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# Academic communication governance and authorship regulation: A critical policy and discourse analysis of the 'non-single author' requirement in Indonesian academic promotion policy - a mixed-methods study

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## Abstract

**Background:** Authorship structures allocate intellectual credit and responsibility in scholarly communication. Indonesian policy requires works used for special academic-promotion requirements to be non-single-authored, making authorship structure an eligibility criterion.

**Objectives:** To analyse the communicative and epistemic implications of this condition through an academic communication governance framework.

**Methods:** The authors combined critical policy and discourse analysis of the ministerial regulation with content analysis of 164 public Threads posts from January to March 2026 and descriptive comparison of selected international research-assessment frameworks. Posts were thematically coded and analysed using descriptive statistics and a chi-square test; intercoder reliability was assessed with Cohen's kappa.

**Results:** Policy analysis showed non-single authorship operating as an eligibility condition within special promotion requirements. Social media analysis identified 5 themes: academic freedom, structural inequality, policy legitimacy, publication ethics, and disciplinary difference. Critical posts constituted 87.2% of the corpus; academic freedom and structural inequality were most frequent, each at 22.0%. Theme and stance were strongly associated ($\chi^2 = 95.61$, df = 8, $P < .001$; Cramer's $V = 0.540$). No equivalent minimum-author requirement was identified in the 8 selected comparative contexts.

**Conclusions:** The condition separates authorship structure from assessment of actual contribution. Contribution-based evaluation using transparent authorship disclosure, including CRediT, offers a more contribution-sensitive and ethically defensible alternative.



## Keywords:

Academic communication governance, academic freedom, authorship policy, higher education policy, Indonesia, research ethics, scholarly communication


### Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use

The authors accept full responsibility for the content of the manuscript, including the disclosure of any use of AI.

Regarding the use of AI in the preparation of this manuscript, the authors declare the following: Claude, GPT, Perplexity, Grammarly.

**Used for:** Language, style and writing.

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used generative artificial intelligence tools, including ChatGPT (Auto version), Perplexity AI, Claude, and Grammarly, to assist with language editing, readability, and clarity of expression. The authors solely used these tools for linguistic and editorial support. The authors carefully reviewed and revised all AI-assisted text to ensure its accuracy, originality, and compliance with academic standards. The authors take full responsibility for the content of this manuscript.

## Introduction

Authorship is a fundamental mechanism through which scholarly knowledge is communicated and intellectual credit is allocated within academic communities.[1] The number of authors and the order in which they are listed in academic publications function as communicative signals of intellectual responsibility, research contribution, and academic reputation.[2] Therefore, authorship is not merely a bibliographic attribute but a core component of scholarly communication systems.[3]

Misattribution of authorship is a recurrent problem in academic publishing because it separates authorial credit from actual contribution, consent, and accountability. International authorship guidance emphasizes substantial contribution, final approval, responsibility for the work, and accountability, while publication-ethics guidance addresses ghost, guest, gift, honorary, and other inappropriate forms of authorship.[4-8] In Indonesia, the debate around a condition that works used to satisfy the special requirements for academic promotion must not be single-authored, referred to here as the 'no-single-author' condition, gives these global concerns a concrete policy form. Requiring at least 1 co-author for these qualifying works may turn authorship from evidence of contribution into evidence of administrative compliance. A reported Indonesian case in 2024, involving foreign academics allegedly listed without their knowledge or consent, illustrates how publication pressure, promotion incentives, and ranking-oriented systems can make authorship vulnerable to instrumentalization.[9,10] Comparable global cases, including retractions for failing to obtain the consent of co-authors or for adding as authors those who did not qualify for that role, show that unauthorized co-authorship is an international research-integrity issue.[11] The rise of paper mills and authorship-for-sale markets further supports the need for contribution-based evaluation rather than structure-based co-authorship requirements.[12,13]

Patterns of authorship vary significantly across academic disciplines because of differences in epistemological traditions and research practices.[14] Empirical bibliometric studies demonstrate that collaborative authorship dominates in experimental sciences, whereas single-authored publications continue to be more prevalent in the social sciences and humanities.[15-17] These disciplinary differences reflect distinct modes of knowledge production rather than variations in research quality.[14,17]

