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Gender diversity in the field of communication in DACH countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) — a scientometric analysis of the scientific job market, publications, citations, and grants

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Abstract In the DACH (i.e., Germany, Austria, Switzerland) communication associations, women comprise half of the membership and can consequently express their interests in academic research, jobs, and publishing. But how does gender diversity in the DACH countries unfold across the job market, publications, citations, and grants? We present three studies to address this question. In Study 1, we observed the websites of communication departments in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland

Online Appendix: All materials, supplemental tables and figures, and data can be accessed at: https://osf.io/th7x2

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and content-analyzed the job titles of men and women working at $N = 164$ institutions. The data revealed that 43% of DACH professors were female. In Study 2, we ran an automatic content analysis to analyze how many publications in the DACH countries versus other countries were authored by men and women between 2000 and 2022 in 90 communication journals and whether authors from the two genders were cited proportionally. We found that women authored 53% of the articles in the 90 communication journals, whereas only 37% of the articles they authored were cited. In Study 3, we applied desktop research to analyze the diversity of grants that were awarded to DACH communication scholars. Women made up between 35% (German Research Foundation) and 43% (Swiss National Science Foundation) of principal investigators that were awarded funds by national funding organizations. We discuss the impact of current practices and suggest some new measures for increasing gender diversity by addressing issues of transparency, recognition, and inclusivity in communication.

Keywords Gender · Diversity · Equity · Communication research · DACH · Media · Academia · Science · Scientometric analysis

Geschlechterdiversität in der Kommunikationswissenschaft im DACH-Raum (Deutschland, Österreich, Schweiz) – eine scientometrische Analyse des akademischen Arbeitsmarkts sowie von Veröffentlichungen, Zitationen und Drittmitteln

Zusammenfassung In den kommunikationswissenschaftlichen Fachgesellschaften des DACH-Raums (Deutschland, Österreich, Schweiz) sind die Hälfte der Mitglieder Frauen. Aber wie steht es um die Geschlechterdiversität in den DACH-Ländern auf dem akademischen Arbeitsmarkt, bei Veröffentlichungen, Zitationen und Stipendien? Wir präsentieren drei Studien, um diese Forschungsfragen zu beantworten. In Studie 1 analysierten wir anhand der Websites von $N = 164$ kommunikationswissenschaftlichen Institutionen in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz die Berufsbezeichnungen von Männern und Frauen. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass 43 % der Professuren in der DACH-Region von Frauen besetzt sind. In Studie 2 haben wir mit einer automatisierten Inhaltsanalyse untersucht, wie viele Veröffentlichungen in den DACH-Ländern im Vergleich zu anderen Ländern zwischen den Jahren 2000 und 2022 in 90 kommunikationswissenschaftlichen Fachzeitschriften von Männern und Frauen verfasst wurden und ob Autor:innen entsprechend dieses Anteils zitiert wurden. Das Ergebnis ist, dass Frauen 53 % der Artikel in den 90 kommunikationswissenschaftlichen Zeitschriften verfassten, während nur 37 % der von ihnen verfassten Artikel zitiert wurden. In Studie 3 analysierten wir die Vergabe von Drittmitteln an Kommunikationswissenschaftler:innen im DACH-Raum. Der Frauenanteil an von nationalen Förderorganisationen geförderten Forscher:innen lag zwischen 35 % (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) und 43 % (Schweizerischer Nationalfonds). Wir diskutieren die Ergebnisse und schlagen Maßnahmen zur Steigerung der Geschlechterdiversität vor, die Transparenz, Anerkennung und Inklusivität in der Kommunikationswissenschaft betreffen.

Schlüsselwörter Gender · Geschlecht · Diversität · Gleichberechtigung · Kommunikationswissenschaft · DACH · Wissenschaft · Szientometrische Analyse

1 Introduction

The overall goal of science is knowledge building with many aims, such as informing the public and stimulating societal progress. Science is conducted by people who bring their cultures, individual natures, and predispositions into the process of research (Scharkow and Trepte 2023). Here, gender plays an extraordinarily critical role. Men and women work differently, ask different questions, consequently tackle different research topics and arrive at different results when it comes to the most important questions in communication research. The diversity of scholars in a field influences the quality, breadth and depth of inquiry in that field and determines which individuals feel that they are included in academic spaces (Hofstra et al. 2020; Potthoff and Zimmermann 2017). It is important to understand the diversity that exists in the field of communication to be able to understand the impact of this field on society.

Gender disparities are very often rooted in structural determinants, such as access to childcare, flexibility in one's teaching load, and the scheduling of meetings (Howe-Walsh and Turnbull 2016; Rennane et al. 2022; Staniscuaski et al. 2020). Hence, it is important to describe gender diversity at the country and regional levels. Previous research has demonstrated that gender diversity in authorships vastly differs across continents and regions, with the DACH region (i.e., Germany, Austria, Switzerland) and Europe lagging behind the US (Trepte and Loths 2020). Although the DACH countries differ in terms of size, academic cultures, and gender norms, their academic cultures often share more commonalities with each other than with countries such as the United States or regions such as the Global South. In addition, the DACH countries share the German language, and there is considerable mobility between their academic systems. Consequently, in this contribution, we systematically document the current state of gender diversity in the field of communication in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland with three studies. First, we present data on the DACH communication job market in Study 1. We then refer to publications and citations as the most important factors that influence academic impact in Study 2. Finally, in Study 3, we present desktop-researched data on grants as another factor that represents scientific impact and is closely linked to success in the academic job market, publications, and citations. But first, we present previous research and theoretical accounts of how gender diversity has been addressed. We begin with the question of why gender is considered a relevant categorizing variable in communication research.

2 Gender as a category in academia and communication

Gender has become a relevant category in academic policy making because data on the job market, citations, publications, and awards have unequivocally demonstrated

that women still have a lower chance of active and rewarding participation (Braun et al. 2023; Trepte and Loths 2020; Wang et al. 2021). They leave academia at lower levels of the career ladder and are not part of the most elite circles (Freelon et al. 2023; Spoon et al. 2023). Individuals who do not identify as male have fewer career prospects than those who identify as male—in academia in general as well as in communication studies (Poggio 2018; Riesmeyer and Huber 2012).

