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The Blind Spot of Academic Integrity: Why Indonesia's Regulations Fail to See Contract Cheating

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Abstract

Indonesia's Ministerial Regulation No. 39 of 2021 obliges universities to sanction unauthorised authorship, including ordering another person to produce a work as one's own. Concern about *joki*, the paid outsourcing of students' assessed work, is readily answered on the grounds that the rule already reaches the buyer, but that coverage does not hold across all market practices, and the gap is where the service does its damage. The provision is also narrower than commonly assumed: it applies only where the buyer made no contribution, a term it leaves undefined, while leaving external sellers entirely outside its regulatory scope. In practice, it leaves verification to similarity checks, which test text for copied passages rather than for authorship. This combination forecloses direct plagiarism while creating demand for services that evade text-matching tools, namely bespoke *ghostwriting*, typing, and formatting offered under the guise of guidance. Indonesian sellers on TikTok and Shopee already describe their products in terms that fall within these legal blind spots. Measured against what an integrity regime exists to protect, the difficulty is that the regulation verifies only what the software displays and requires no account of contribution, so a thesis a student wrote and a thesis a student bought are indistinguishable at assessment. A regulation intended to protect academic integrity thus rewards not looking for its breach. This article argues for relation-sensitive cheating definitions alongside stronger verification, including provider accountability in national legislation and process-based monitoring of student authorship.

Introduction

Nowadays, completing homework or tackling difficult academic tasks in Indonesia requires little effort; assistance is just a smartphone tap away. Driven by demand on digital platforms such as Shopee and TikTok, joki services have developed into a lucrative informal market, providing income opportunities for underemployed graduates and students in a highly competitive job market (BPS, 2026). Similar commercial strategies have also been observed on other digital platforms. Rowland et al. (2018), for example, found that contract cheating websites use credibility, interactive features, low prices, and rapid delivery to attract students. More concerningly, joki services extend across all education levels, from middle and high school to undergraduate and master's degrees (S1 and S2) (KPK, 2026). As highlighted in investigative reporting by CNN Indonesia (Yuliawati, 2024), providers offer low-cost, comprehensive packages, including PowerPoint preparation, essay writing, paraphrasing, and Turnitin similarity-score manipulation, potentially normalising academic dishonesty before students enter higher education (Heriyati et al., 2023).

Even though a thesis is meant to be the ultimate test of independent competence—one that students are legally required to fulfill under national higher education standards (Permendiktisaintek No. 39/2025)—it can easily be ordered from an account found under a simple hashtag search. The practice is called joki (literally "jockey"), paid work done on a student's behalf. Internationally, this is known as contract cheating, a term coined by Clarke and Lancaster (2006) for students recruiting a third party to complete assessed work and submitting it as their own—a prevalence that remains contested, but is certainly far

from small. Globally, Newton (2018) pooled 71 samples covering 54,514 students and found that 3.52% self-reported contract cheating, rising to 15.7% in samples from 2014 onward. He cautioned that the rise may partly reflect an increase in self-reported cheating in general, and that most samples—70% of them convenience samples with low response rates and weak guarantees of anonymity—are likely to under-report. A survey of 14,086 students at eight Australian universities put the share at 5.78% (Bretag et al., 2019). Crucially, Indonesia is entirely absent from this global evidence base: none of Newton's 71 samples was Indonesian. Because the highest recent global rates came largely from samples outside North America, Newton (2018) suggested that contract cheating may historically have been more common in non-Western contexts than the English-language literature records.

The Indonesian figure is of a different kind. In October 2026 the Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, KPK) published its 2026 Education Integrity Survey, in which paying another party to complete a final assignment was reported in 90.88% of the surveyed higher-education units and, according to the Commission's launch statement, by 43% of higher-education respondents (KPK, 2026; Justisio, 2026). The figure counts institutions in which the practice was reported, not students who buy. What it establishes is not the size of the market but its ordinariness: there is almost no Indonesian campus where outsourcing a final assignment is unknown. A member of the House of Representatives responded by proposing a national academic anti-fraud task force (Antara, 2026).

A national rule already exists. Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology No. 39 of 2021 on Academic Integrity in Producing Scholarly Works (hereafter Permendikbudristek 39/2021) obliges every university to adopt an integrity regulation, defines six forms of violation and sets sanctions up to the cancellation of a degree. Public discussion of joki nevertheless proceeds as though the problem were a gap in the law, and reaches past the ministerial rule to the criminal code. This article argues that the problem is better described as a mismatch. The regulation names the buyer more directly than is commonly recognised, but it defines the offence in terms that the market can describe itself around, binds only part of the market, and leaves verification to an instrument, the similarity check, that a bespoke product is designed to pass.

The argument is made in two registers. The first is a close reading of the regulation and of the criminal provisions usually cited against joki. The second is a description of how the market presents itself, drawn from 1,269 public TikTok videos and 54 Shopee listings collected in October 2026. The two are read together because the question is not only what the rule says but what it is able to see. Indonesian scholarship on joki is small. The only survey, published in this journal, found that 73 of 1,081 undergraduates (6.75%) reported contract cheating and explained the behaviour through the theory of planned behaviour (Heriyati et al., 2023). Other work has read contract cheating as a symptom of the commercialisation of education, built on literature review (Bhinekaswathi & Nurbayani, 2022), or as a practice shielded by collectivist norms (Geraldine & Niyu, 2024). The closest policy study, Akbar and Picard's (2019) critical discourse analysis of Indonesian plagiarism policy, found that national documents defined plagiarism broadly, attended to lecturers more than students, and were reproduced in university policy with little transformation; it predates the 2021 regulation and does not address

outsourced authorship. At the international level, Ahsan et al. (2022) similarly identified gaps in contract cheating scholarship, particularly the limited use of theory-driven approaches and diverse research methodologies, underscoring the need for context-specific empirical studies. None of these lines examines the current regulation or the market directly. The contribution here is to show, with Indonesian data, that the visible supply of contract cheating is organised in the vocabulary the integrity regime does not reach, and to propose a reorientation of that regime from text to authorship.

The article asks three questions. RQ1: How do Indonesia's academic integrity regulation, the criminal provisions cited against joki and the national performance indicators define and verify contract cheating? RQ2: How does the visible joki market on TikTok and Shopee present its product, establish credibility and relate to detection? RQ3: What do the gaps between the two imply for the governance of academic integrity?

Materials and Methods

Regulatory documents

The regulatory corpus comprises the instruments that define, sanction or measure academic integrity violations by students in Indonesian higher education as of October 2026: Permendikbudristek 39/2021 on academic integrity; Law 20/2003 on the National Education System (Arts. 25 and 70); Law 1/2023 on the Penal Code, in force since 2 January 2026 (Arts. 272, 391–392 and 622); Permendiktisaintek 39/2025 on quality assurance; and Kepmendiktisaintek 358/M/KEP/2025 on key performance indicators, read with the Ministry's implementation guidance (Kemdiktisaintek, 2025). The repealed Permendiknas 17/2010 was examined only to establish its status. Official texts were obtained from the Ministry's legal database and from regional higher-education service offices; where two copies differed, the Ministry's copy was used.

The documents were analysed by close reading of definitions, scope, evidentiary requirements, sanctions and measurement, guided by Bacchi's (2012) question of what the problem is represented to be in a policy and what is left unproblematic, an approach recently applied to Australian contract-cheating legislation (Groves & Nagy, 2026). For each provision the analysis asked what conduct it names, whom it binds, what evidence it requires and what it counts. Quotations are given in the original Indonesian with the authors' translation.