Institutional policies increasingly regulate authorship structures within academic evaluation systems.[6] Governments and universities often promote collaborative research because interdisciplinary teamwork is associated with higher citation impact in some fields.[18] However, regulatory intervention into authorship practices may also reshape the norms of communication associated with the production and dissemination of knowledge.[19]

In Indonesia, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology introduced a new technical guideline[20] for academic promotion through Ministerial Decree No. 39/M/KEP/2026. Under the section on special and additional special requirements for academic promotion, the decree states that a work used to satisfy the special requirement must not be single-authored, alongside requirements concerning novelty, thesis- or dissertation-derived research, and publication by the applicant's home institution. Authorship structure therefore functions as an eligibility condition within this specific component of promotion assessment, not as a blanket prohibition on single-authored scholarship.

This regulation emerged within a broader international trend towards reforming

research assessment. Since 2022, the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) has called for fairer evaluation practices that recognize the diversity of research roles and reduce inappropriate reliance on quantitative metrics.[21] The United Kingdom's Research Excellence Framework (REF) provides a prominent national research-assessment model that evaluates output quality on the basis of originality, significance, and rigour without specifying authorship structure as an output-quality criterion.[22] The selected comparative materials reviewed in this study similarly emphasize research quality, impact, research environment, or disciplinary context rather than an explicit minimum number of authors.[21,22]

From the perspective of science communication, the Indonesian regulation represents a form of governance of academic communication in which the conditions under which scholarly communication occurs are shaped by institutional policies.[1] This form of governance influences how scholars produce knowledge, collaborate with peers, and claim intellectual credit.[2,3]

It is against this background that the present study investigates the implications of this policy through a new theoretical framework, namely the academic communication governance model, which conceptualizes authorship regulation as an interplay of policy structures, practices of scholarly communication, and research ethics. More specifically, the study was guided by 3 research questions: (1) How is the 'no-single-author' condition framed in higher-education policy discourse? (2) How is the condition interpreted in public communication on social media? (3) How does this condition compare with selected international research-assessment frameworks? Answers to these questions seek to evaluate whether the policy is epistemologically justified, how it is interpreted in visible public discourse, and whether its authorship condition is consistent with international research–assessment principles.

## Methods

### *Study design*

This research employed a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, combining critical policy analysis, policy discourse analysis, social media content analysis, and a descriptive international policy comparison.[23,24] This design was used to interconnect regulatory text, public interpretation, measurable discourse patterns, and comparative research-assessment context. Dual coding and reliability testing using Cohen's κ strengthened the consistency of coding during the analysis.[25]

### *Critical policy analysis*

Critical policy analysis was conducted on the Indonesian ministerial regulation governing academic promotion published in 2026.[20] This method of analysis examines how policy language constructs problems, assigns responsibilities, and shapes institutional norms.[23] The policy text was coded based on 3 analytical categories: (1) epistemic assumptions about research collaboration, (2) governance mechanisms regulating authorship, and (3) ethical implications for scholarly communication.[14]

### *Policy discourse analysis*

Policy discourse analysis examined how the regulation constructs authorship as an administrative condition within academic promotion.[24] The analysis focused on policy language referring to authorship, scholarly works, special requirements, and evaluation, identifying the regulatory framing through which authorship structure becomes consequential.[24] Rather than treating the policy as either inherently beneficial or inherently harmful, the analysis also mapped its practical implications for policymakers, academic institutions, evaluators, and scholars.

### *Social media content analysis*

The study's data set consisted of 164 relevant and publicly accessible posts published on Threads between January and March 2026, immediately following the policy's publication, that discussed the regulation. Relevant posts were identified using keywords related to authorship policy, namely 'penulis tunggal' (single author), 'kenaikan jabatan fungsional' (academic promotion), and 'peraturan kepengarangan' (authorship regulation). The sample size reflects a time-bounded, keyword-based corpus of retrievable public discourse rather than a statistically representative survey of Indonesian academics. Posts were included when they substantively addressed the no-single-author condition, academic promotion, authorship consequences, or policy legitimacy. Duplicate posts, reposts without added commentary, personal attacks, and posts unrelated to promotion policy were excluded.