Gender is not something that categorizes scholars, but it designs and structures academia in the sense that gendered structures are "permeating academic institutions" (Bender et al. 2022, p. 48). Gendered structures of academic institutions are based on socially shared gender definitions (Ang and Hermes 1994) and are constructed by "doing gender" (West and Zimmermann 1987). Most members of academia and society at large contribute to these processes, for example, by inviting men and women to speak at different kinds of events, by appointing men for different positions than women, and by expecting different types of unseen work from their female and male graduate students (Falk and Hagsten 2022). Even though the deconstruction of gender is always part of gendering, the symbolic system of binary gender still functions as a leading principle (Butler 2006; Hagemann-White 1984). These gendered structures have been identified as promoting differences in at least six subfields (Poggio 2018): (a) men's and women's analytic abilities, (b) macrostructural factors, (c) cultural determination in socialization and identity construction, (d) the construction of ideal scholars as independent workers without any (family) obligations, (e) organizational practices that reinforce gender and power dynamics, and (f) the neoliberal organization of universities. The reproduction of gender inequality can thereby be traced back to individual and organizational structures. The structuring principles set forth by Poggio (2018) are evident in policy-making across universities and scientific associations. There, the questions of why gender separates topical interests (and seemingly qualifications), identity, and self-worth with regard to certain jobs and positions, even the organization of labor and care in academic households, have been subjected to analysis and debate. Particularly, intersectionality fosters inequality, as other categories come into play, such as age, family, or career status (Crenshaw 1989). It seems that our discipline, which was previously labeled a "gendered organization" (Prommer et al. 2006) in the early 2000s, has not fundamentally changed since then. As an extension of research traditions inspired by the "Gleichheitsansatz" (Klaus 2005), which understands gender parity as the main goal of equality measures, it is important to look at the field of communication from a current perspective. However, in the German context, there is no continuous evaluation of gender ratios. Before we contribute to answering this question with our own original data, we review previous research on how gender diversity is distributed in our field and also how standards of gender diversity can and should be defined.

3 Gender diversity in the field of communication in the DACH region

The primary question that must be addressed in research and policy-making initiatives pertaining to gender diversity in communication is not whether this is a crucial

issue, but rather, what the overarching objective should be. It might be assumed that the diversity of our field is a policy goal that all communication scholars in DACH would agree upon. However, the question of how much diversity is sufficient often arises during the course of our own research, as evidenced by numerous discussions on social media and in the discussion sections of scientometric publications. Trepte and Loths (2020) asked "How much diversity is 'just right', and when will we be 'there'?" (p. 295). Hence, beyond the question of the *diversity of our field*, it is also necessary to address *field diversity*. The diversity of our field refers to the status quo in the population of men and women in a certain area of academia (e.g., journal authors), whereas field diversity also considers the potential population of people aspiring to be recognized as a part of this area (e.g., graduate students or members of scientific associations).

We define gender diversity as the proportions of people in the variety of gender subcategories, i.e. male, female, and nonbinary in a certain predefined area (Trepte and Loths 2020). This area may refer to the elite group of professors in the field of communication, one communication journal, the abundance of all communication journals, or the group of academics who have successfully been awarded a research grant.

Field diversity, then, "refers to the baseline population that is not necessarily represented in a certain outlet, such as a conference or a journal, but strives for participation" (Scharkow and Trepte 2023, p. 3). Field diversity is much harder to define because it does not rely on predefined areas or outlets but tries to define a potential population that wants to gain access to the abovementioned areas. How can we determine who wants to be part of the academic field of communication research? We suggest observing easy-to-access and difficult-to-access fields. Whereas the professorship, publications, and citations in major journals as well as grants and prizes are usually defined as the hardest-to-reach goals, the enrolment in undergraduate studies, membership in scientific associations, and attendance at conferences are easier to reach. Hence, diversity will always have to be defined against the backdrop of expectations and aspirations. In this respect, it will also be important to increase transparency regarding the gender diversity of submissions to conferences and journals, not only of published contributions. A more advanced understanding of field diversity requires examining scholars' intention to contribute, rather than focusing solely on successful publications or presentations. While such data are available to conference organizers, program planners and journal editors, they are not yet publicly available. In the discussion section we will argue for greater transparency in the throughout the entire process of academic publishing.

To understand gender diversity as a contextual measure of the three studies presented in this article, we analyzed *gender field diversity* with respect to scientific associations, which are important stakeholders in academia. They host conferences, publish academic journals, give out awards to outstanding academics (e.g., Theory Award, Best Paper Awards, Dissertation Award), and are the political voice of the field in their respective countries.

The memberships of the scientific associations in communication in DACH countries are approximately gender-balanced. In 2024, in the German National Communication Association (DGPuK) 54% of its 1367 members were women. In 2024, for

the Austrian Association (ÖGK), it was 51% of 109 members, and for the Swiss Association (SCKM), it was 50% of 264 members.[1] Notably, female membership in the German DGPuK increased significantly from 28% in 2003 to 54% in 2024; see Table A1 in the Online Appendix[2]; (Klaus 2003). This change shows how far gender diversity in communication has come since the founding of the DGPuK in 1963 when there was one female member on the team of founders, and women comprised 6% of the membership (Klaus 2003).

By choosing to participate in a scientific association, women express that they are and want to be a part of communication research in DACH countries. This trend is also reflected at the international level of the ICA, where female members comprise over 60% of the members and conference participants in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (see Figure A1, Online Appendix). Now that we have defined the field diversity by the number of members in communication associations at the 50% level, we present previous research on gender diversity in our three areas of inquiry: jobs, journals, and grants.

4 Gender diversity in the job market in DACH communication

The first evaluation of gender imbalances was conducted in 1991 when Fröhlich and Holtz-Bacha (1993b) surveyed all researchers and lecturers at German institutes as well as individuals in degree programs studying communication, public communication, and journalism studies. They sent out 207 questionnaires and received 153 responses (Fröhlich and Holtz-Bacha 1993b). For the year 1991, Fröhlich and Holtz-Bacha (Fröhlich and Holtz-Bacha 1993a) reported that women comprised 50% of the students at the basic level in our field. However, at the top level, where only five out of 51 professors (roughly 10%) were women, the proportion looked very different (see Table A2, Online Appendix).