Keyword-Based Identification and Coding Scheme

In the coding scheme, verbal assurance claims were distinguished from trust and secrecy claims to capture two distinct dimensions of promotional communication. Verbal assurance claims refer to statements intended to reassure prospective customers about the reliability, safety, quality, completion, or expected outcomes of the services offered. These statements may include explicit guarantees or verbal expressions of assurance, such as claims that a service is safe, reliable, or assured, when used to communicate confidence in service delivery.

In contrast, trust and secrecy claims refer to statements emphasising customer confidentiality, privacy, trustworthiness, or the protection of customers' identities and personal information. This category captures promotional language intended to reassure customers that their involvement, transactions, or use of the service will remain confidential or undisclosed.

This distinction was maintained throughout the coding process: verbal assurance claims concern the service and its delivery, whereas trust and secrecy claims concern the protection and confidentiality of the customer relationship (see Table 1).

Table 1
Operational Definitions of Promotional and Assurance-Related Coding Categories

Category	Operational definition
Academic Outsourcing	The use of a third party or external provider to complete tasks, functions or services related to education and academic work.
Explicit Offer	Direct statements explicitly offering academic work or related services for payment.
Price-Led Language	Statements emphasising service prices, discounts, affordability, or other price-related information.
Assistance Vocabulary	Expressions framing the service as academic assistance, support, guidance, or help.
Verbal Assurance Claims	Statements verbally assuring prospective customers of service reliability, safety, quality, completion, or expected outcomes.
Trust and Secrecy Claims	Statements emphasising customer confidentiality, privacy, trust, or protection of identity and personal information.
Free Revision	Explicit promises to revise or correct delivered work without additional payment.
Testimonials	Statements or content presenting customer feedback, experiences, or endorsements.
Similarity/Plagiarism Check	References to similarity detection, plagiarism checking, or similarity scores as part of the service.

Data Identification and Sampling

TikTok records were collected through the seven hashtag searches described below, and every record returned (1,351) was retained; no sampling was applied at this stage. The records were then screened for duplicate post IDs. After removing 82 duplicate records, the final dataset consisted of 1,269 unique TikTok videos.

The resulting dataset was then subjected to keyword-based screening of video captions and hashtags to identify content potentially related to academic outsourcing and joki services. This procedure identified

589 videos for further analysis. The keyword-based identification was treated as an initial classification procedure rather than definitive confirmation that every identified video promoted academic outsourcing services.

To examine the classification results, a random subsample of 100 videos was drawn from the 589 keyword-identified videos for manual examination. The manual coding was used to assess the extent to which the keyword-based identification corresponded with the content and promotional characteristics of the selected videos. The manual examination was treated as a validation exercise rather than as a second independent coding of the entire dataset. The subsample was drawn with a fixed random seed (2026), coded manually by a single coder against the definitions in Table 1, and compared with the keyword coding using Cohen's kappa (Table 4).

Public TikTok posts were collected with a scraping tool on 15 October 2026 from seven hashtag searches: #skripsi, #jokitugasmurah, #jokitugaskuliah, #pejuangskripsi, #bimbelskripsi, #jokiskripsi and #mahasiswa. Of 1,351 records, 82 duplicate post identifiers were removed, leaving 1,269 unique videos. A video was coded as joki-related if its caption or hashtags contained the term *joki* (589 videos, 389 accounts) and as an explicit offer if it also used offer language (open, slot, service, order, *jasa* [service] or WhatsApp; 151 videos, 113 accounts). Within the joki-related group, keyword families were coded for price-led language, assistance vocabulary (*bimbingan*, *konsultasi*, *bantu*, *bimbel*: guidance, consultation, help, tutoring), trust and secrecy words, credibility commitments (free revision, payment on completion, guarantee, refund, testimonial) and similarity or plagiarism checks. The full keyword dictionary, the counts it produces and the code are provided in Online Resource 1. Rupiah amounts were extracted by pattern matching and read in context. Shopee search-result pages for the queries "joki skripsi" and "tugas" (assignment) were transcribed by hand into 54 unique listings with title, displayed price, rating, seller city and a service category.

Combining policy documents, platform content and search data answers a methodological gap in the field: a systematic review of contract-cheating research found that more than 60% of studies come from Australia, the United Kingdom and North America, that few combine data sources, and that only 11% discuss research ethics in any detail (Liyanagamage et al., 2025). The design follows non-participatory netnography of publicly visible material (Kozinets, 2020) and the supply-side tradition of platform studies of contract cheating (Lancaster, 2018; Amigud & Lancaster, 2019). No account was contacted, no purchase was simulated, results are reported in aggregate, and no caption is quoted in a form that could be traced by search. Shares reported for the full corpus are keyword counts; because their agreement with the manual coding was low (Table 4), they are read as the presence of vocabulary rather than as validated claims, and known sources of misclassification are set out in the Limitations. Because the study analysed only publicly accessible posts and listings, without interaction with their authors or collection of private data, formal ethics review was not required.

Search data

To set the supply side beside the vocabulary of demand, monthly Google Trends data were retrieved on 2 November 2026 for five search terms: *joki skripsi* (thesis joki), *joki tugas* (assignment joki), *joki tugas akhir* (final-assignment joki), *jasa skripsi* (thesis service) and *jasa bimbingan skripsi* (thesis guidance service), the last chosen to mirror the assistance vocabulary sellers use. Settings were Indonesia, January 2004 to October 2026, all categories and web search. Google Trends reports relative search interest on a 0–100 scale, indexed to the highest monthly value among the terms compared, not absolute search volumes; values for low-volume terms are rounded to zero. Annual means are reported for 2012–2026, because earlier values are sparse and volatile. A second comparison, retrieved the same day with identical settings, added three terms related to detection: *jasa cek turnitin* (Turnitin-checking service), *lolos turnitin* (pass Turnitin) and *parafrase* (paraphrase). Because Google Trends rescales each comparison to its own maximum, values from the two retrievals are not combined. Search data answer a gap that Newton (2018) identified in the field: because self-report surveys are likely to under-report, he recommended objective measures, among them search traffic related to the use and advertising of cheating services.

Survey data

The national results of the 2026 Education Integrity Survey of the Corruption Eradication Commission were used as contextual evidence on prevalence and enforcement (KPK, 2026), supplemented by the Commission's launch statements as reported in the press (Justisio, 2026). The survey reports the share of education units in which a behaviour was reported, not the share of students, and is used here only for that unit-level purpose.

Results and Discussion

Permendikbudristek 39/2021 replaced the 2010 regulation on plagiarism, which it expressly revoked (Art. 25). The point needs stating because the 2010 rule continues to be cited as current in commentary and in some research on joki; any analysis that relies on it describes a regime that no longer exists. The 2021 regulation is broader in scope. It applies to the *sivitas akademika*, defined as lecturers and students (Art. 1(7)), and to *karya ilmiah*, scholarly works, defined as the output of the three missions of higher education by members of the academic community "that has been assessed and/or published" (Art. 1(4)). The phrase "assessed and/or published" matters. A thesis or an assignment that has been graded falls within the definition; the regulation is not confined to publications.