The posts were coded to reflect 5 categories: (1) academic freedom, (2) disciplinary difference, (3) publication ethics, (4) structural inequality, and (5) policy legitimacy. Two independent coders assigned each of the 164 posts to any 1 of the 5 categories. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the number of posts assigned to each category, and a chi-square test of independence was used to examine the association between discourse theme and policy stance. Intercoder reliability was assessed using Cohen's kappa coefficient.[25] The value of Cohen's κ reached 0.82 for theme coding, indicating strong agreement, and 0.68 for stance coding, indicating substantial agreement. Disagreements were resolved through consensus before the final codes were used for analysis.

### *International policy comparison*

For contextual comparison, the study reviewed the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment and a published presentation summarizing international research-assessment systems.[21,22] The comparison was descriptive and illustrative rather than a systematic review of national promotion rules. Eight contexts for which the comparative source provided sufficient descriptive detail were summarized: the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Sweden, Poland, Spain, and the Netherlands. The analysis examined whether the selected materials described a minimum-author requirement comparable to the Indonesian special-requirement condition and summarized the assessment dimensions emphasized in those systems.

### *Ethics*

The study analysed publicly available policy documents and publicly accessible social media posts. No personal or sensitive data were collected. Formal ethical approval was not required in accordance with institutional guidelines for analysing publicly available data. All posts were anonymized before analysis.

## Results

### *Critical policy and policy discourse analysis*

Critical policy and policy discourse analysis of the ministerial decree identified 3 major implications of the authorship condition embedded in the special requirements for academic promotion.[20] The decree states under the special-requirements section that qualifying work must be 'bukan penulis tunggal' ('not single-authored'). This wording makes authorship structure administratively consequential in determining whether a work can satisfy that component of promotion assessment.

First, within the special-requirement component, the policy makes non-single authorship an eligibility condition alongside other requirements, including novelty. Authorship structure is therefore given an administrative

role independent of the detailed assessment of each author's contribution. This condition may have different effects across disciplines because authorship norms vary substantially among fields.[14-17]

Second, the regulation uses authorship structure as an administrative indicator rather than directly measuring contribution.[6] A non-single-author requirement is separate from contribution-based authorship criteria and publication-ethics guidance such as those of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors and the Committee on Publication Ethics.[3-5]

Third, the condition can be interpreted as privileging non-single-authored outputs at the special-requirement stage, although the decree does not state that collaborative publications are intrinsically stronger. Bibliometric evidence indicates that authorship patterns vary by field and cannot, by themselves, be treated as a direct measure of research quality.[15-17]

### *Social media content analysis*

#### Thematic distribution

Descriptive statistics for the 164 posts are presented in Table 1. Academic freedom and structural inequality were the most frequent themes, each accounting for 36 posts (22.0%). Policy legitimacy accounted for 33 posts (20.1%); publication ethics, for 32 posts (19.5%); and disciplinary difference, for 27 posts (16.5%). This distribution indicates that the controversy was not confined to administrative compliance but centred on scholarly autonomy, unequal access to collaboration networks, policy legitimacy, publication ethics, and disciplinary fairness.

#### Policy stance distribution

Table 2 presents the distribution of attitudes towards the policy and shows that responses

**Table 1. Thematic Distribution of Social Media Discourse (N = 164)**

| Theme | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Policy legitimacy | 33 | 20.1 |
| Publication ethics | 32 | 19.5 |
| Disciplinary difference | 27 | 16.5 |
| Academic freedom | 36 | 22.0 |
| Structural inequality | 36 | 22.0 |
| Total | 164 | 100.0 |

critical of the policy, 143 posts or 87.2% of the total, overwhelmingly outnumbered the responses that were supportive of the policy (11 or 6.7%) or neutral (10 or 6.1%). Critical posts thus outnumbered supportive posts by approximately 13 to 1, suggesting serious reservations within the observed public discourse.