A decade later, in 2002, Meyen (2004) reported that 16% of professors were women (see Table A3, Online Appendix) by examining personnel entries (e.g., start of work, tenure info, obituaries) in the German academic communication journal *Publizistik* and the websites of communication and journalism departments. Meyen (2004) summarized the situation in 2002 as follows: "If you want to become a professor for communication or journalism, you should be male" (p. 201) and emphasized that certain institutional contexts might also be beneficial.

Later, for the year 2019, Prommer and Riesmeyer (2020) reported on a total of 192 professors/chairs, of which 120 were men (62.5%) and 72 were women (37.5%). The proportion of female professors in the lowest paid category (W1 professorships) was 54%, there were no women in the highest paid categories (C4 professorships,

[1] For DGPuK (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Publizistik und Kommunikationswissenschaft, Germany) we used data from study 1, for ÖGK (Österreichische Gesellschaft für Kommunikationswissenschaft, Austria) and SGKM (Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Kommunikations- und Medienwissenschaft, Switzerland) data are based on the authors' personal communication with the association leaderships.

[2] All tables and figures indicated with an "A" are stored as part of the Online Appendix A at https://osf.io/th7x2

the highest salary group that was used for new professors until the beginning of the 2000s), and there were 38% at the second highest level (W3 professorships). The authors also reported differences between the federal states in terms of the proportion of female professors (Figure A2, Online Appendix).

At that time, the situation in Austria was even worse: Dorer (2002) surveyed the proportion of women from 1997 to 2000. The number of female professors was quite simple: It was zero. In 2001, Ingrid Paus-Haase was appointed as the first Austrian female professor in our field. Furthermore, in 1999/2000, women comprised 20% (4 m, 1f) of senior lecturers and researchers, 41% (10 m, 7f) of research assistants, and 63% (3 m, 5f) of guest and honorary professors. Dorer (2002) summarized that even at the beginning of the 21st century, the proportion of female students was not reflected by the composition of its faculty.

Such varying gender proportions along the lines of hierarchies can also be observed within the scientific associations. Surprisingly, considering the low percentage of female members at the time (Klaus 2003), the DGPuK announced their first female president in 1968. However, since then, only four female DGPuK presidents (i.e., Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (1968–1970), Romy Fröhlich (2002–2006), Ulrike Röttger (2008–2010), Daniela Schlütz (since 2024)) in comparison to 21 male presidents have held this position. In contrast, the Austrian communication association has elected female presidents in 42% of elections since its establishment in 1976. Four men and four women can call themselves former or current president of the ÖGK, however in terms of years of presidency, the ÖGK has had male presidents for 32 years and female presidents for 16 years. Interestingly, while the first female professor was tenured in Austria in 2001, the ÖGK elected their first female president in 1997 (Landespolizeidirektion Salzburg 2024). Even at the international level at the ICA, only male scholars have held the president position between 1949 and 1985. Since then, we counted 16 female and 24 male ICA presidents.

Previous research has also focused on the particularly challenging situation of young scientists. Wirth et al. (2005, 2008) identified that women comprised 53% of pre docs in 2005 and 39% of post docs in 2008. In an online survey ($N = 281$), Prommer et al. (2006) asked PhD candidates from all communication and media studies departments in DACH countries about their paths to academia. The authors described the gender distribution with a pyramid: A broad base of 64% female students, 51% female PhDs, and 13% female professors.

In sum, women are overrepresented as students in the communication field, and women and men are still equally represented as members of communication associations, but these proportions do not translate into academic jobs. Women more often have the lower paid and short-term jobs of adjunct professors or guest lecturers without an appointment (Dorer 2002; Fröhlich and Holtz-Bacha 1993b; Meyen 2004). Previous data have shown clear evidence of what has been termed "a leaky pipeline" (Pell 1996) in the progression of women's careers. However, previous research has also demonstrated improvements in gender diversity in all positions. As it seems important to obtain a more current picture that is based on nuanced observational data and takes into account the abundance of communication departments in the DACH region, we asked:

RQ1 What is the distribution of men and women across different job positions in communication institutes across the DACH region?

5 Publications and citations in communication

Publications provide an avenue for the most important goals of science: to share and discuss empirical results. Publishing is at the core of knowledge production. In scientometrics, publications are employed as a metric to operationalize the impacts of a person, journal, or field. Publications are of course also measures that are used in the job market, for example, in tenure decisions (Gärtner et al. 2023; Pruschak and Hopp 2022).

The journal *Medien- und Kommunikationswissenschaft* reported that in 2021 and 2022, 36% of male-authored, 18% of female-authored, and 67% of mixed-gender-authored manuscripts were accepted, resulting in publication rates of 30% male-authored, 11% female-authored, and 59% mixed-authored manuscripts (Bleicher et al. 2023).

In the journal *Publizistik*, one can see an increase in the proportion of female authors over time, from 8% female authors in 1996 to 52% female authors in 2022 (Beck et al. 2023). Interestingly, in 2023, the proportion of female authors in *Publizistik* was only approximately one third (Domahidi et al. 2024), which can be attributed to the special issue "Data, archives, and tools: Introducing new publication formats on infrastructures and resources for communication and media research" that made up 10 of the 21 articles published in Publizistik in 2023. In this special issue, only 6 of 35 authors (17%) were women (see Online Appendix "Publizistik Special Issue").

For the journal *SComS*, 27% of the publications between 2017 and 2022 were single-author papers by women, and 15% of the publications had all-female author teams (Fürst et al. 2023). By contrast, 19% of the publications were single-author papers by men, and 8% of the publications had all-male author teams.

In an analysis of authorship in six international journals in communication, Trepte and Loths (2020) found that, between 2006 and 2016, 39% of German authors who published in these journals were women.