Article 9 lists six violations: fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, unauthorised authorship, conflict of interest and multiple submission. Plagiarism is defined by the taking of existing work: taking part or all of another's work without proper citation, rewriting another's work without using one's own language, and reusing one's own published work without citation (Art. 10(3)). The provision that bears directly on joki is the fourth. Article 10(4) reads:

“Kepengarangan yang tidak sah sebagaimana dimaksud dalam Pasal 9 huruf d merupakan kegiatan seseorang yang tidak memiliki kontribusi dalam sebuah Karya Ilmiah berupa gagasan, pendapat, dan/atau peran aktif yang berhubungan dengan bidang keilmuan berupa: a. menggabungkan diri sebagai pengarang bersama tanpa memberikan kontribusi dalam karya; b. menghilangkan nama seseorang yang mempunyai kontribusi dalam karya; dan/atau c. menyuruh orang lain untuk membuat karya sebagai karyanya tanpa memberikan kontribusi.” (Permendikbudristek 39/2021, Art. 10(4))

“Unauthorised authorship as referred to in Article 9(d) is the activity of a person who has no contribution to a scholarly work, in the form of ideas, opinions and/or an active role related to the field of knowledge, consisting of: (a) joining as a co-author without contributing to the work; (b) removing the name of a person who contributed to the work; and/or (c) ordering another person to make a work as one’s own without contributing.” (authors’ translation)

Item (c) describes the buyer of a ghostwritten thesis with some precision. The regulation therefore does not lack a category for joki, and claims that Indonesian integrity rules recognise only plagiarism understate what the text provides. The category is, however, defined by an absence. The violation consists in having made no contribution “in the form of ideas, opinions and/or an active role related to the field of knowledge”, and the regulation defines none of these terms. A student who chose the topic, forwarded her supervisor’s comments and attended supervision with a purchased draft has supplied an idea and played a role. This is not a hypothetical defence. In the only Indonesian survey of contract cheating, 53.4% of students who had outsourced work said they edited it before submission and a further 20.5% said they used it only as a reference; just 26% submitted it as received (Heriyati et al., 2023). Most buyers, on their own account, contribute something. Whether that is enough to take her outside item (c) is a question the text leaves to each university’s examining team. The provision names the act and then gives the actor a defence. Even expert commentary is unsure where the act belongs. In the most detailed published commentary on the regulation, Siaputra and Santosa (2024) read unauthorised authorship as including ghostwriting, yet place ghostwriters and essay mills, “also known as contract cheating”, under a separate heading of personal misconduct alongside bribery and impersonation, outside the categories of scientific misconduct that the regulation lists. The ambiguity has moved rather than disappeared. The 2010 regulation was criticised for leaving the line between intentional and unintentional plagiarism undefined (Akbar & Picard, 2019). Purchased work removes that ambiguity, since payment makes the act deliberate, pre-planned and intentional (Newton, 2018); the 2021 regulation reintroduces it at a different point, by making the offence turn on whether the buyer contributed.

The regulation’s reach is also bounded by its subjects. Obligations and sanctions attach to lecturers and students (Arts. 2(1), 16, 17), and the sanctions for students run from a reduced grade to the cancellation of a diploma (Art. 17(1)). A provider who is a student or lecturer could in principle be reached, although no item in Article 10 describes the act of writing another person’s work for payment. A provider outside the academic community, which is what an anonymous TikTok account or a Shopee shop is, falls

outside the regulation altogether. The rule addresses the demand side of a market and is silent on its supply.

Two procedural features complete the picture. Reports must be “accompanied by relevant evidence” (Art. 12(2)), and the procedures for handling reports, examining them and imposing sanctions are set by each university after senate approval (Arts. 6, 12(6), 17(3)). There is no national standard for what counts as evidence of outsourced authorship. Delegation does not necessarily fill the gap. Under the 2010 regime, university policy reproduced ministerial text with little transformation, leaving definitions broad and levels of sanction undefined (Akbar & Picard, 2019). If that pattern has persisted, campus regulations will inherit the contribution qualifier rather than define it. Table 2 summarises the reading.

Table 2
Provisions of Permendikbudristek 39/2021 and their reach to contract cheating

Provision	What it establishes	Reach to joki
Art. 1(4), *karya ilmiah*	Works by lecturers or students that have been assessed and/or published	Graded assignments and theses fall within scope
Arts. 1(7), 2(1), 16–17	Obligations and sanctions apply to the academic community (lecturers and students)	Buyer is covered; external commercial providers are not
Art. 10(3), plagiarism	Taking or rewriting existing work without proper citation	Bespoke ghostwritten work usually has no source to match
Art. 10(4)(c), unauthorised authorship	Ordering another person to make a work as one’s own without contributing	Names the buyer; “contribution” is undefined
Art. 12(2), reporting	Reports must carry relevant evidence	Evidence of purchase usually sits in private messages
Arts. 6, 12(6), 17(3), 24	Universities set procedures and sanction rules	No national standard for evidence of outsourced authorship

Narrower in criminal law than commonly reported

Public explanations of joki commonly reach for criminal law, citing Article 70 of the National Education System Act (Law No. 20 of 2003) and the forgery article of the Penal Code. Both citations are weaker than they appear. Article 70 reads:

“Lulusan yang karya ilmiah yang digunakannya untuk mendapatkan gelar akademik, profesi, atau vokasi sebagaimana dimaksud dalam Pasal 25 ayat (2) terbukti merupakan jiplakan dipidana dengan pidana penjara paling lama dua tahun dan/atau pidana denda paling banyak Rp 200.000.000,00 (dua ratus juta rupiah).” (Law No. 20 of 2003, Art. 70)

“A graduate whose scholarly work used to obtain an academic, professional or vocational degree as referred to in Article 25(2) is proven to be a *jiplakan* shall be punished with imprisonment of up to two years and/or a fine of up to IDR 200,000,000 (two hundred million rupiah).” (authors’ translation)

Article 25(2) provides, in the same terms, that such a graduate’s degree is revoked. The statute does not define *jiplakan*: the official elucidation of both articles reads only *cukup jelas*, “sufficiently clear”. The word ordinarily means a copy or duplicate, although the dictionary also gives *jiplak* the looser sense of cheating (Akbar & Picard, 2019), and both provisions reach only graduates, not students still studying. A thesis written to order is not a copy in the ordinary sense of the word; it is new text produced by the wrong person. The provision was drafted for plagiarism, and its application to ghostwriting would require reading *jiplakan* in its loosest sense, as any work not the graduate’s own, which is an interpretation the text permits but does not settle.

The new Penal Code makes the gap clearer rather than closing it. The forgery article usually cited, Article 263 of the old code, lapsed when Law No. 1 of 2023 took effect on 2 January 2026. Its successor, Article 391, penalises making a document falsely or falsifying it, and the elucidation defines a document as one capable of creating a right or an obligation, releasing a debt or serving as proof of a fact. More pointedly, the new code contains a section devoted to false academic credentials. Article 272 penalises forging a diploma or certificate of competence, using a false diploma or academic, professional or vocational degree, and issuing one, with up to ten years’ imprisonment for issuers; and Article 622 repealed the Education Act’s own offence of using a false diploma (Art. 69) and redirected it to Article 272(2), while leaving Article 70 in force. The legislature, in other words, revisited the criminal law of academic credentials in 2023 and kept two separate offences: a false document, and a copied thesis. Contract cheating fits neither. A diploma awarded on the strength of a purchased thesis is not false; it is issued by the university that awarded it. What is false is the authorship of the work assessed, and that is neither a forged document nor, on its ordinary meaning, a copy. Whether a court could stretch either offence to reach it is a question for criminal-law scholarship, and this article does not resolve it. It is enough for present purposes that the criminal route depends on contested interpretation, while the administrative route, which is clear about the buyer, depends on an undefined qualifier and on evidence the market is organised to withhold.

