

Gift Authorship as a means of Research Collaboration among Indian Researchers

Somipam R Shimray

This study examines gift authorship as a means of research collaboration among Indian researchers. A systematic literature review was conducted using keyword searches such as “author”, “authorship”, “gift authorship”, “research collaboration”, “Indian researchers”, and “research collaboration model” from the selected databases, i.e., Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar. The study found that adding friends and colleagues’ names as co-author through research collaboration without making any significant contribution are commonly practiced among Indian researchers. Recruitment, timely promotion, renewal contract and salary raises motivate gift authorship among Indian researchers. VRC is suggested for a rapid and effective outcome among homogenous disciplines. While HRC is advised for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration, allowing researchers to develop partnerships with various paths for researchers from many fields. Effective research collaboration could increase the value of knowledge generation and, as a result, encourage researchers to adopt effective models of collaboration that will inevitably improve searchers' abilities. The study recommended a research collaboration model (RCM) that will benefit future researchers to sign up for proper collaboration rather than simply adding a name as gift authorship.

Introduction

Researchers are known to gain from various institutional and interpersonal linkages and networks, which offer unique benefits for producing and disseminating knowledge (Gao et al., 2022). To be called a researcher, a researcher must conduct research systematically and apply skills to find a solution to existing problems (Aiyebilehin, 2022). For research to be considered complete, it must be published or documented (Singhal and Kalra, 2021). Thus, a researcher must be vigorously conduct research systematically rather than simply adding a name to an article as a gifted author. Harvey (2018) defines gift authorship as the custom of presenting authorship to a junior or senior colleague in a deliberate or secret expectation that they will pay back the favor. It is an attachment to publication credits of researchers who don't significantly contribution to formulating a scientific project (Jones and McCullough, 2015).

Two researchers working together is always better than one. It allows researchers to develop closer relationships with academics, faculty, scientists, and non-profit workers and share their knowledge. This saying becomes true when tackling critical problems. Many scientific problems can be resolved by working together as a team. A collaborative investigation enables sharing thoughts, concepts and design across a subject, acquiring novel skills, admission to funding and producing quality outcomes (Bansal et al., 2019). To be counted as authors, the authors must make a considerable contribution to take accountability for the

content. Travesty in this background represents authorship in a false, absurd, and distorted way. Adding authors' names who made no significant contribution explains an absurd intimation of what collaborative study stands for. Authorship acknowledgment must be constructed only on considerable contributions to conception and design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data, conscripting the article, revising the draft article, and final review of the version to be printed (Bhattacharya, 2010; ICMJE, 2010; Zaki (2011). In the same way, ICMJE (2022) asserted that authorship must be grounded on the following four principles.

1. Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work, or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work
2. Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content
3. Final approval of the version to be published and
4. Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

Authors who don't meet the above four principles must not be numbered as authors; nevertheless, acknowledgment should be given (ICMJE, 2022). Examples of activities not qualified to be added as co-authors include gaining funding, general management of a research group, writing support, technical editing, language editing, and proofreading. Individuals whose help does not explain authorship may be acknowledged under a single header example "clinical investigator", "participating investigators", "served as scientific advisors," "critically reviewed the study proposal," "collected data," "provided and cared for study patients," "participated in writing or technical editing of the manuscript" (ICMJE, 2022). Therefore, to do away with the practice of gift authorship. Indian scholars must be mindful of what research collaboration means.

2 Statement of Problem

The authors must contribute significantly and accept responsibility for the content to be recognised as authors. Any names listed as authors are thought to have contributed intellectually to the article, not only to cover the article processing charge (APC). Therefore, authorship must extend beyond simply listing names. It must be earned by making a noteworthy contribution, demonstrating dedication, and accepting shared responsibility. Parody in this setting gives a false, ridiculous, and distorted impression of authorship. An absurd implication of what collaborative study stands for is explained by adding authors' names who made no noteworthy contributions. In a sorry state, research collaboration (RC) among researchers is concentrated on just adding names of persons who had no intellectual contributions to an article (Ali, 2021). Therefore, this study emphasizes examining authorship and research collaboration and attempts to propose a research collaboration model (RCM) suitable for Indian researchers.