Now, one could argue that the publication gap is based on gendered publishing practices; for instance, with women publishing more books and chapters and men authoring more empirical journal articles. According to Potthoff and Kopp's (2013) analysis, only six of the 41 most cited texts in media reception were written by women. And three of the 24 seminal works (selection based on most cited texts) in journalism studies identified by Loosen and Scholl (2023) were authored by women (see Online Appendix "Key Works Authors"). Furthermore, we counted edited books and monographs and found that the German book series "Studienbücher zur Kommunikations- und Medienwissenschaft," published by Springer, had 40 (66%) male and 21 (34%) female authors during the time between its first publication and 2024. And, the first book that aimed to provide an introduction to the field of communication with a woman as the first editor was released in November 2024 (Röttger et al.

2024). Overall, we found that women comprised 17% of editors of introductory books to communication (see Table A4, Online Appendix).

In international scientometric studies that did not specify the authors' national affiliation any further, the proportions of female authors were usually significantly higher. For example, in an analysis of $N = 2238$ research articles in three major journalism journals (*Digital Journalism, Journalism Practice*, and *Journalism Studies*) from 2000 to 2020, Schatto-Eckrodt and Quandt (2023) found that, in 2019, there was a surplus of female unique authors.

Similar to career paths, gender diversity of authors varies with journal status. Women are being published less in higher ranked journals and are represented more in lower ranked journals. Freelon et al. (2023) analyzed $N = 1675$ communication scholars publishing in at least one of 11 high impact factor communication journals between 2000 and 2019. They found that 74% of the first authors and 69% of the second or later authors in these journals were male.

We can summarize that overall, female authors from the DACH region have been significantly underrepresented as authors. It is hard to obtain a clear picture of gender diversity across journals because the available data are scattered across a wide variety of outlets with different publication years and have thereby become moving targets. As we aim to contribute a more comprehensive perspective on the gender diversity of publishing in the DACH region, we asked:

RQ2a How did the proportions of publications by male and female DACH versus non-DACH authors develop between 2000 and 2022 in 90 international communication journals?

A publication achieves its worth only if it is read and referred to. Citations are one of the most important academic currencies (EU Directorate General for Research and Innovation 2021; Roberge 2024). The number of times a paper is cited is used as an indicator of its quality and relevance (Gärtner et al. 2023; Potthoff and Kopp 2013).

In previous work on gender diversity, it has often been demonstrated that publications do not translate proportionally into citations (Knobloch-Westerwick et al. 2013; Mayer et al. 2018; Potthoff and Zimmermann 2017; Wang et al. 2021). Knobloch-Westerwick and colleagues (Knobloch-Westerwick and Glynn 2013; Knobloch-Westerwick et al. 2013) named this effect the "Matilda Effect" to indicate that successes are more easily attributed to men than women. Previous research for DACH journals has found a significant gender-citation gap. For two German journals, *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft* and *Publizistik,* Potthoff and Zimmermann (2017) found that male-led papers cited more male-led research (86%) than female-led papers did (77%). They claimed that this discrepancy in citation practices contributes to the fragmentation of communication research along gender lines.

Again, communication research is an international discipline, so we took another look at international research to contextualize gendered citation practices. Wang et al. (2021) analyzed the first and last authors of citations in $N = 4704$ articles from 14 communication journals between 2009 and 2018. They found that in articles by male first and last authors, male-led papers were overcited by 14%, and female-led

papers were undercited by 20% (first and last author female) or 13% (first author female). Over- and undercitation were measured by comparing the proportions of male/female-led articles published between 1998 and 2018 and the proportion of male/female-led articles cited during that time frame. The only author group that overcited female-led research (by 12%) and neither over- nor undercited male-led research was author teams with female first and last authors. Analogously, Schatto-Eckrodt and Quandt (2023) showed that, of the articles with high citation rates, 68% were authored by men and only 32% by women.

Previous research on gender citation gaps has demonstrated a severe undercitation of women and that the citation gap seems to be closing more slowly than the publication gap. To explore this issue more systematically for authors who are affiliated with the DACH region, we asked:

RQ2b How did the proportions of citations of articles by male and female authors in DACH versus non-DACH countries develop between 2000 and 2022 in 90 international communication journals?

RQ2c What were the differences in how gender publication and citation gaps by DACH versus non-DACH authors closed between 2000 and 2022 in 90 international communication journals?

6 Research grants in DACH communication

Third-party funding is of utmost importance for universities, particularly because the continuous funds given to universities by federal and state governments make up only approximately 50% of university funds (Dohmen 2023). In 2022, German universities received €9.3 billion in third-party funding (Statistisches Bundesamt 2024). Next to the federal ministry of education and research, the German Research Foundation (DFG) is the second biggest source of third-party funding with €3.1 billion in funds distributed in 2022 (Statistisches Bundesamt 2024).

In their funding initiative for particularly risk-laden projects ("Experiment!"), the Volkswagen Foundation tested how a randomized selection of proposals improved the diversity of the funding recipients. In a first step all proposals were reviewed. The particularly outstanding proposals were directly approved and of those with positive reviews, a certain number was randomly selected. The rate of successful proposals by women rose from 17% (review based selection) to 25% (randomized selection). A later evaluation comparing both selection processes showed no difference in the number of publications and inventions as outcomes of these particular projects (Röbbecke and Simon 2023). Several other funding institutions such as the Swiss National Science Foundation have also run trials of partially randomized selection processes. That said, we do not know about other previous studies on the differential rewarding of grants to men and women in the DACH region. To address this gap, we analyzed the landscape of prizes and awards because, as grants, these are also based on non-anonymous reviews of the quality of academic work. Thus, we refer to prizes and awards as indicators of how grants are distributed among men

and women. As previously outlined, women are represented to a lesser degree at higher levels of the job hierarchy and in top-tier journals. Analogously, prizes and awards in the German national association DGPuK and the Austrian national association ÖGK are still dominated by men. The DGPuK Theory Award was awarded to women for the first time in 2023 after it was awarded to men four times in a row after being established in 2015. The Best Paper Award in DGPuK journals has gone to 40 male and 24 female first authors since 2004, with no clear increase in the proportion of women over time (see Table A5, Online Appendix).

In the DGPuK, only 41% of Dissertation Awards went to female scholars (which we will later compare with our results from Study 1 on the proportion of PhD students in our field). This finding stands in stark contrast to the award for the Best Student Led Submission at the annual DGPuK conference, as more women ($n = 35$) than men ($n = 28$) have received this award since 2004.