The Case for the Existing Framework and Its Limits

The case that the existing framework is sufficient deserves to be stated at full strength before it is qualified. Article 10(4)(c) names the buyer. Article 1(4) brings assessed coursework within scope. Article 17 gives universities a graduated set of sanctions that ends in the cancellation of a diploma, and Article 6 requires every university to specify violations, levels of severity, enforcement bodies and procedures in its own regulation. On this view the problem is enforcement, not definition, and the remedy is for universities to apply rules they already have. The argument has a further strength: it avoids criminalising students. Jurisdictions that have legislated against contract cheating, New Zealand, Ireland and Australia, have criminalised the selling of cheating services, not their purchase; Australia’s 2020 Act

carries penalties of up to two years' imprisonment for providers (Groves & Nagy, 2026). Indonesia, by contrast, has regulated only the buyer. Its defenders also see the regulation's brevity as a design choice: it was not meant as a rigid technical guideline, and leaving types of violation, procedures and sanctions to each university makes room for contextualisation and for forms of misconduct not yet imagined (Siaputra & Santosa, 2024). A framework that handles student conduct through academic sanctions is, on this argument, the proportionate one, and the foreign record gives it support: New Zealand's provision has been used once and that case was not completed, and Australia's has been used to block some 370 websites without a single fine (Groves & Nagy, 2026), while an international survey of 7,126 students found that one in five of those who had used commercial outsourcing believed such services were already illegal in their country and used them anyway (Awdry et al., 2022). The same survey lends the Indonesian choice some support from an unexpected quarter: 86.9% of respondents held that students should be partly or wholly to blame if outsourcing were made illegal, a view at odds with laws that target only providers (Awdry et al., 2022).

The argument holds as far as it goes, and it goes as far as a case in which the purchase is known. Its limits lie before that point. The first is the contribution qualifier. A rule that defines the offence by the absence of contribution invites a market that sells the appearance of one: drafts the student can annotate, sessions the student can attend, "guidance" rather than writing. The second is the scope of the regulation's subjects. The market that supplies joki is largely external to universities, and a rule that binds only students can raise the cost of buying but not of selling. The third is evidence. The regulation requires relevant evidence and leaves its form to each university, while the only routine verification instrument universities apply to student work is a similarity check, which tests for the infringement defined in Article 10(3) and not the one defined in Article 10(4). The international evidence on that instrument is unambiguous. Because purchased work is original text, text-matching software rarely flags it. In Lines' (2016) study of 26 purchased assignments, no marker raised a concern and 23 appeared acceptable on Turnitin (as reported in Dawson & Sutherland-Smith, 2018). Human judgement does better when it is directed: markers told to look for contract cheating identified purchased work 62% of the time while correctly clearing 96% of genuine work, most often because the purchased text did not answer the questions the task set (Dawson & Sutherland-Smith, 2018), although unassisted markers in a later study reached only 48% (Dawson et al., 2020, as reported in Cotton et al., 2024). The similarity check's very success against copy-and-paste plagiarism has been argued to push would-be cheaters toward paid services (Rigby et al., 2015).

The evidential gap is the deeper one. Detection of contract cheating is not the same as its successful prosecution: even accurate markers could not supply the level of evidence a formal hearing requires (Dawson & Sutherland-Smith, 2018), and a lecturer who suspects outsourcing but cannot document it has, as Alin (2020) observes, good ethical and legal reasons to do nothing. Jurisdictions that have confronted the problem have specified what counts as proof. Australia's higher-education regulator advises that the standard is the balance of probabilities, that evidence may include file metadata, mismatches with the student's prior work, responses to questions about the work and statements from persons with knowledge of the outsourcing, and that the student must be able to answer each item

(TEQSA, 2022). Permendikbudristek 39/2021 requires “relevant evidence” without saying what evidence is relevant to an authorship violation or to what standard it must be proven. Each university decides, and the cautious decision is to proceed only on a similarity report, which is the one form of evidence a purchased thesis will not produce.

Consider a final-year student at a private university who works part-time and sees her supervisor twice a semester. She buys a thesis chapter from an account found under #jokiskripsi, having chosen the topic herself, and brings the purchased draft to supervision. The draft passes the similarity check, because it was written for her. Under Article 10(4)(c) her case turns on whether choosing a topic and attending supervision count as ideas or an active role. The seller is outside the regulation. The instrument her university applied found nothing, and nothing in the procedure required anyone to ask who wrote the text. Each element of the framework has done what it was designed to do, and the purchase has passed through all of them.

What the Market Shows

Market Atomization on TikTok

Supply is atomistic in the sense of easy entry. Of the 113 accounts making explicit offers, 93 (82%) appear only once; the median seller has 516 followers, and 60% have fewer than 1,000. The concentration of posting is low (Herfindahl–Hirschman index of 153 on a 0–10,000 scale for explicit offers), while attention is highly unequal: the Gini coefficient of views is 0.89 and the top 10% of accounts (11 of 113) receive 77% of views. A seller needs an account and a hashtag. Products are mostly coursework, with papers, assignments and reports mentioned in 79% of joki-related videos and theses in 49%, and a distinct niche of 62 videos from 45 accounts serves students of the open university, Universitas Terbuka.

Sellers compete on cheapness, but prices are rarely stated. Price-led language appears in 58% of joki-related videos and the word *murah* (cheap) in hashtags on 53%, yet only 26 videos (4.4%) state a price. The stated amounts are almost all starting prices for small tasks: excluding one seller’s thesis quote, the 25 lowest stated prices have a median of IDR 10,000 (interquartile range 5,000–30,000); that quote, the only one for thesis work in the data, is IDR 1.1 million for an undergraduate thesis and 1.7 million for a master’s thesis, apparently per chapter rather than for the whole work (Fig. 1). Price is advertised as a floor and settled in private messages. The floors are consistent with what Indonesian student buyers report paying, from about US$1.40 to US$49 per assignment (Heriyati et al., 2023).

This much would be expected of any informal market with low entry costs. What bears on the regulatory argument is how the market names its product, how it establishes credibility, and what it says about detection.

Manual examination of TikTok posts

The manual examination of 100 TikTok posts provides a more granular view of how joki-related services are presented in individual captions. Explicit service offers appeared in 53 posts (53%), while academic outsourcing was identified in 31 posts (31%). Assistance-related vocabulary occurred in 31 posts (31%), and price-led language appeared in 18 posts (18%). These findings suggest that service promotion is not expressed exclusively through direct references to outsourcing; it also relies on language that frames the service as assistance or practical support.

Assurance-related claims were identified in 12 posts (12%), while testimonials appeared in four posts (4%), similarity or plagiarism-check references in three posts (3%), and free-revision promises in one post (1%). No posts were coded for trust or secrecy words under the applied coding criteria. The relatively low frequency of testimonials, revision promises, and similarity-check references indicates that these forms of promotional claims were less prominent in the manually examined subsample than direct service offers and assistance-oriented language.

Taken together, the manual coding illustrates the coexistence of direct service offers, assistance-oriented language, and assurance-related claims. This distinction is relevant to the article's central argument: commercial academic services may present themselves not only as providers of completed work but also through the vocabulary of assistance, convenience, and service assurance. These results describe the 100-post subsample and should not be interpreted as prevalence estimates for the entire TikTok corpus.

Table 3
Manual coding results for the 100-video TikTok subsample

Coding category	**n**	**%**
Academic outsourcing	31	31
Explicit offer of service	53	53
Price-led language	18	18
Assistance vocabulary	31	31
Trust/secrecy words	0	0
Free revision promise	1	1
Testimonial	4	4
Similarity/plagiarism check	3	3
Guarantee/assurance claims	12	12

Note: N = 100. Each category was coded as a binary variable (1 = present; 0 = absent). Categories are not mutually exclusive; therefore, percentages do not sum to 100%.