### *Engagement analysis*

Results of the engagement analysis are presented in Table 3. Engagement was highest for posts addressing disciplinary differences, suggesting that disciplinary authorship traditions were particularly salient in the observed public discourse.

### *Chi-square test: theme and policy stance*

The chi-square test (Table 4) indicated a statistically significant association between discourse theme and policy stance ($\chi^2 = 95.61$, df = 8, $P < .001$). Cramer's $V$ was 0.540, indicating a strong association between the 2. All posts categorized as being related to publication ethics, disciplinary difference, academic freedom, or structural inequality expressed critical stances, whereas the posts related to policy legitimacy contained a more mixed distribution

**Table 2. Attitudes Towards the Authorship Policy (N = 164)**

| Stance | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Critical | 143 | 87.2 |
| Supportive | 11 | 6.7 |
| Neutral/informational | 10 | 6.1 |
| Total | 164 | 100.0 |

**Table 3. Mean Engagement by Discourse Theme**

| Theme | Mean Engagement | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Disciplinary difference | 35.6 | 15.8 |
| Structural inequality | 33.0 | 17.3 |
| Academic freedom | 31.8 | 16.0 |
| Policy legitimacy | 31.1 | 16.4 |
| Publication ethics | 28.0 | 15.1 |

SD, standard deviation.

of critical, supportive, and neutral posts. The result should be interpreted as evidence of a strong categorical association in the observed corpus rather than as a causal relationship.

### *International policy comparison*

A descriptive comparison of selected international research-assessment contexts is presented in Table 5. No equivalent minimum-author requirement was identified in the materials reviewed. Across these examples, assessment approaches emphasize dimensions such as research quality, impact, research environment, or disciplinary context rather than specifying a minimum number of authors. The comparison is illustrative and should not be interpreted as a comprehensive survey of national academic-promotion regulations.

The United Kingdom's Research Excellence Framework assesses research outputs on originality, significance, and rigour and does not specify authorship structure as an output-quality criterion.[22] The comparative source also describes research-assessment arrangements in Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Sweden, Poland, Spain, and the Netherlands.[22]

**Table 4. Chi-square Test of Discourse Theme and Policy Stance**

| Statistic | Value |
|---|---|
| Chi-square ($\chi^2$) | 95.61 |
| Degrees of freedom | 8 |
| $P$ | < .001 |
| Cramer's $V$ | 0.540 |
| Interpretation | Strong association; not causal |

The broader reform direction reflected in the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment emphasizes diversity in research contributions and reduced reliance on inappropriate quantitative proxies.[21]

## Discussion

### *Academic communication governance model*

The findings support the contention that authorship regulation can function as a multi-layered mechanism within the governance of communication in academia. At the macro level, higher-education policy introduces regulatory structures that define acceptable authorship practices for specific assessment purposes. These regulations can influence authorship norms and stimulate public discourse within academic communities. The interplay between policy, discourse, and practice shapes scholarly communication and may have downstream effects on research ethics and knowledge production.

This framework extends existing accounts of scholarly communication by integrating policy analysis with a governance perspective.[1] Although authorship norms as phenomena that are specific to each academic discipline or domain have been examined earlier,[14-17] the present analysis demonstrates how institutional policy can function as a regulatory intervention that reshapes those norms from above.

### *Ethical implications of the no-single-author condition*

The decree does not explicitly state that the no-single-author condition is intended to encourage collaboration. Nevertheless, requiring a qualifying work to have more than 1 author can operate as an incentive for co-authorship. If authorship structure is treated as a formal condition of eligibility rather than as evidence of genuine contribution, the rule may create structural incentives for unethical authorship