Thus, the German association DGPuK has clearly favored awarding men in the history of its awards and prizes. The situation seems better in Switzerland and Austria: The Best Paper Award in the Swiss journal SComS went to three female and four male first authors, although it went to male first authors in the first three years (2018–2020). The Ulrich Saxer Foundation Best Presentation Award at the SGKM conference has been awarded to five women and one man since it was established in 2018. The number of female dissertation awardees is also much higher in the SGKM where it has been given to seven women and two men since being established in 2018.

In sum, women tend to get more awards in early career stages; however, they are underrepresented in prestigious awards, such as the DGPuK Theory Award. This underrepresentation of women as awardees is in line with awards in the international context. For example, 71% of the recipients of the ICA Aubrey-Fisher Mentorship Awards were male scholars, although the association comprises 60% female members and contributors (cf. Table A6, Online Appendix; Braun et al. 2023).

In the light of these results, it seems justified to ask for a more nuanced picture of how grants are awarded in the DACH region, so we asked:

RQ3 Out of the research grants awarded by the German Research Foundation, the Austrian Science Fund, and the Swiss National Science Foundation in communication, what proportions have been awarded to men and women?

7 Study 1: the gender diversity of the academic job market

7.1 Method

7.1.1 Procedure and sample

To obtain an overview of the DACH job market, we searched the official websites of scholars working at communication institutions. First, we coded every communication scholar working at a university in Germany, Austria, or Switzerland in December 2023. The selection of institutions was based on the list of institutions

on the DGPuK website (for details, see the Online Appendix "Institutions"). In addition, we included scholars who were members of DGPuK in 2023 and working in Germany, Austria, or Switzerland in December 2023 (see the Online Appendix "Coding Instructions"). Thus, scholars at universities of applied sciences and at research institutes were also included in our analysis. For an overview how included institutions are distributed across the DACH region see Fig. 1. However, the Austrian and Swiss associations (ÖKG, SGKM) do not provide membership information. In addition to different levels of information, the smaller sample of Austrian and Swiss scholars and differences in job hierarchies renders a direct comparison across DACH countries difficult. Thus, we begin with an overview of the German job market and add comparisons with Austria and Switzerland at the end where reasonable.

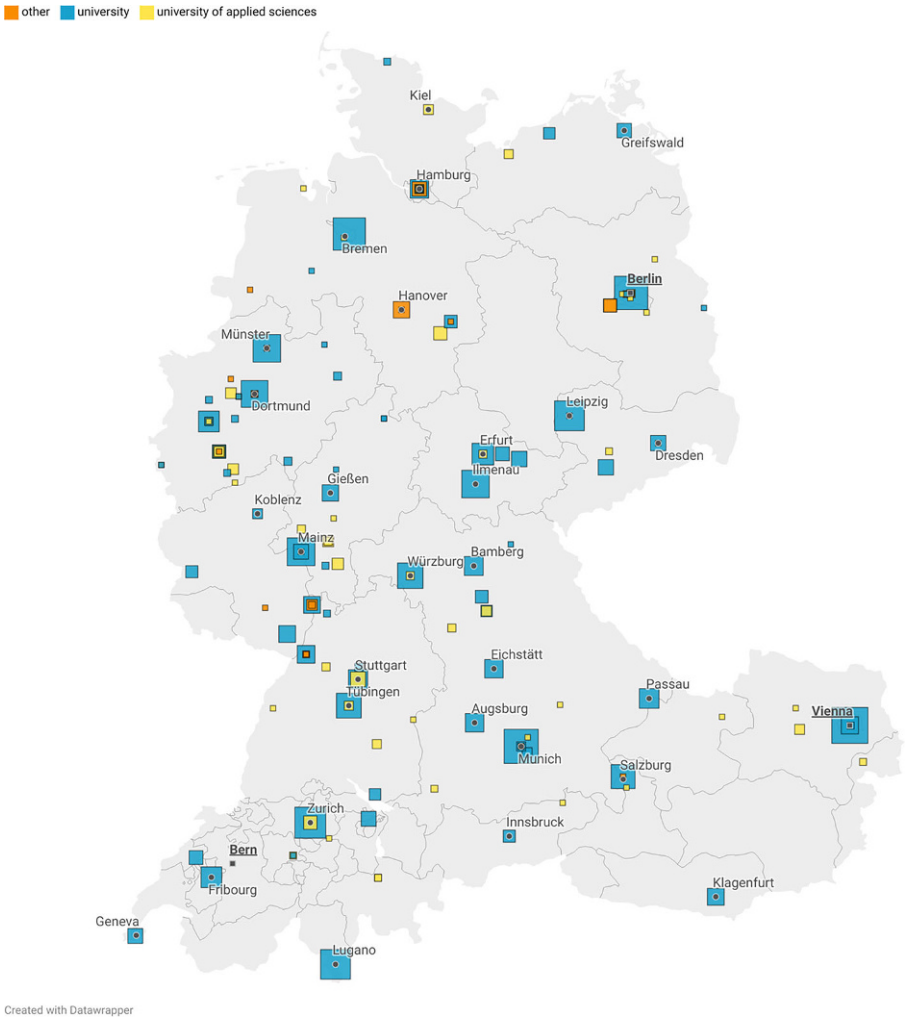

Fig. 1 Institutions in the field of communication in the DACH region. Note: The size of the square indicates the number of faculty members

For Germany, our data set included $N = 1239$ scholars affiliated with $N = 138$ institutions. Of the 1239 scholars, $n = 1011$ were working at German universities, $n = 155$ at universities of applied sciences,[3] $n = 38$ at research institutes, and $n = 29$ at universities of arts ("Künstlerische Hochschulen"). The overall ratio in our data set was 54% female and 46% male scholars, and one person was coded as nonbinary.

For communication scholars working in Austria, our data set included $N = 183$ scholars from $N = 13$ different institutions, dominated by University of Vienna with $n = 89$ scholars. The overall ratio in our data set was 66% female and 34% male scholars with no scholar coded as nonbinary.

