

Description

Assigning appropriate authorship is fundamental to guarantee professional conducts and ethical practices when publishing academic and research papers. Until the beginning of the 20th century, individual authorship for research papers was the norm. However, shared authorship became more and more common since approximately 1920. Nowadays, it is easy to find academic researches signed by plenty of people, even hundreds, especially when it comes to large researches and trials. The reason is simple and well-known: academic publications are gold for researchers and their careers.

But are interests in being a part of publications affecting researchers' professional and ethical practices? How to decide who may sign academic research papers?

Some Common Authorship Rules

There are plenty of guidelines designed by different institutions to determine authorship rules. These standards always have something in common: their goal to avoid academic misconduct.

Let's start with the assumption that authorship should be discussed between all the co-researchers. However, contributors usually have different expectations regarding who to include as an author.

To guarantee ethical practices and avoid conflicts of interests, many institutions establish some minimum basis:
– Authorship may be reserved to all those who contribute substantially to the research (designing the concept, collecting, analyzing or processing data, writing the paper, etc.)
– A researcher may not be excluded because of his rank: there is not a surprise that many junior researchers are sometimes excluded from research papers' authorship, even when they really contributed. By the same token, seniority or a high institutional position may not be a sufficient reason for attributing authorship.
– Authors share responsibilities for the research results.
– All of them should approve the final version.

How to Deal with Authorship Order?

In some academic fields, major contributors sign first. However, this practice can easily lead to conflict. Therefore, many institutions recommend listing the authors alphabetically, to ensure that all who have

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contributed are mentioned equally. This is a common practice in some academic areas such as mathematics or economics.

This way of listing can be complemented by a correct use of footnotes, to mention different kinds of contribution. Using footnotes properly is considered a good and professional practice.

Another solution is adding acknowledgments, to mention all who don't fulfill the requirements for authorship but have contributed to the research.

Avoiding Problems

As mentioned above, institutional position should never be enough to attribute academic authorship. However, many academic misconducts are related to academic authorship nowadays.

Ghost authorship, that occurs when a researcher is not included as an author, is common nowadays. Many publications don't give credit to junior researchers or investigation staff members, who actually contributed highly to the research. This practice is also used to avoid naming participants related to conflicts of interest.

Honorary authorship is also common. Naming authors with high institutional positions gives credit to the publication, but does not give researchers their due credit.

Sometimes, academic personalities who didn't make a real contribution are named just to give recognition to the paper. This practice, known as guest authorship, can damage an author's reputation.

Some other times, authors are included without their permission, becoming involuntarily responsible for the publication.

What are the consequences of all these incorrect applications? How to guarantee ethical practices? Academic institutions work worldwide to determine authorship rules. Their goal is clear: **stop these misconducts in order to restore the dignity of academic publications.**

Category

1. Publishing Research
2. Understanding Ethics

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