3. Objective

The study is carried out based on the following objective.

- ❖ To review the gift authorship pattern in the Indian context, the cause for gift authorship, research collaboration approach and propose a research collaboration model.

4. Methodology

This paper provides a thorough analysis of extensive literature. The technique used in the study is a systematic literature review. The studies were explored using keyword searches such as author, authorship, gift authorship, research collaboration, Indian researchers, and research collaboration model from the selected databases, i.e., Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar. Data collection for this study occurs between May 20, 2022 and June 19, 2022.

5. Gift Authorship in India Context

Publication of scientific papers is essential for the development of modern science and career promotion (Singhal and Kalra, 2021). A writer needs to be aware of ethical publishing standards. Authors should follow good publication practices while avoiding research fraud or other forms of misconduct in science (Singhal and Kalra, 2021). Good science flourish only when research is conducted and published with utmost honesty and integrity. Gift authorship is a practice where researchers' names are added to the list of co-authors without making significant intellectual contributions. The philosophy of "Publish or Perish" is chiefly accountable for the practice of gift authorship (Singhal and Kalra, 2021). Occasionally adding co-authors as gift authors is done in a give-and-take understanding. Authors have a network of associates who add each other's names in such cases. Sometimes, the gifted author is preserved by superior professors whose names are added to the manuscript to add value to the article. While there could be numerous probable details for gift authorship, so often, junior researchers sense pushed to agree to take or give authorship to their superior associate having significant influence over their future career. Moreover, junior professionals may accept as valid that adding eminent and experienced associates as authors will increase the probability of publishing, other reason may be to maintain a good working relationship with colleagues. It is widely practiced in India between colleagues and co-workers on a Quid Pro Quo understanding (Padmanabhan, 2015), which refers to the addition of co-authors such as the head of the organization or institutions, colleagues and seniors to increase the chances of publishing the manuscript (Sengupta and Honavar, 2017). Padmanabhan (2015) asserted that in an Indian situation, a considerable amount of original research comes from postgraduate, M.Phil. and Ph.D. dissertations or thesis. The proprietorship behavior of scholars in the direction of their work is apparent by adding gift authorship, which consists of batchmates, spouses, family relatives, and the current head of the institution. In the research integrity sense, it is a pure imitation of the value and spirit of research partnership (Aiyebilehin, 2022). Therefore, gift authorship should never be a means to having more publications.

Specialists, experts, and academicians with many publications are often well-thought-out to have more capability, skill and proficiency than less published associates. For many Indian academicians, it is true that the innocuous way to get better at “publish or perish” is to merely request a friend to add him/her as a co-author to works they have no significant involvement to increase their quantity of publications. Therefore, adding authors as gift authorship is commonly widespread in academic and research institutions and has surged in recent years (Rajaram, 2021). Zaki (2011) rightly pointed out three distinct reasons why gift authorship is immoral. Firstly, a publication that is not sincerely received may misleadingly signify the individual’s know-how. Second, owing to gift authorship, the person is alleged to be more accomplished than his associate who has not published, giving a biased benefit professionally over his co-worker while applying for job and promotion. Lastly, the gifted author is alleged to have a wrong ability and will be anticipated to achieve responsibilities that may be beyond his proficiency. Preceding research identified cases of immoral research conduct among Indian researchers. For instance, Ali (2021) declared that research collaboration among Indian researchers is concentrated on just adding names i.e., gift authorship of persons who had no intellectual or technical contributions to an article is a travesty of collaboration. Similarly, Marušia et al. (2011) pointed out that France, South Africa, India and Bangladesh reported a high (55%) authorship misuse. COPE (2018) result shows gift authorship (65.1%) as the most frequent form of inappropriate authorship in India. Dhingra and Mishra (2014) researched misconduct among medical professionals in India and found that 97% of respondents are aware of publication ethics; however, only 29% alleged it was satisfactory and discovered that the most usually practiced wrongdoing was offering gifts authorship (65%). As Punyani & Deshpande (2018) asserted that 58% of the researchers are aware of the cause and concern of gift authorship, whereas 42% were unaware of it. Further, the respondents who are aware were asked about the probable motives for gift authorship and it was discovered that the majority alleged that pleasing senior colleagues and sharing appreciation with a coworker to improve their curriculum vitae are the motives of gift authorship. Furthermore, sharing the financial load in paying APC for the manuscript is another reason for gift authorship. Irrespective of its cause, gift authorship is an unprincipled operation that gives a dishonest concept of an individual’s capability while, in a real sense, it does not exist (Punyani and Deshpande, 2018). Therefore, gift authorship must be discouraged in academic writing among Indian researchers as it poses a severe apprehension in Indian science and society. Thus, authors signing a manuscript to confer their authorship must consult with integrity that they take shared responsibility in making a significant contribution to completing the manuscript.