For communication scholars working in Switzerland, our data set included $N = 206$ scholars from $N = 13$ different institutions, with University of Zürich and University of Lugano as the biggest ones. The overall ratio in our data set was 60% female and 40% male scholars, again, no scholar was coded as nonbinary, and for one person we were not able to determine the gender.

To code a person's gender, we used given names and photos on the websites, and, when applicable, their gendered job descriptions. This procedure has inherent disadvantages, as it merely reproduces the binary system, but to date, no alternative method has been established in a standardized framework (Kinnebrock et al. 2012).

7.2 Measures

For a complete picture of the academic job market in German communication, we coded every person's academic job title. For a better overview of this section, we differentiate between eight different job categories: Professors, Assistant Professors, Honorary Professors, Assistants with habilitation, Senior Researchers, Post Docs, Lecturers, PhD Students/Research Assistants, and Others [in German: Professuren,

Table 1 Positions in communication at German tertiary education institutions in 2023 by gender

			Women		Men
	N_{Total}	n	%	n	%
Professors	351	150	43	201	57
Assistant Professors [Juniorprofessuren]	21	8	38	13	62
Honorary Professors	32	3	9	29	91
Senior Researchers and Lecturers [Privat-dozenturen]	16	7	44	9	56
Senior Researcher ((Ober-)Rät:innen)	43	24	56	19	44
Post Docs	248	129	52	119	48
Lecturers [Lehrkräfte für bes. Aufgaben]	14	7	50	7	50
PhD Students	508[a]	341	67	166	33
Others	5	2	40	3	60
Total	1238	671	54	566	46

[a] Including one person who identified as nonbinary

[3] In Germany, these are called Fachhochschulen (FH) and Hochschulen für angewandte Wissenschaften (HAW).

Juniorprofessuren, Honorarprofessuren, Privatdozenturen, Akademische Räte, Post-Docs/promovierte wissenschaftliche Mitarbeitende, Lehrkräfte für besondere Aufgaben, PraeDocs/Doktoranden, and Others] (for details, see the Appendix "Equivalent Positions" in the Online Appendix).[4] "Others" included only five individuals, for example, rare functions, such as academic lecturer [Studienrat im Hochschuldienst] or academic director [akademischer Direktor]. Our German data set included: 351 Professors, 21 Assistant professors [Juniorprofessor:innen], 32 Honorary Professors [Honorarprofessor:innen], 16 Senior Researchers and Lecturers [Privatdozenten], 43 Senior Researchers [akademische Räte], 248 Post Docs, 14 Lecturers [Lehrkräfte für besondere Aufgaben], 508 PhD Students, and five others. Table 1 shows the gender distributions in the data set by position.

7.3 Results

With RQ1, we asked about the distribution of men and women across different job positions in communication institutes. Our data demonstrate that the ratio of female and male scholars varies markedly between academic job levels. The χ^2 test using a Monte Carlo simulation demonstrated a significant difference with $\chi^2 = 84.689$, $p = 0.020$, Cramer's $V = 0.18$; and $\chi^2 = 83.252$, $p < 0.001$, Cramer's $V = 0.26$ with gender as a binary measure. At the level of German professors (not including Assistant Professors and Honorary Professors), in 2023, the ratio was 43% female and 57% male ($N = 351$). This breakdown represents an increase in the proportion of women compared with Prommer and Riesmeyer (2020) recent study, which reported that 37% of professors were women. However, our data showed that, among assistant professors ($n = 21$), the proportion of women was only 38%, and among honorary professors ($n = 32$), it was only 9% in 2023. The ratio at lower levels of the academic job ladder showed the leaky pipeline to the top: At the level of academic researchers without a PhD ($n = 508$), 67% were identified as female, whereas at the level of Post Docs ($n = 248$) and senior researchers (akademische (Ober-)Räte) ($n = 43$), which are often nonpermanent positions, the proportions were 52 and 56%, respectively. Lecturer positions [Lehrkräfte für besondere Aufgaben] were occupied by female scholars at a rate of 50% ($n = 14$) and senior researcher and lecturer positions [Privatdozent:innen] at a rate of 44% ($n = 16$).

We also compared Germany's federal states (see Table A7, Online Appendix) with a χ^2 test using a Monte Carlo simulation demonstrating that the differences between states remained statistically nonsignificant with $\chi^2 = 21.932$, $p = 0.555$, Cramer's $V = 0.09$; and $\chi^2 = 17.105$, $p = 0.234$, Cramer's $V = 0.12$ with gender as a binary variable. In the states employing over 100 communication scholars, the overall proportion of female communication scholars ranged from 50 to 59% (North Rhine-Westphalia: 50%, Baden-Württemberg: 51%, Bavaria: 57%, Thuringia: 59%). Analyzing professorships only, in federal states with more than 20 professorships, the proportion of female professors varied greatly around the general mean of 43% (Rhineland-

[4] In addition to the job categories there are invisible differences in salaries called for example W2, W3 or C4 Professors, which also vary between federal states. Because these salary groups are only public when jobs are advertised, but not on websites, we did not include them in our analysis.

Palatinate: 26%, Baden-Württemberg: 34%, Bavaria: 36%, North Rhine-Westphalia: 44%, Berlin: 62%).

Similar to the proportions of academic jobs occupied by women, the proportions of female scholars also varied across institutions. However, these proportions remained nonsignificant in an adjacent χ^2 test. We specifically analyzed institutions with at least 40 scholars ($n = 10$). LMU Munich, TU Ilmenau, and University of Münster had the highest ratios of female scholars (between 60 and 62%). A group of four institutions showed near gender parity: University of Tübingen, University of Bremen, University of Würzburg, and TU Dortmund (55 to 58%). University of Mainz and FU Berlin both had proportions of 51%, and University of Leipzig had only 39% female scholars. Regional differences might be explained by the different levels of intervention success (e.g., the RLP Program of Equal Chances in Research and Science) to increase gender diversity (e.g., professorships, to which only women can apply).

However, again, these data unfolded differently when we took into account the hierarchy of professorships at these particular universities. What is especially interesting is that larger proportions of female professors were found at smaller institutions. Among the eight institutions with 10 or more professorships (this time including Assistant Professors), only FU Berlin (46%) and University of Münster (58%) had above-average proportions of female professors (see Table 2).