Agreement between the keyword coding and the manual coding is low (Table 4). Kappa ranges from −0.04 to 0.23, well below the 0.60 conventionally taken as acceptable, and the two methods diverge in

both directions. Keyword matching over-counts price-led language (53 against 18) and trust and secrecy words (31 against none); in most of these cases the matched word appears only in a hashtag such as #jokitugasmurah or #jokitugasterpercaya, which the dictionary reads as a claim and a reader does not. It under-counts explicit offers (28 against 53), assistance vocabulary (13 against 31) and assurance claims (3 against 12), which suggests that sellers make these claims in phrasings the dictionary does not list. The keyword shares reported for the full corpus therefore describe the vocabulary that surrounds the market rather than the claims sellers make, and are read alongside the manual subsample.

Table 4
Agreement between keyword and manual coding, 100-video TikTok subsample

Coding category	Keyword n	Manual n	Agreement (%)	κ
Explicit offer of service	28	53	55	0.12
Price-led language	53	18	47	−0.02
Assistance vocabulary	13	31	72	0.22
Trust/secrecy words	31	0	69	0.00
Free revision promise	0	1	99	0.00
Testimonial	1	4	95	−0.02
Similarity/plagiarism check	4	3	93	−0.04
Guarantee/assurance claims	3	12	89	0.23

Note: Agreement is the share of the 100 videos coded identically by both methods; κ = Cohen's kappa. κ is 0 by construction where one method records no positives.

Naming: assistance rather than authorship

The market describes itself in the vocabulary of help. Assistance terms (guidance, consultation, help) occur in 88 of the 589 joki-related TikTok videos (14.9%), alongside the hashtag #bimbelskripsi, "thesis tutoring", which was one of the seven searches precisely because sellers use it. On Shopee, the platform on which listings are subject to a marketplace's moderation, the naming moves further from authorship. The word *joki* appears in the titles of only two of 54 listings and in the thumbnails of six; most titles describe typing, formatting, editing, slides or assistance, and some use altered spellings that evade keyword filters. Typing and formatting account for 19 listings (35%) and assignment writing for 14 (26%); only two listings (4%) offer thesis writing. The median displayed price is IDR 2,000, and half of the listings cost IDR 1,000 or less, which marks them as entry products that move the buyer into chat. Both features have precedents. Bhinekaswathi and Nurbayani (2022) noted Indonesian offers beginning at one thousand rupiah, and the Australian regulator observes that cheating services commonly promote themselves as legitimate study help and criticise institutions for giving students too little support (TEQSA, 2022). The self-presentation is also a legal defence. Groves and Nagy (2026) observe that offences against cheating services become difficult to apply when a service bills itself as homework help

or tutoring, and that advertising in the language of “support” and “help” did not abate after Australia’s Act. What is specific to the Indonesian case is that the same vocabulary meets a regulation aimed at the buyer, where it answers the contribution qualifier rather than a provider offence. International providers have long used a parallel device, terms and conditions that make the client responsible for any misuse of the product (Draper et al., 2017, as reported in Newton, 2018); the Indonesian market does the same work with its product names.

None of this demonstrates that sellers have read Article 10(4). The defence is not new. Indonesian paper mills were already justifying themselves to the press in 2010 by pointing out that their articles were written to order rather than copied from existing work (Kompas, 2010, as reported in Siaputra & Santosa, 2024). It does show that the visible market presents itself in exactly the terms that the provision leaves undefined. A service called guidance is a service in which the buyer has, by description, an active role. The regulation defines the offence as an absence of contribution; the market describes its product as a contribution the buyer makes with help. The two vocabularies fit together, and the fit favours the seller.

How Students Actually Search

Search data show the other side of the naming. Interest in *jasa skripsi*, a term that covers both legitimate thesis services such as printing and binding and outsourced writing, declined steadily, from an annual mean of 29.6 in 2012 to 16.4 in 2021 and 7.0 in 2026. Searches using the word *joki* rose as it fell. *Joki tugas* was near zero until 2019 (0.7), then rose to 3.2 in 2020, 12.0 in 2021 and a peak of 18.8 in 2023 before easing to 9.6 in 2026; *joki skripsi* rose from 1.8 in 2019 to around 10–11 from 2022 onward (Fig. 2). The two *joki* terms together first exceeded *jasa skripsi* in May 2021, and since 2024 their combined mean (22.2) has been more than twice that of *jasa skripsi* (9.6). The rise began during the shift to remote learning in 2020–21 and predates the change in Google’s data collection in 2022, so it is unlikely to be an artefact of that change, although its causes cannot be read from these data. The shape resembles the one observed in Spain, where traffic to 44 contract cheating websites rose strongly during the pandemic and then fell by 21.7% between 2022 and 2023 and by a further 31.3% between 2023 and 2024, a decline temporally consistent with the spread of generative AI, though not shown to be caused by it (Comas Forgas et al., 2026). Indonesian interest in *joki tugas* likewise peaked in 2023 and has since fallen by about half, while *joki skripsi*, the larger and less automatable task, has held steady. That divergence is what Lancaster (2024) anticipated: generative AI may push down the price of routine outsourced work while sustaining a premium market for work buyers believe a human has written.

The decisive comparison is with the vocabulary of guidance. *Jasa bimbingan skripsi*, the phrasing closest to the assistance language that sellers use, registers a non-zero value in only three of 274 months and never exceeds 2; *joki tugas akhir*, the formal phrasing of the regulation’s world of “final assignments”, registers in one. Buyers, in other words, do not search for guidance. They search for *joki*, by name, and with growing frequency, while queries associated with *joki skripsi* include definitional searches such as “what is joki” and an extension of the market to journal articles, *joki jurnal*. The euphemism visible in sellers’ listings is therefore not the language of the market. It is the language of the listing. The word that has become ordinary in what students type into a search engine is the word that disappears from a

Shopee title, which is consistent with the reading that the assistance vocabulary serves the seller's protection rather than describing the product.

The second comparison bears on detection. Neither *jasa cek turnitin* nor *lolos turnitin* registers a non-zero value in any month, so explicit demand for evading similarity checks is too small to measure, which matches the small share of sellers who advertise such checks. *Parafrase* behaves differently. Its annual mean, between 2 and 3 throughout 2012–2019, rose to 9.7 in 2021, 38.0 in 2022 and about 61 in 2023–2024; monthly values climbed from late 2021, before the 2022 change in Google's data collection, and stepped up again in late 2022. Since 2024, interest in *parafrase* has averaged some 27 times the combined interest in *joki skripsi* and *joki tugas* in the same comparison. The term is generic: students search for it to learn a legitimate academic skill and to find paraphrasing software, and its rise cannot be attributed to misconduct. Its relevance here is narrower. Paraphrase is the operation that turns borrowed text into text a similarity check will pass, and the scale of interest in it suggests that the problem of text which is new in wording but not in authorship is not confined to the paid market this article describes.

Trust Words, Few Guarantees

Because an illicit purchase cannot be disputed through ordinary channels, buyers cannot easily punish poor work, and the economics of such markets predicts that sellers rely on reputation or on costly commitments to establish credibility (Rigby et al., 2015). The commitments are rare here. Trust or secrecy words such as *terpercaya*, *amanah*, *aman* and *rahasia* (trusted, trustworthy, safe, confidential) appear in 27% of joki-related videos, while free revision appears in 3.9%, testimonials in 3.2%, payment on completion, a down payment or instalments in 1.4%, an explicit guarantee (*garansi*) in one video and a refund in none (Fig. 3). These are keyword counts: in the manually coded subsample no video made a claim of confidentiality in the sense defined in Table 1, and what the trust family captures is better read as assurance about the service, which the manual coding found in 12 of 100 videos (Table 3). The looser *dijamin* (guaranteed) appears in 14 videos (2.4%), attached in about a third of them to the seller's trustworthiness or confidentiality, in three to a good grade and in the rest to speed or quality. On Shopee, ratings do the work that words do on TikTok, and they are saturated: the mean is 4.94 and 68.5% of listings show exactly 5.0. The contrast with the international industry is instructive. Commercial essay sites typically build trust through promises of quality work, timely delivery and passing grades and through words such as "guarantee" and "secure" (Kreitz & Stoesz, 2025); Indonesian TikTok sellers rarely make a formal guarantee: where the word appears, it attaches mostly to the seller rather than to the work, and the dominant promise is to be trustworthy and discreet.