6. Cause for Gift Authorship (CGA)

Authorship must not be confined to adding just a list of names. It has to be earned by making a significant contribution with commitment and shared responsibility. The vast majority of Indian researchers lack knowledge of research techniques. Also, unlike in western countries, research fund is limited in India. Researchers generally do independent research. Likewise, the government or organization does not subsidize all the research programs. Therefore, researchers with limited resources cannot publish in open-access in

reputed international journals. A non-native English speaker's language proficiency is another barrier to publishing in reputed journals. These reasons influence and encourage immoral research practices such as "gift authorship". However, to uphold the honesty and integrity of research and sustain the public's faith in scientific activities, all authors must oblige to the rulebooks of respectable scientific publication exercise, i.e., avoid gift authorship and take accountability for significant portions of the manuscript (Singhal and Kalra, 2021).

The University Grants Commission criteria for supervisorship, M.Phil & Ph.D (UGC, 2016) award, likewise, concerning regulations on the appointment of teachers and other academic staff in universities and colleges (UGC, 2018), publishing articles in UGC-CARE List, journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science (UGC, 2019), all the mentioned parameters echo the "publish or perish" philosophy as getting a manuscript published becomes challenging with the implementation of watchdog, i.e., CARE. The system pressured researchers, academicians and scientists to have more articles. Commonly, many unethical practices are carried out to gain a number, such as duplication of an article, lack of approval from the third party, plagiarism, error in methods/analysis/results, conflict of interest, unreliable data and gift authorship (Shimray, 2022). Consequently, it directly or indirectly encourages the unethical practice of gift authorship among Indian scholars. For instance, research conducted by Raju and Patil (2020) analyzed 89 Indian publications on SARS-CoV-2 from 2/3/2020 to 12/5/2020 and found that within three months, one author's name was found in six articles, wherein five articles, the author is mentioned as co-author, technically contributing 6.74% of the total contribution by India author. Such is a deplorable state that calls for examination. Such is just one instance among many where scholars, researchers and scientists share authorship rights to an article shorn of making considerable academic contributions, in another scenario asserted by Gupta (2020) where Indian young researchers, particularly junior researchers at the beginning of their academic career, have few papers to 100s of articles all published in a brief period through gift authorship or co-authorship anywhere in the mid of the publication course. Several articles are gifted by good-hearted and kind co-workers or associates (Gupta, 2020).

To encourage the researcher to publish the paper, a one-time financial prize of Rs 50,000 for international journals and Rs 20,000 for Indian journals was recommended by the Department of Science and Technology. However, this recommendation has been received with severe condemnation by many academicians. Some academicians named as a "hare-brained scheme" and suggested that this scheme would surely destroy research conduct (Ravindranath, 2019). Furthermore, there is little assurance that the reward scheme founded on publication will not lead to more destruction in the value of scientific research in India (Prasad, 2019). Lakhotia (2018) asserted that fund crunch and untimely release of funds for new or ongoing projects disrupt the research work leading to discouragement and frustration of the researchers delaying research publication and discouraging ethical research practices. With the prevailing states where researchers' income is marginally low tied with journals charging high APC, many researchers' gift authorship becomes a savior and a cost-sharing method. In some instances, less intellectual contribution results in more financial contribution;