Our data replicated results from previous studies as outlined in the "Gender Diversity of the Academic Job Market" section. Female scholars dropped out at

Table 2 Proportions of female professors (including Assistant Professors) at German institutions with more than five professors

		Women		Men	
	N_{Total}	*n*	%	*n*	%
University of Bamberg	6	0	0	6	100
University of Leipzig	12	3	25	9	75
University of Mainz	14	4	29	10	71
FH Darmstadt	7	2	29	5	71
Macromedia	10	3	30	7	70
LMU Munich	12	4	33	8	67
University of Bremen	9	3	33	6	67
University of Erfurt	6	2	33	4	67
TU Ilmenau	6	2	33	4	67
University of Würzburg	6	2	33	4	67
Hochschule der Medien	13	5	38	8	62
TU Dortmund	10	4	40	6	60
FU Berlin	13	6	46	7	54
University of Tübingen	6	3	50	3	50
Hochschule Medien, Kommunikation, Wirtschaft Köln	7	4	57	3	43
TH Köln	7	4	57	3	43
University of Münster	12	7	58	5	42
University of Hamburg	6	4	67	2	33

Table 3 Faculty in communication at Austrian tertiary education institutions in 2023 by gender and position

		Women		Men	
	N_{Total}	*n*	%	*n*	%
Professors	47	21	45	26	55
Assistant Professors	1	1	100	0	0
Senior Researchers and Lecturers	3	3	100	0	0
Lecturers	6	6	100	0	0
Post Docs	45	29	64	16	36
PhD Students	78	57	73	21	27
Others	2	2	100	0	0
Total	182	119	65	63	35

For Austria, Associate Professors and Assoziierte/r Professor/in were included in Professors

several points along the path to full professorships. The first leak occurred at the transition from predoctoral to postdoctoral positions, and later leaks occurred at each subsequent step on the career ladder. However, the gender gap in professorships is currently closing more quickly than it was in the decade after 2010 (Prommer and Riesmeyer 2020).

In comparison with Austria and Switzerland, Germany was found to have the lowest ratio of female communication scholars: Germany: 54%, Austria: 66%, Switzerland: 60%.

Analyzing academic ranks, the ratio of professors was 43% female and 57% male in Germany ($N = 351$), 45% female and 55% male in Austria ($N = 47$) and 52% female and 48% male in Switzerland ($N = 46$). Assistant professors did not play a relevant role in either country (Austria: one female assistant professor, Switzerland: two female and one male assistant professor). Differences between male and female scholars in academic job positions were significant for Austria (χ^2 test using a Monte Carlo simulation: $\chi^2 = 17.31$, $p = 0.004$, Cramer's $V = 0.31$), but not for Switzerland (χ^2 test using a Monte Carlo simulation: $\chi^2 = 4.68$, $p = 0.477$, Cramer's $V = 0.15$). Overall, in Austria and Switzerland, higher academic positions were more gender-balanced than in Germany (see Tables 3 and 4). It is striking that all academic levels below professorships in Austria were found to be dominated by female scholars.

Table 4 Faculty in communication at Swiss tertiary education institutions in 2023 by gender and position

		Women		Men	
	N_{Total}	*n*	%	*n*	%
Professors	46	24	52	22	48
Assistant Professors	3	2	67	1	33
Lecturers	7	3	43	4	57
Post Docs	43	28	65	15	35
PhD Students	90	59	66	31	34
Others	11	5	45	6	55
Total	200	121	61	79	40

For Switzerland, Oberassistent was included in Post Doc and Diplomassistent was included in PhD Students

8 Study 2: gender diversity in publications and citations

8.1 Method

8.1.1 Procedure, sample, and analysis

The database comprised $N = 60{,}470$ unique scientific articles from 90 journals that were classified as communication science journals by the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) and published between 2000 and 2022. The data used here was part of a larger project from which the DACH data were analyzed for this article, and other results were published elsewhere (Jansen et al. 2025). Of the 90 journals under investigation, 85 were international journals, and five were German-language journals (i.e., *Medien- und Kommunikationswissenschaft, Publizistik, SCM, SComS*, and *Medienjournal*). We accessed the articles via the Scite API (2023). Scite includes articles with a digital object identifier (DOI). Because DOIs were introduced in 2000, we focused our analysis on all online articles with a DOI from 2000 onwards to ensure a comprehensive data set.

After identifying missing data for citations and publications in specific journal volumes, we conducted a reliability analysis to assess the coverage of the automatic data collection methods via Scite and OpenAlex. A subsample of 99 articles was manually coded and compared with our data set. This subsample included three German-language and nine randomly selected international journals from the years 2000, 2010, and 2020, with three randomly chosen articles per year, yielding a reliability of Krippendorff's $\alpha = 0.86$.

Afterwards, we manually coded missing data for three additional journals. After addressing the gaps, duplicates were removed on the basis of title and author information. Articles with invalid formats—such as comments, bibliographies, book reviews, biographies, and those in non-Latin scripts—were excluded. We also verified the validity of DOIs, publication years, journal names, and country codes. To estimate the proportions of female authors per published and cited works, we split the author list per article, such that each author per article was considered as a separate case. This means, for instance, that in the case of a unique article with a three-member author team, three cases were generated in the dataset after the split. To ensure accurate automatic gender assignment, authors whose first names were represented by initials were excluded.

Authors' genders were automatically inferred from their first names using the Gender API service (2023), applied to 45,369 unique name-gender combinations. Of these, 7490 names (6.2% of all unique names at that stage) could not be classified and were excluded. After assigning the gender for each author, we calculated the proportions of female authors for each article. The accuracy and misclassification rates of the Gender API were validated in a previous study based on a manually coded subsample ($n = 300$; see Braun et al. 2023), showing high overall accuracy but slightly imbalanced misclassification rates (0.10 for women, 0.02 for men). This suggests that women were more likely to be misclassified than men. To correct for this bias in aggregate estimates, we applied matrix back-calculation (Bachl and

Scharkow 2017), which adjusts proportions based on estimated misclassification rates.