The prominence of secrecy matters for the regulatory argument as much as for the economic one. A promise of confidentiality is a promise about evidence. It is also the product itself. Contract cheating is less a purchase of text than a purchase of the way out of a task, and its value to the buyer is academic credit obtained without the work and without being noticed (Ellis, 2024). Article 12(2) requires relevant evidence of a violation, and the market's most common credibility claim is that such evidence will not exist. The promise cuts both ways. The evidence does exist; it sits with the seller, who retains the chat history, the payment record and the original file, and international studies record providers using exactly

that material to demand further payment from students, sometimes after graduation, under threat of exposure to their university or employer (Lancaster, 2024). Confidentiality is guaranteed only for as long as the seller chooses to keep it.

Selling the Detection System

The market also sells the instrument of detection. Similarity or plagiarism checks are offered in 2.7% of joki-related TikTok videos, and two of the 54 Shopee listings sell detection checks as a stand-alone service. The numbers are small and should not be overread. Their significance is qualitative. Being advertised as “plagiarism-free” is a basic selling point of contract cheating services internationally, precisely because it makes their products difficult to identify with originality-detection software (Newton, 2018), and the Indonesian market has turned that promise into a service: the one routine test that universities apply to student work is available as a product from the same sellers who supply the work, so a buyer can certify the outcome before submission. In a market whose product is text written for the buyer, the check confirms what the seller already knows. Knowing how the check works may itself lower the perceived risk of cheating. In a survey of 183 Australian students, awareness of plagiarism-detection technologies was associated with lower perceived risk of being caught using AI ($\beta = -0.56$), which the author reads as students learning the limits of those tools; higher perceived risk from AI detection was in turn associated with greater perceived control over contract cheating ($\beta = 0.22$), consistent with a substitution of human outsourcing for detectable machine text (Senali, 2026). The study is cross-sectional and small, but the direction matters: a detection regime that students understand to be text-based tells them which kind of cheating it cannot see.

The KPK survey describes the environment in which this supply operates. Its 2026 national index stands at 73.30, with Governance the weakest dimension at 70.67. Rule enforcement scores 65.52, and within the Character dimension the lowest variable is courage, at 52.87, with the courage to refuse an invitation to break rules the lowest highlighted indicator at 44.85 (KPK, 2026). The survey does not measure detection or penalties for outsourcing directly, and its unit-based percentages cannot be compared with student-level prevalence. Read beside an open, cheap and euphemistic supply, it is consistent with an environment in which the expected cost of buying is low.

The Integrity Paradox

Academic integrity regimes exist to protect what an assessment certifies: that the person assessed did the work and can account for it. Permendikbudristek 39/2021 states this purpose in its values (honesty, trust, fairness, honour, responsibility and courage, Art. 2(2)), and Article 10(4) is the provision that comes closest to it, since authorship is the question of who did the work. The regime in practice verifies something else. Plagiarism is defined by resemblance to existing text, the instrument applied to student work tests resemblance, and the result of that test is what universities record. Unauthorised authorship, which is the violation joki actually commits, is defined but not verified.

The consequence is not merely that contract cheating escapes detection. It is that the evidence produced by the integrity regime certifies the purchased work. A ghostwritten thesis returns a low

similarity score because it is new text, and the score enters the student's record as evidence that integrity was checked. The instrument intended to protect originality becomes, for the one product designed around it, a certificate of compliance. What the similarity report records under these conditions is novelty of wording, not authorship. The habit runs deep. The national campaign's guidance on reading similarity reports advises that, where a report finds no textual similarity, the text should be checked again in another language, in case it was plagiarised and translated (Siaputra & Santosa, 2024). Good practice, in other words, responds to a clean report by looking harder for borrowed text, not by asking who wrote the text. International guidance reads the same report differently: an unusually low similarity score in a standard assignment may itself indicate a deliberate effort to conceal unoriginal work, and should prompt a look at document properties and referencing rather than closing the question (Crockett, 2022, as reported in Lancaster, 2024).

The same structure has been identified elsewhere in Indonesian higher-education policy. Pradana (2026) shows that the 2026 decree on lecturer promotion requires qualifying articles to be co-authored and verifies only what the byline displays, so that a name earned through substantial work and a name added for compliance are indistinguishable at assessment. In both cases the regime checks a property that can be read from the surface of a document, author count in one case and textual similarity in the other, and does not check the property the rule exists to protect, which is contribution. In both cases a market or a practice forms around the difference.

Two features of the current policy environment risk deepening the paradox. The first is measurement. The Ministry's 2025 decree on key performance indicators offers universities, as an optional governance indicator, the "prevention and handling of academic integrity violations", measured by a single formula: the number of reports of academic integrity violations in one period (Kepmendiktisaintek 358/M/KEP/2025, Annex, indicator 11(c)). The decree states the direction of assessment in terms that leave no room for interpretation:

"Semakin rendah semakin baik, dimana nilai nol (0) dapat mencerminkan kinerja yang baik, sepanjang perguruan tinggi memiliki dan menjalankan mekanisme pencegahan, pelaporan, verifikasi, dan penanganan pelanggaran integritas akademik secara institusional." (Kepmendiktisaintek 358/M/KEP/2025, Annex, indicator 11(c))

"The lower the better, where a value of zero (0) may reflect good performance, provided that the university has and operates institutional mechanisms for the prevention, reporting, verification and handling of academic integrity violations." (authors' translation)

Among the listed criteria is the academic community's compliance with integrity, glossed as "the absence of cases of academic integrity violation" (ibid.). The Ministry's implementation guidance counts only reports received and verified in the national reporting application, Anjani (Kemdiktisaintek, 2025). The proviso about mechanisms is real, but it is satisfied by having a rector's regulation and an integrity board; it does not ask whether those mechanisms find anything. A university that begins to examine the authorship of final assignments, and therefore begins to find purchased theses, will report more

violations and score worse than one that relies on similarity checks and finds none. In a market where the KPK survey places outsourcing of final assignments in 91% of higher-education units, a count of zero is less likely to measure integrity than the absence of looking. The indicator rewards the blind spot this article describes. It also works against the one mechanism of deterrence the evidence supports. Students are deterred by penalties they believe will be applied, which is why university sanctions can deter where criminal law does not (Rigby et al., 2015; Awdry et al., 2022); yet only about 4% of the students in Awdry et al.'s (2022) survey who reported outsourcing had been caught by their institution. The Indonesian figure is similar in kind: 82.2% of student buyers said their lecturer never found out, and 63% knew of no report of contract cheating ever reaching their university (Heriyati et al., 2023). An indicator that scores a falling count of detected violations as improvement asks universities to keep that figure low. The second is normalisation. Geraldine and Niyu (2024) link the difficulty of detecting contract cheating in Indonesia to collectivist and altruistic norms under which helping a peer is a virtue, and the Australian evidence shows a continuum from sharing work with friends to buying it (Bretag et al., 2019). A market that sells "help" and "guidance" occupies the point on that continuum where the line is hardest for students to see, and a regulation that defines the offence by the absence of contribution does not draw the line for them. In Indonesia the continuum runs through friendship: 57.5% of student buyers outsourced to friends rather than anonymous providers, 78.1% said their friends had done the same, and 74% knew that what they were doing was dishonest (Heriyati et al., 2023). Where enforcement is weak, perceived risk is expected to weigh less in students' decisions and norms among peers more (Senali, 2026), which is the configuration these figures describe.

