

Review of: "How Do Academicians Publish More Research Papers for Their Promotion and Positions? A Scrutiny of CV"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Dr. T Amose examines the number of publications written by scholars as they seek to gain promotion in an academic setting. While unearned authorship is a global problem, Dr. Amose's paper would greatly benefit from a thorough review of the extant literature as well as a deeper understanding of how fields and institutions work. He might also examine the suggestions by COPE and ICMJE (1).

The article is based on his assumption that the high number of articles published by many scholars seems improbable in the timeframe they are written and states "it seems that the work is typically not done solely by the efforts of the academicians themselves." This assumption is flawed in that in many fields, including economics, collaboration is increasing and, in many cases, can be essential due to the complexity of the problem. In economics in 2014 only about a quarter of research papers were by single authors which reflects an increase in collaboration between investigators (2).

In a study of scholars from 69 countries, Kumar and Ratnavelu (3) find that the scholars cite improved quality of the paper, division of labor, and complimentary expertise among the benefits. About 34% of papers cite authors by contribution while most used alphabetical order.

There are field specific norms for authorship and in a great many fields, collaboration between investigators can allow for a more thorough investigation of a topic. Dr. Amose lists several factors in authorship. The first is order of authors. Order of authorship is field specific and as noted above, it seems that in economics it is alphabetical or by agreement among the authors about relative contribution to the study. Within a field, there can be different expectations as to the appropriate listing of authors.

The second factor the author mentions is financial contributors. Financial contributions are acknowledged in different ways, organizations are generally cited at the end of the paper, members of the team who obtained sponsorship may be included as authors. Many academic studies would be impossible without financial support so acknowledgement is appropriate, and authorship may be appropriate if the person who secures financial support also defines aspects of the study and recruits co-investigators with appropriate expertise.

The third factor Dr. Amose lists is "friendly associations" where he charges that friendly relationships with members of publication teams enable multiple publications. While this may occasionally play a role, in general it is not a major one; in legitimate peer-reviewed journals, the process is set up so that review is rigorous and more than one reviewer is involved. On the other hand, it is widely recognized that young academics are well served by getting to know people in their fields

so that they can get feedback on their work well before submitting a publication.

Finally, Dr. Amose suggests reforms that are neither necessary nor wise. Government regulations are not generally the best way to run academic affairs. As pointed out by others, approval by heads of departments, deans or heads of institutions is not feasible in most institutions. More important is for the contributions of all authors to be clearly understood and all authors should be accountable for the results. Some journals now require all authors to indicate their contributions. This seems to me a more reasonable approach as fields become more complex and studies benefit from multiple people with different expertise.

1. COPE <https://publicationethics.org/about/our-organisation> ICMJE <https://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html>
2. Haltom, R. Too many co-authors? Econ Ficus 2014 Q4
3. Kumar, S., Ratnavelu K. Perceptions of Scholars in the Field of Economics on Co-Authorship Associations: Evidence from an International Survey. PLOS One 2016 11(6): e015633 PMC4913925. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4913925/>