

Study: Women structurally underrepresented in management research

November 22 2021

Women are structurally underrepresented in leading management and organization journals, a new study published today in *Research Policy* finds. Nora Lohmeyer(verwijst naar een andere website) of Radboud University and Carolin Auschra and Julia Bartosch of Freie Universität Berlin analyzed a dataset of 43,673 articles in fourteen top journals, and found that even in 2017, the most recent year of their study, on average only 30 percent were written by women. Furthermore, almost all topics within the field are dominated by men in publication, leading to a significant gender gap in publishing.

The number of articles authored by [women](#) is lagging behind the number of women currently working in the [field](#), the authors claim. In the last decades, most leading journals struggled to pass the threshold of 30 percent of female authors and for some journals the percentage of female authors was even lower, barely hitting 20 percent. The low share of women in top journals cannot be explained by an overall low representation of women working in the field, with women making up a little over 40 percent, based on rough numbers.

Male islands

In the paper, the researchers also describe a dominance of "male islands," research topics on which predominantly men publish. In fact, the researchers could only find one topic on which women publish slightly more than men: gender and diversity. There is also a prevalence

of "men's clubs": in 2017 about half the articles were authored by men (either in all male teams or by male single authors), while only 3.4 percent were authored by female single authors and 5.8 percent by all female teams.

Lohmeyer: "Publications are very important for academic careers. Promotions, grants, and benefits are often tied to the number of publications in top journals. If women publish less in these journals, as our study shows, they will have a harder time getting ahead in the field. And it can create vicious circles: researchers need top publications to get grants, but the likelihood for achieving top publications is much higher if you get a grant. Our study suggests that women might get caught in such circles more often than men."

Requirements for future diversity

Furthermore, current publications drive future diversity in the field. "Who publishes in top journals impacts the diversity of topics covered in the field and can limit scholarly plurality. If men and women tend to publish on different topics and women are underrepresented in top journals, these journals might miss out on relevant topics."

"Previous studies have shown that while women tend to publish less, they are not publishing research of lower quality. This suggests that journals need to undertake specific actions to ensure a more diverse range of authors," explains Bartosch. "The first step for these journals is to become aware of the underrepresentation of women. Based on our findings, editors can benchmark the gender-diversity of their [journal](#) against their peers and see how they do compared to others. To increase the number of women in their journals, they could plan special issues around specific themes where women publish more often, to encourage more female authors to come forward. In other fields, such as medicine, it has been suggested to check the proportion of included women during

the review process for invited and commissioned articles. This might be a way forward for our field as well."

Discussion

Auschra: "This is a complicated, multifaceted process which is not easily solved. Our study suggests that despite an overall and steady increase in the number of women, a large part of the underlying structure of management and organization research is still male. Only by analyzing the roots of that structure and addressing the problem at those roots can the field grow and encompass a wider range of research, more accurately reflecting the field at large. We hope that our article triggers a vivid discussion about the representation of women in top journals that engages the whole community."

Provided by Radboud University

Citation: Study: Women structurally underrepresented in management research (2021, November 22) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-11-women-underrepresented.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--