therefore, gift authorship becomes a mutually beneficial practice. Gift authorship has negative significance and unethical and damages research morale and integrity (Daniel, 2016), incorrectly signifying the individual's knowledge, resulting in appearing to be more capable than his associate (Zaki, 2011). And the long-term effect is that such researchers will not be able to investigate a project or supervise a scholar as they do not have the required skills and knowledge (Aiyebilehin, 2022). In many cases, it has been discovered that the practice of gift authorship is higher in manuscripts with many authors.

7. Research Collaboration Approach (RCA)

Research is an essential activity that occurs in an academic environment. It is chiefly an activity involving designing, collecting and interpreting data through a methodical and systematic approach to explaining and comprehending unsolved phenomena (Wadesango, 2014). Collaboration is described as an equally beneficial and well-defined association between two or more institutions to attain shared objectives (Parnami and Bandyopadhyay, 2008), can be between institutions, associations, confederations, voluntary and can occur at different levels, national, international, same subject, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary (Bansal et al., 2019). Collaborative research promotes exchanging of ideas, thoughts and philosophies across different disciplines, encourages learning of novel skills, admission to funding and higher excellence of results (Bansal et al., 2019), inspires the formation of active communication, corporations, provides identical prospects amongst the research members, promotes the ethical behavior upholding honesty, morality, integrity, fairness, transparency, and privacy (Bansal et al., 2019), save substantial human resources, time and money, complicated and complex problem is solved through collaboration. Shaikh (2019) delineated research collaboration into three categories, i.e. “collaboration between two research scholars or doctoral students from the same field or department belonging to the same or two different universities”, “collaboration between a doctoral student and a senior research fellow or supervisor from the same field or department belonging to the same or two different universities” and “collaboration between two research scholars or between a research scholar and a senior research fellow from two different fields, disciplines or departments, preferably belonging to two different universities”.

Collaborative research is increasingly complicated and has increased and diversified immensely (Parnami and Bandyopadhyay, 2008). Thus, in research collaboration, the authors must be willing to mutually shape the problems to be attempted and the queries that need to be responded to, to take on the study and interpret the outcomes in terms of their implication for civic and policy transformation, and circulate the study answers and advocate for transformation. Factors such as funding resources, knowledge on extended capacity, teamwork, learning capability, increasing specialism in disciplines, division of work, often required to challenge multifaceted research complications and sharing of resources act as a driving power in the direction of increased collaboration activities. Research collaboration, therefore, brings diverse know-how to a project (Bansal et al., 2019). Also, it is extensively carried out in developed nations to provide space for consistent matching and coaction of ideas and skills to attain valuable conclusions (Aiyebilehin, 2022).

Ultimately, it is intended to let specialists share skills, ideas and expertise over an informal course (Wadesango, 2014). Therefore, dual creation of value, knowledge sharing and management, external environment, strategic partner selection, intellectual property rights, spillover effects, collaboration and transaction cost, trust, commitment and stimulation of rewards, reduced opportunism and collaboration and strategic management are a byproduct of successful collaboration. To reap the benefits of collaboration, collaborators must have an identical interest area of research for generating new ideas for solving the research problems. Similarly, enthusiasm and interest are required from all the researchers involved throughout the project duration. Thus, Ovreteit, et al. (2014), recommend five principles for research collaboration, research that plays a part in designing a well-being system; research proposed to bring out actionable results; investigators and experts take part in describing the question and construe results; investigators and experts contribute substantial time and a wide-ranging framed explanation of the collaboration approach. There are practices in co-authoring articles with various authors, which by no means represent the proper practice of collaborative research but simply adding names of additional authors who have made no involvement in the work. For instance, gift authorship was the most usual form of unprofessional authorship (65.1%) practice in the Indian subcontinent (COPE, 2018). In reality, Katz and Martin (1997) notice that collaborative research with multiple authorship should be done with proper care. Therefore, Indian researchers must wisely conduct collaborative research with multiple authorship with appropriate care. The literature review pointed out that research collaboration is carried out between individuals, organizations, institutions and nations. However, no published literature comprehensively discussed the research collaboration model. This paper examines the gift authorship pattern, inspects the ethics of research publication and explores the research collaboration. Lastly, this paper suggested a research collaboration model (RCM) that will be ideal for research collaboration.