**Table 5. Selected International Research-Assessment Contexts in the Comparative Source**

| Country/region | Assessment Context | Key Features Described in Source |
|---|---|---|
| UK | Research Excellence Framework (REF) | Peer review of outputs, impact, and research environment; output quality assessed using originality, significance, and rigour.[22] |
| Australia | Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) | Assessment has covered outputs, grants, and PhD activity; engagement and impact assessment was introduced in 2018.[22] |
| New Zealand | Individual research portfolio assessment | Eligible academics submit research portfolios; peer review considers rigour, originality, significance, and impact.[22] |
| Hong Kong | Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) | The RAE follows elements of the UK approach; research impact was included in the 2020 exercise.[22] |
| Sweden | ALF health-research quality assessment | Peer-review panels consider scientific quality, clinical significance and societal impact, and prerequisites for clinical research.[22] |
| Poland | National research assessment | The comparative source describes periodic national assessment combining outputs, impact, and research funding indicators.[22] |
| Spain | CNEAI research-performance review | Six-year research-performance reviews include evidence of research impact and influence.[22] |
| The Netherlands | Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP) | The source describes movement away from publication-based metrics towards broader educational and societal impact.[22] |

ERA, Excellence in Research for Australia; RAE, Research Assessment Exercise; REF, Research Excellence Framework; SEP, Standard Evaluation Protocol.
ALF, Avtal om Läkarutbildning och Forskning (Agreement for Cooperation on Medical Education and Research).
CNEAI, Comisión Nacional Evaluadora de la Actividad Investigadora (National Commission for the Evaluation of Research Activity).

practices. Authorship misattribution can appear as gift authorship, honorary authorship, coercive authorship, ghost authorship, and inflated authorship; these forms weaken the credibility of authorship as a visible indicator of intellectual responsibility.[4-8] In the Indonesian debate analysed here, these global risks become practically relevant because the non-single-author condition may encourage the addition of names for compliance rather than for sharing credit and acknowledging genuine contribution.

These risks are not hypothetical. International authorship guidance emphasizes substantial contribution, drafting or critical revision, final approval, and accountability, whereas Committee on Publication Ethics guidance addresses inappropriate authorship practices.[3-5] These expectations cannot be satisfied by administrative authorship structure alone. Tang[26] argues that accountability is inseparable from genuine authorship: without autonomous agency and moral responsibility, authorship credit loses its fundamental meaning. Policies that require co-authorship without reference to contribution and accountability risk normalizing inflated authorship, a phenomenon already documented in biomedicine and observed in other fields.[7,8]

The present regulation may also intensify the 'publish or perish' culture that research-policy reformers have criticized.[21,27] Research-assessment reform initiatives have consistently challenged inappropriate reliance on quantitative proxies and rankings as substitutes for qualitative research assessment.[21]

### *Structural inequality and the Matthew effect*

The regulation may disproportionately affect scholars working in smaller institutions with limited research networks. Researchers at under-resourced universities may have fewer opportunities to form productive co-authorship networks, placing them at a systematic disadvantage as far as career advancement is concerned. This dynamic echoes Merton's well-documented 'Matthew effect', whereby advantages to those already well-connected researchers

accumulate while disadvantaged scholars face compounding barriers.[28] In the data set, posts related to structural inequality explicitly linked the rule to institutional asymmetry, disadvantages to scholars working in peripheral institutions, uneven research ecosystems, and the difficulty in finding eligible co-authors.

Structural inequality as a theme accounted for 36 posts (22.0% of the corpus) and tied with academic freedom as the most frequent theme. All posts related to structural inequality were critical of the policy, and their mean engagement (33.0) was higher than the overall corpus mean (31.8), producing an engagement ratio of 1.04. The data therefore support a cautious Matthew-effect interpretation: a formally uniform rule may operate unequally when academics have unequal access to collaboration networks, institutional support, and publication infrastructure. This is an interpretive claim grounded in the observed discourse, not an estimate of the national prevalence of unequal access to collaboration.

### *Disciplinary diversity and epistemic justice*

The humanities and social sciences have long-established traditions of single-authored scholarship that reflect disciplinary epistemologies and modes of knowledge production.[14,15] Bibliometric research confirms that single-authored publications remain common and valued in these fields.[15-17] A policy that treats authorship structure as an administrative indicator may devalue legitimate forms of individual scholarship and may contribute to epistemic injustice when discipline-specific modes of knowledge production are institutionally disadvantaged.

