeeping](#)
- [Institutional Prestige](#)

Bottom line: *Ego can elevate a team — or suffocate it, if left unchecked. The more fragile the work, the louder the ego.*

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