8. Recommended Research Collaboration Model (RCM)

After conducting a thorough review, the researcher proposed Research Collaboration Model (RCM) (Figure 1) for research collaboration among Indian researchers. The components in this proposed model, i.e. RCM, include: common objectives, accountability for success, identical area of study, curiosity & enthusiasm, mutual authority, intellectual input, mutual benefits, sharing of resources, shared responsibility, creativity, research integrity, skills & knowledge and team sport. Integration of these elements will yield maximum outputs through merging knowledge and resources, resulting in tackling complex questions and expanding the scope of research, maximizing impact through receiving more citations, attracting funding, expanding the network by meeting potential researchers, embracing the new skills, encourages greater creativity, efficient learning, a wider array of techniques in admission to a larger number of methods used for investigation, deeper research, increased number of publications, higher likelihood of becoming commercial and collaboration among researchers result in early adopters of the proposed model. The research coordinator must coordinate the project, constitute a research team, set a dateline for project completion and define the researcher's role. For instance, the research coordinator needs to ensure that the team members are competent in project design, literature evaluation, methodology, data collecting, data analysis, article drafting, revision,

etc. Otherwise, the team members will be less interested in seeing the project through and the researcher will only be able to contribute insignificantly by giving their names as gifts. A researcher must consider their job as a component of the overall project rather than as a separate effort if they are to prevent duplication in project execution.

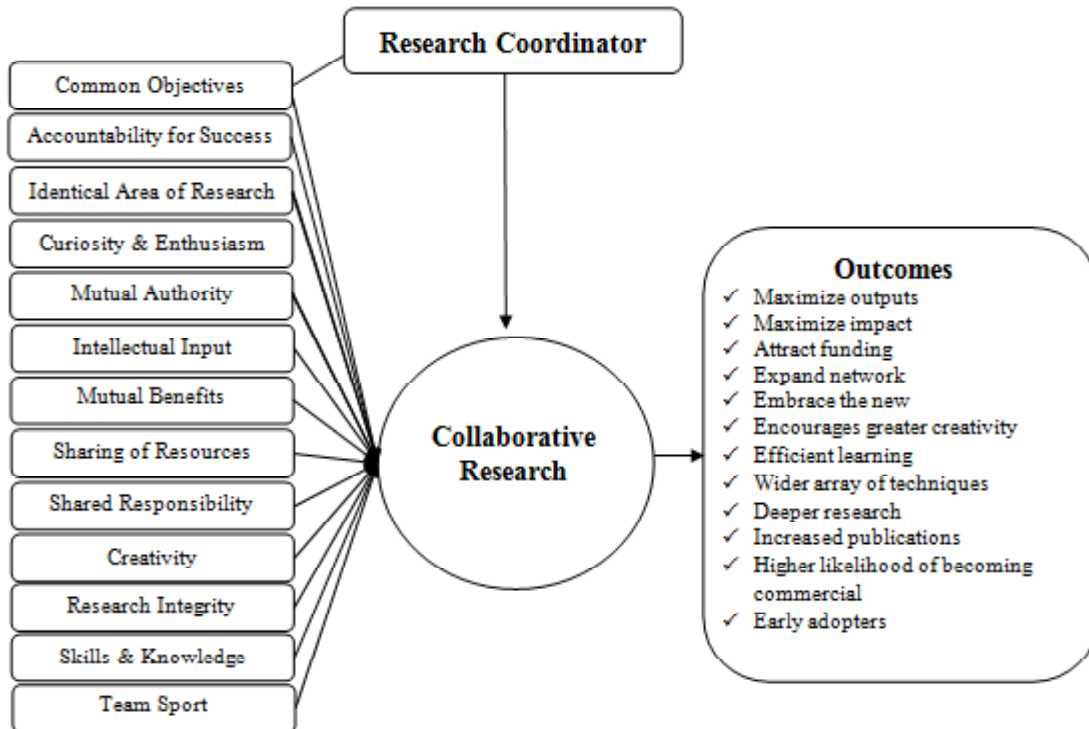


Figure - 1 Research Collaboration Model (Developed by the author)