This concern aligns with the broader international movement towards disciplinary equity in research evaluation. The CoARA explicitly calls for 'recognition of the diversity of research activities, practices and outputs' and the 'promotion of criteria and processes that respect the variety of disciplines, research types and career stages'.[21] The European Commission's Report on Research Assessment (April 2024) similarly highlighted a 'lack of concrete activities focusing on qualitative assessment' and called for more systematic approaches that reveal the challenges research stakeholders face.[29]

### *Policy alternative: contribution-based evaluation*

The comparative review supports consideration of a contribution-based rather than structure-based approach to research evaluation. The CRediT taxonomy provides a standardized framework for disclosing individual contributions across 14 defined roles, including conceptualization, methodology, writing, and project administration.[2,30] Contribution statements allow evaluators to examine who contributed what rather than inferring contribution from author count or author order. This approach is compatible with broader international norms that emphasize transparency of contributions and diversity in research assessment.[21]

A contribution-based evaluation model would assess the nature and quality of each author's input rather than simply requiring multiple names on a publication. Such an approach is consistent with CoARA principles, REF assessment criteria, and the broader movement away from bibliometric proxies towards qualitative evaluation of research excellence.[21,22] Implementing the model would require standardized forms to disclose the contributions of each author, clear guidance for evaluators, institutional procedures to verify the claims, and a mechanism to appeal in the event of contested claims regarding the stated contributions. Phased implementation would allow the model to encourage genuine collaboration while protecting legitimate single-authored scholarship in disciplines where independent authorship remains epistemically appropriate.

### *Strengths and limitations*

The present study integrates policy analysis, discourse analysis, and analysis of the content of posts on social media to examine the governance of scholarly communication. The use of multiple and complementary methods strengthens the validity of the authors' conclusions by triangulating findings across analytical levels.

However, the study has several limitations. First, the corpus of posts on social media was relatively small (164 posts) and should be understood as a time-bounded discourse corpus rather than a representative sample of the views of Indonesian academics. Second, the corpus was limited to posts in Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia) on the Threads platform and may therefore under-represent scholars discussing the policy in English, in closed institutional channels, in discipline-specific networks, or in offline academic settings. This limitation imposed by the language and the platform means that the findings capture visible public discourse rather than the full range of academic opinion. Third, the study is limited to a single national policy. Future research should analyse bibliometric data to assess how authorship regulations influence collaboration in practice and should include longitudinal data to assess the effects of policy over time. Fourth, the cross-sectional nature of the social media analysis precludes causal inference. Fifth, the international comparison was illustrative and based on selected research-assessment materials rather than a systematic review of national promotion regulations; therefore, the absence of an equivalent authorship-number condition in the selected materials should not be interpreted as proof that no such rule exists in any institution or jurisdiction.

## Conclusions

Authorship structures are a central component of communication systems in academia because they apportion credit, signal responsibility, and shape how scholarly contributions are evaluated. The present study shows that the Indonesian no-single-author condition makes authorship structure an eligibility threshold within the special requirements for academic promotion. Empirical data from public discourse indicate that this condition was criticized in most of the posts on Threads, especially when the policy was connected to academic freedom, structural inequality, disciplinary difference, and publication ethics.

The comparative review did not identify an equivalent minimum-author restriction in the selected research-assessment contexts. Instead, international reform agendas increasingly emphasize transparent descriptions of contributions, qualitative assessment, and discipline-sensitive evaluation through frameworks such as CoARA, REF, and CRediT. These approaches provide practical tools and principles for documenting contributions, improving transparency, and reducing reliance on author count or author order as proxies for quality.

Indonesian higher-education policy would therefore benefit from replacing the authorship-number condition in the special requirements with a contribution-based evaluation model that assesses the quality and nature of scholarly input. This approach could encourage genuine collaboration while preserving legitimate single-authored scholarship and reducing incentives for honorary, gift, or coercive authorship.

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