

Ten good practices for gender equality in scientific journals

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Contents

- Introduction
- What can journals' editorial teams do?

Ten good practices



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Introduction

Scientific journals guarantee that the results of research and the major breakthroughs in all knowledge areas are published as articles, regularly, flexibly and relatively quickly, in structured texts of reasonable length, which have also been validated by experts in the content field as part of the peer review process.

Journals are key factors in science, academic careers and scientific communication, and accordingly they play a central role in the important issue of ensuring gender equality in scientific research and its social impact.

This issue, which is a centrepiece of European regulations and legislation, has now reached a point where it is possible to talk about a real institutional commitment to gender equality. However, laws, regulations, protocols for action and recommendations are not enough in themselves – an effort and the desire to act are needed if the goal of equality is to be achieved. Sound science with a gender perspective is positive for society in general, which is why it must be adopted as part of the evaluation of research quality.

What can journals' editorial teams do? Ten good practices

1) Parity on board membership

Ensure that the membership of journals' academic boards and editorial teams consists of 50% men and 50% women. This parity is achieved by adding as many members of the underrepresented sex as are required. The parity figure may be 40%-60% as recognized by many institutions if the composition of the academic community in the journal's subject area means that it is difficult to achieve a 50-50 proportion.

2) Parity on reviewers' teams

Try to achieve the highest levels of parity between male and female reviewers. Although many journals have the well-known problem of finding experts to review the articles they receive, maximum parity levels must be sought (40%-60% is considered sufficient) among this crucial group who are directly involved in maintaining the quality of publications. The percentage of female reviewers of articles in previous years should be reviewed, and consideration given to whether the current year's trend is in the right direction, in order to request people of the underrepresented sex to perform more reviews if necessary. As a transparency measure, and to highlight and acknowledge the work done, the complete lists of experts who have carried out a review should be published in a visible place in the journal at the end of each year (provided that the number of articles published by the journal and its subject matter ensure that the reviewers cannot be identified by the authors), or aggregated data broken down by sex should at least be published.

3) Double blind reviews

Journals should avoid discrimination, biases and preconceptions that may arise when the authors' sex, nationality or other characteristics are known. Reviews in which both the reviewer and author are anonymous, known as double blind reviews, ensure that this is the case.

4) Disaggregated research data

Break down the data on which published research is based by sex and gender whenever possible, since this ensures that the research is rigorous and of high quality. The biological characteristics of individuals (sex) and the social and cultural characteristics of both sexes (gender) must be taken into account whenever these factors are important for the research and it is relevant to mention them.

5) Visibility in the list of references Visibility in the list of references

To be recommended by the journal, and wherever possible, choose bibliographic reference styles that enable authors' full name to be included.

6) Full names of authors

List the full first name of the authors of the studies when publishing articles. This highlights the role of women in the different fields of scientific research. In international journals, the author's sex/gender may not always be apparent from their first name, so other options such as symbols or "she/her" could be used, or photographs and a brief biography could be added.

7) Use inclusive language

Use inclusive language in the journal and do so without breaking the rules of grammar or harming linguistic concision. This is often possible, although it is easier in some languages than in others. Using inclusive language is not primarily a grammatical issue or a mere technical issue, but instead shows a clear intention and attitude regarding equality between men and women and influences social behaviour.

8) Recommend the use of inclusive language

Recommend the use of inclusive language in articles that are published, and, if possible, mention a guide produced by the language service of the publishing university or institution or its equality unit, in order to facilitate the correct use of expressions without discrimination, while maintaining grammatical simplicity. Language is an instrument for people to understand each other, and today it best fulfils this function if it incorporates inclusive language. Changes in language lead to changes in society and therefore have an impact on society.

9) Communication and dissemination

Providing information about all the actions above in the journal's social media and dissemination and communication channels fosters collaboration, transparency and interaction between different parties. Likewise, if the journal announces information or events that go beyond the specific actions carried out by the editorial team, but which are related to gender equality in the academic and research world, as well as in the publication's subject area, this also helps to highlight the journal's interest in this issue and the importance it gives to the subject. One possible initiative for consideration would be the publication of a special issue within the journal's subject area focusing specifically on the topic of gender.

10) Balance in citations

Scientific contributions by women are often underestimated, and they are cited less often than contributions by their male counterparts. Researchers, institutions and journals must endeavour and be encouraged to promote a certain degree of balance in the proportion of articles written by men and women that are cited.

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