The incentive matters because detection was already structurally weak. Ellis (2024) describes contract cheating as a value chain in which the student and the writer both rely on the last link, the marker, not noticing; and markers in massified higher education, often casual staff paid by the hour, have neither the time to follow a student's work across a programme nor the means to check every source. The failure to detect contract cheating, on this account, is built into the way higher education is organised rather than a lapse by individual teachers. This detection problem is also evident in empirical research: Dawson and Sutherland-Smith (2018) found that experienced markers identified only 62% of purchased assignments in a pilot study, illustrating the limitations of conventional assessment practices in detecting outsourced work. Indonesia's regime adds a further link. Where other systems fail to notice for want of time, an indicator that rewards a low count of violations gives institutions a reason not to notice at all. The same indicator undercuts the national reporting channel the Ministry has built. Whistle-blowing routes for students and staff are among the few means by which contract cheating comes to light (Lancaster, 2024); Indonesia has one in Anjani, and then scores universities on how few verified reports it carries.

This is an inconsistency rather than an oversight. The regulation recognises that authorship can be misrepresented without any text being copied; that is why Article 10(4) exists alongside Article 10(3). Having named the problem, it leaves verification to an instrument built for the other one. The regime asks whether a text is borrowed. The market sells text that is not.

Closing the Blind Spot

Indonesia's integrity regime regulates the wrong variable for the market it faces. It defines authorship violations and verifies textual resemblance, binds buyers and leaves sellers untouched, asks for evidence that the market's chief credibility claim is designed to prevent, and scores universities better the fewer violations they report. Four changes follow from the analysis.

First, contract cheating should be named and defined by relation rather than by resemblance: the submission, as one's own, of assessed work produced in substantial part by another person, whether or not payment is made and whether or not any existing text is copied. The undefined qualifier "without contributing" should be replaced by a standard of substantial authorship that a topic choice or attendance at supervision cannot meet. A workable test already exists in the literature: Draper and Newton (2017) define contract cheating as a third party's contribution to assessed work "such that there is reasonable doubt as to whose work the assessment represents" (as quoted in Newton, 2018). That test asks the question Article 10(4) avoids, which is not whether the buyer did anything but whether the work can still be attributed to the buyer. This is a change the Ministry can make by amending its own regulation, and the transition period for universities to align their internal rules with the 2025 quality-assurance regulation, which runs to September 2027 (Permendiktisaintek 39/2025, Art. 116), offers a natural window.

Second, responsibility should extend to providers. A ministerial regulation cannot reach persons outside the academic community, but a statute can. The revision of the National Education System Act, which the House of Representatives aims to pass in 2027, is the appropriate vehicle for an offence directed at commercial provision and advertising of academic cheating services, modelled on approaches that target suppliers rather than students. The same revision could replace the reference to a *jiplakan* in the current Article 70 with language that reaches outsourced authorship. Platform cooperation through the communications ministry would complement this; the euphemism visible on Shopee suggests that moderation displaces naming before it displaces supply. Platform rules are not self-enforcing: in Spain, contract cheating services continued to buy search advertising despite platform policies that prohibit it (Comas Forgas et al., 2026). The foreign record warrants modest expectations. Provider offences elsewhere have been rarely enforced and have shown little deterrent effect (Awdry et al., 2022; Groves & Nagy, 2026), and a provider offence defined by the word "cheating" will miss a market that sells "guidance". Australia regulates supply, Indonesia regulates demand, and neither, on its own, reaches the euphemistic middle where the transaction is described; that is the argument for pairing any provider offence with the verification of authorship proposed next.

Third, verification should move from product to process. Universities should be required to document the authorship of final assignments through supervision records, staged drafts and an oral examination in which the student accounts for the work, and quality-assurance audits should check that these records exist. The same process artefacts, plans, drafts, version histories and short oral defences, are the measures recommended for reducing outsourcing in the age of generative AI (Senali, 2026), so one reform answers both problems. Verification of process also works on the market's economics. A seller can supply a thesis chapter cheaply only because nobody asks the buyer to account for it; if every final

assignment carries drafts and an oral defence, the purchased text must come with a buyer who can defend it, and work good enough to survive that scrutiny costs far more to produce. Closing the vulnerabilities a business exploits, in Ellis's (2024) terms, raises the price of undetectable work until the business model no longer pays. Similarity checks should be retained for the purpose they serve and should not be reported as evidence of integrity in general. The Ministry should also set a national evidentiary standard for authorship violations, stating the standard of proof and the kinds of evidence that may establish outsourcing, as the Australian regulator has done (TEQSA, 2022). Workable procedures already exist: Alin (2020) proposes comparing a verified sample of a student's writing with the suspected submission and then testing the student, under supervision, on the content of that submission, a sequence that both substantiates a suspicion and protects a student wrongly suspected. A standard of this kind gives lecturers a reason to act and students a guarantee of fair treatment, and it addresses the reluctance that the present silence produces. Verification should be paired with education aimed at the market itself. A short academic-support literacy module, explaining which forms of help are legitimate and which are not, reduced students' trust in contract cheating websites more than their trust in legitimate tutoring or university support (Kreitz & Stoesz, 2025), a finding worth testing in a market that sells itself as tutoring.

Fourth, measurement should reward detection rather than its absence. Indicator 11(c) of the 2025 performance-indicator decree should not score a lower count of reported violations as better performance. If integrity is to be a performance indicator, it should count institutional capacity, such as the share of final assignments with documented process evidence and the proportion of reports investigated and resolved, a measure the decree already lists among its criteria but does not use in its formula.

What is at stake is not the inconvenience of catching students who buy their work, but whether an Indonesian degree continues to certify that its holder did what the transcript says. A regime that can measure similarity to the percentage point but cannot ask who wrote the text has chosen what not to see. The market has already noticed.

Limitations

The data describe the visible supply side at one point in time and are not a measure of market size or of student behaviour. The TikTok sample was built from hashtags, so the share of joki-related videos reflects the searches, and most videos date from 2026, so no trend can be inferred. Keyword coding agreed poorly with manual coding of a 100-video subsample (κ between − 0.04 and 0.23; Table 4), the manual coding was done by a single coder, and the keyword coding admits false positives: 18 joki-related videos (3.1%) from seven accounts advertise video-editing services and entered the corpus through *joki* hashtags. Stated prices are floors, not transaction prices. The Shopee material covers the first results page of two queries, transcribed by hand. The KPK figures count units, not individuals, and the higher-education figures reported in the launch coverage should be checked against the Commission's full report. The legal reading of Article 70 of Law 20/2003 and Articles 272 and 391 of Law 1/2023 is offered as a policy argument and should be tested by criminal-law scholarship. Generative

AI is largely absent from the data: only four joki-related videos (0.7%) mention AI or ChatGPT. This may understate a shift already under way, since generative AI multiplies the risks of contract cheating by opening outsourcing to students who could not previously pay for it (Cotton et al., 2024), and sellers may use such tools without saying so. Tighter AI detection may also push in the opposite direction, toward human-written outsourcing that neither text-matching nor AI detectors are built to find (Senali, 2026). The authorship argument applies with equal force to AI-produced text, which is also new text that a similarity check will pass. Google Trends values are relative indices, not search volumes, cannot be compared across separate retrievals, are rounded to zero for rare terms and may change between retrievals; *jasa skripsi* includes legitimate services, so its decline cannot be read as a decline in outsourcing. Finally, the association between the market's vocabulary and the regulation's terms is descriptive: the data show that the two fit together, not that one caused the other.