Effective collaboration is necessary for a successful research study. Therefore, there are two approaches (Figure 2) to collaborate on research: Vertical Research Collaboration (VRC) and Horizontal Research Collaboration (HRC). Researchers at the VRC can come from the same discipline, and the research focuses on a particular area. A research partnership between institutions and organisations is taken into consideration in this collaboration. The work division is given to the research coordinator, who assumes leadership in this situation. This kind of relationship is generally developed between the supervisor and the student. While HRC has a broader scope, this collaboration involves interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches, allowing researchers to forge partnerships with numerous channels for researchers from various domains. Researchers from the HRC partnership may include Ph.D. students, post-doctoral researchers, and senior academics looking into areas of research that are somewhat related to their areas of research interest (Shaikh, 2019).

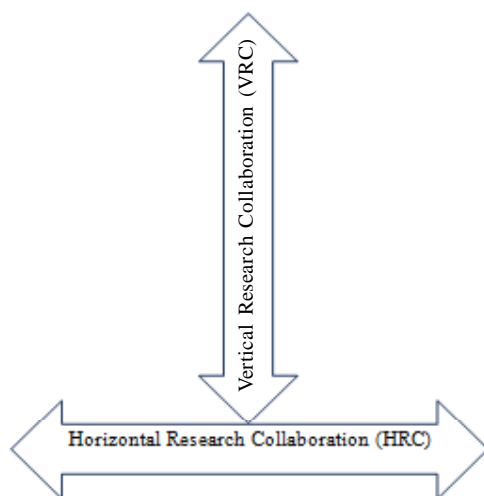


Figure 2: Vertical Research Collaboration (VRC) & Horizontal Research Collaboration (HRC)

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

Effective research collaboration amongst research team members is key to a project's success. Indian researchers are encouraged to collaborate on projects to provide high-quality research results. Indian scholars must appreciate the ethics of publishing and the collaborative spirit of research. This will defeat and eliminate gift authorship, a custom that was generally regarded as a kind of scientific partnership. Only when every collaborator contributes and accepts responsibility for finishing the project can true collaboration take place. An explosion of publications with unethical origins, i.e., gift authors, will inevitably fail the affirmative test since they cannot participate in forged scientific studies, validate realism theories, or demonstrate their intellectual competence to complete the work at hand. Among Indian researchers, such meritless awards and pointless writing have significant repercussions. To prevent the practice of gift authorship from disparaging Indian scientific society, UGC, ICAR, CSIR, ICSSR, universities, and other research institutes must passionately eradicate unethical behaviours and educate both new and senior researchers about proper research ethics. Lastly, the author put up a model for research collaboration that may be applied to collaborative research. Future researchers can perform a quantitative studies to quantify the awareness, attitude, and behaviour of Indian researchers using the proposed RCM. Following are the recommendation proposed by researchers.

- ❖ To educate Indian researchers about authorship issues and publication ethics, workshops, seminars, conferences, lectures, and training sessions must be arranged.
- ❖ University Grants Commission (UGC), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), universities, etc. must essentially formulate authorship guidelines that are similar to the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) guidelines.

- ❖ The journal should ask each author how much of the text they contributed to encourage fair and active participation from all authors. The journal must also include a list of individuals who satisfy the criteria for an author, co-author, or acknowledgment.
- ❖ Constant observation is necessary; hence a watchdog is needed. Both at the institutional and governmental levels, such watchdog may be constituted.

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About Author

Dr. Somipam R. Shimray

Assistant Professor

Department of Library and Information Science, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow

Email:srshimray@yahoo.com