Declarations

Author Contribution

HM designed the study, conducted the regulatory and policy analysis, gathered and processed the TikTok, Shopee, and Google Trends datasets, and prepared the figures. KN developed the keyword dictionary, performed the manual validation coding, and synthesized the empirical survey context. HM and KN interpreted the results, drafted the main manuscript text, and contributed to the policy recommendations. Both authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

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Figures

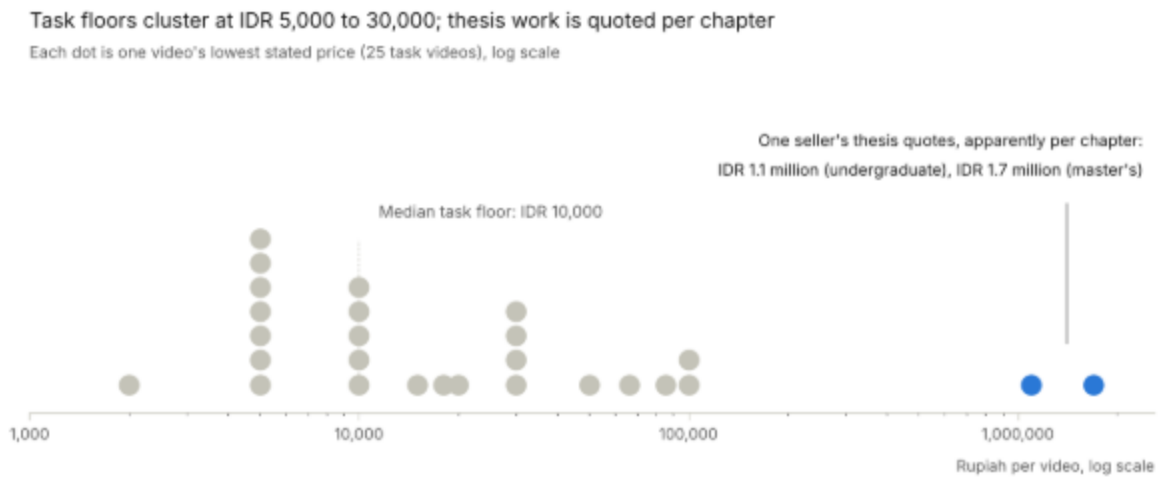
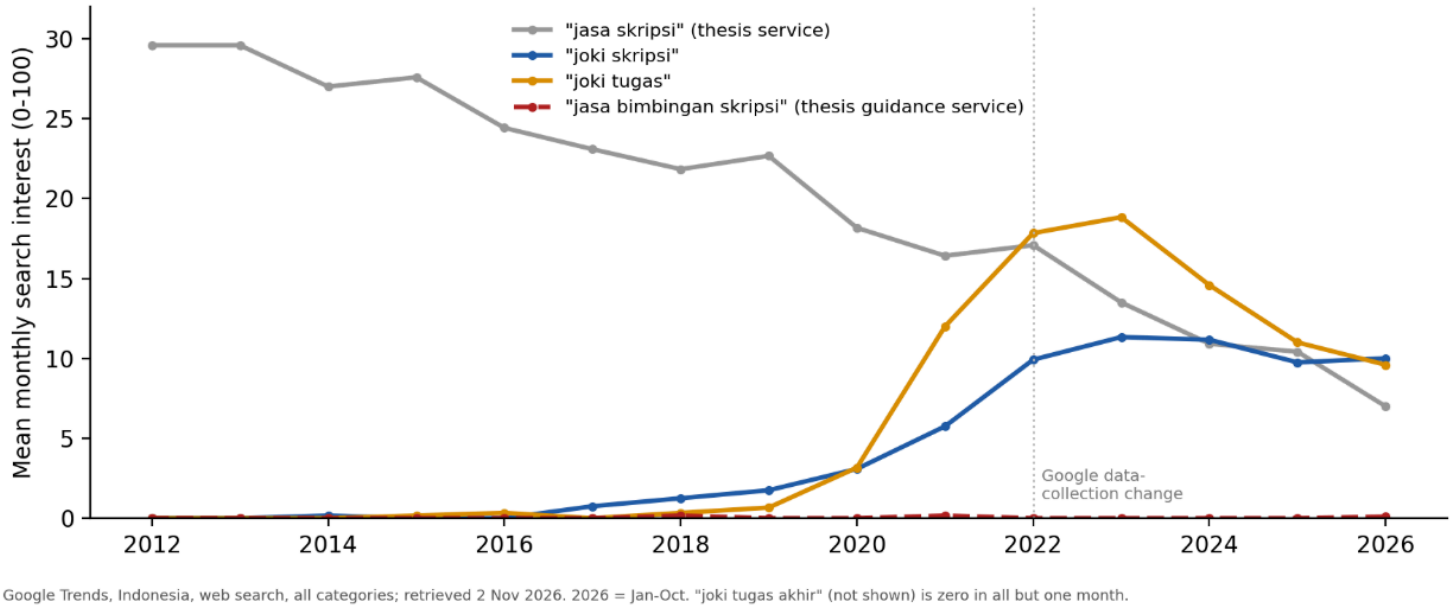


Figure 1

Lowest stated price per video (n = 25) and one seller's thesis quotes (apparently per chapter), in rupiah on a log scale. TikTok, 15 October 2026. Amounts are mostly starting offers; units are rarely stated.



Google Trends, Indonesia, web search, all categories; retrieved 2 Nov 2026. 2026 = Jan-Oct. "joki tugas akhir" (not shown) is zero in all but one month.

Figure 2

Annual mean of monthly Google Trends search interest in Indonesia for four terms, 2012–2026 (2026: January–October). Values are relative to the highest monthly value among the five terms compared (*jasa skripsi*, January 2008 = 100).

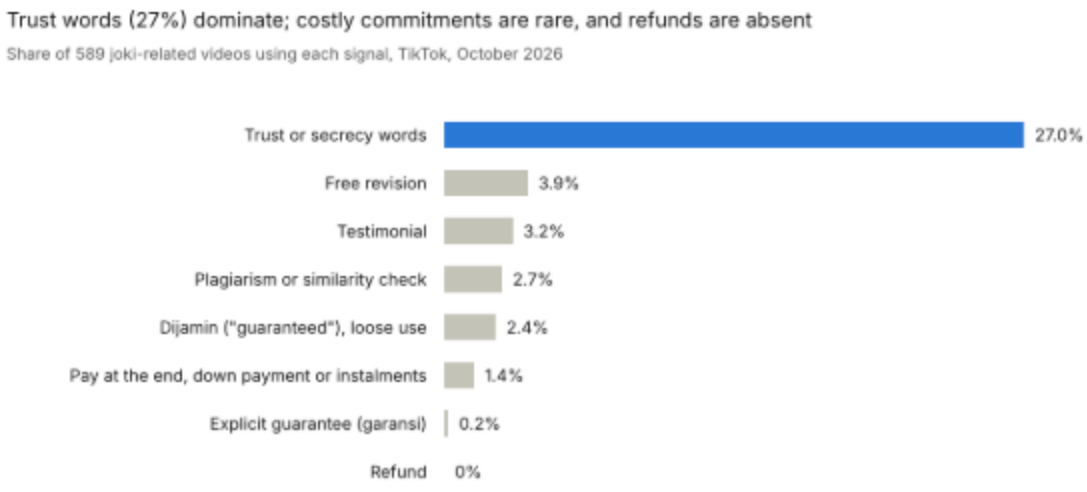


Figure 3

Credibility signals in joki-related TikTok videos (n = 589). Categories overlap. Keyword counts (dictionary in Online Resource 1); agreement with manual coding is reported in Table 4.