This process resulted in a final data set of $N = 60{,}470$ unique published articles authored by $N = 57{,}551$ unique individuals (52.4% female, 47.6% male) affiliated with institutions in 140 countries.[5] These published articles referred to $N = 511{,}824$ unique works as citations, which in turn were authored by $N = 437{,}433$ individuals (38.6% female, 61.4% male) from $N = 176$ countries. To address our second research question (RQ2), we computed linear regression models by including interaction terms (Year × DACH) for citations, publications, and the delta variables (measuring the difference between the proportions of authors in publications and citations).

8.2 Results

With RQ2, we asked how the proportions of publications (2a) and citations (2b) by male and female DACH versus non-DACH authors developed between 2000 and 2022, as well as what the differences were in how these gaps closed over time (2c). The proportion of publications (2a) by female authors showed a significant increase over time ($B = 0.0043$, $SE = 0.0011$), $t(42) = 4.14$, $p < 0.001$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.906$, and a significant interaction with DACH authorship ($B = 0.0106$, $SE = 0.0015$), $t(42) = 7.14$, $p < 0.001$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.906$, indicating a greater increase in publications over time for female DACH authors. For citations (2b), the proportion of female authors showed a significant increase over time ($B = 0.0043$, $SE = 0.0007$), $t(42) = 5.89$, $p < 0.001$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.8509$, but did not show a significant interaction with DACH authorship ($B = 0.0017$, SE = 0.0010), $t(42) = 1.62$, $p = 0.112$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.8509$. The delta analysis (2c) for female authors showed a significant interaction with DACH authorship ($B = –0.0089$, $SE = 0.0016$), $t(42) = –5.46$, $p < 0.001$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.6558$, indicating that the gap between published and cited articles increased more for female DACH authors than for female non-DACH authors.

Figure 2 illustrates the trends in the proportions of female DACH versus non-DACH authors, highlighting publications (a), citations (b), and the gap between these two metrics (c). In the year 2000, 21.6% of all publications by DACH authors were authored by women, compared with 47.6% of all publications by non-DACH authors. The proportions of publications with female authors increased significantly by 2022, such that the current proportions were 54.3% for publications by female DACH authors and 57.1% for publications by female non-DACH authors.

By contrast, the proportion of cited female authors remained at a significantly lower level, with 22.7% of DACH authors and 33.2% of non-DACH authors cited in 2000. By 2022, this proportion increased to 35.9% for DACH authors and 42.7% for international authors.

The gap between published and cited studies for female non-DACH authors remained relatively constant at (minus) 14 percentage points. In the DACH region, however, this gap widened substantially: In 2000, the delta value for published and cited studies was at zero indicating that women were cited according to their

[5] As approximately 30% of the data lacked affiliations, it was not possible to assign country codes to 5012 of the 142,946 unique authors of cited articles.

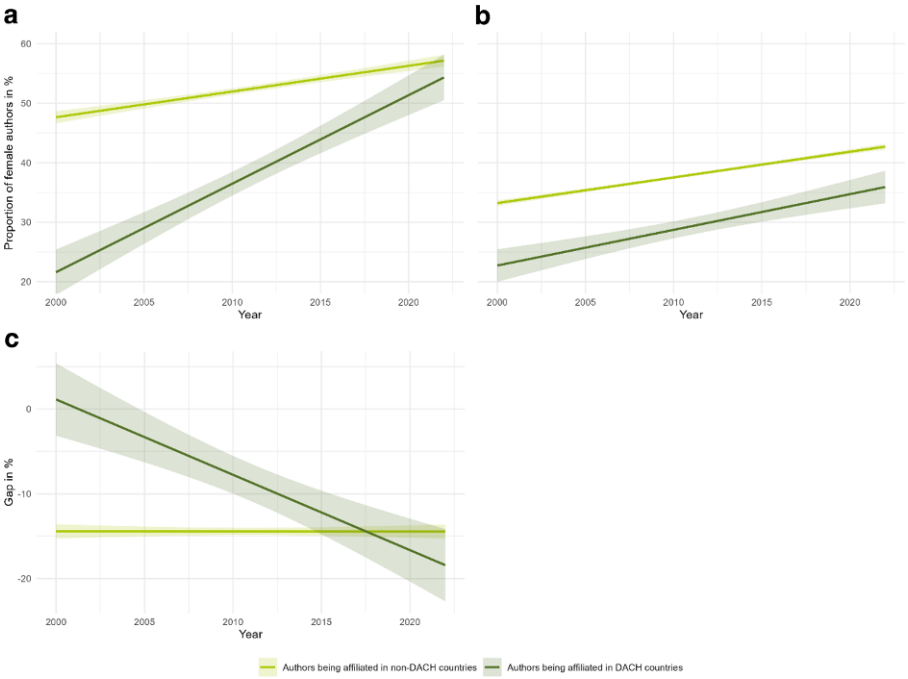

Fig. 2 Proportions of female authors in publications (**a**) and citations (**b**) by DACH versus non-DACH countries. Note. Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals around the regression lines

publication output, whereas by 2022, the gap had grown to (minus) 19 percentage points.

Overall, across all years and regions, women were cited 12 percentage points less than would be expected based on their publication productivity. These findings underscore a persistent and widening disparity, highlighting a paradox of increasing scholarly productivity among women in communication science coupled with a decreasing valuation of their contributions.

9 Study 3: gender diversity for grants in communication research

9.1 Method

9.1.1 Procedure and sample

To determine the gender proportion for grants (i.e., third party funding), we analyzed the gender diversity of principal investigators of all grants that had been awarded to communication scholars by the national funding agencies of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. For Germany, we analyzed the German Research Foundation DFG grants from the first grant that was approved in 1993 to grants starting in 2023. We systematically searched the DFG online publications (https://gepris.dfg.de/) for

grants in the discipline of "Communication Sciences" in the research area "Social Sciences". For Austria, we analyzed grants by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), through searching the Research Radar systematically for funded projects in "Media and Communication Sciences" that started from 1995 to 2023. Finally, for Switzerland, we analyzed grants by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). We systematically searched their Grant Search for funded projects in "Communication Sciences" from the first grant that was approved in 1988 to October 2024.

We coded all grants by the gender of the principal investigators and the type of funding. Gender was coded manually using names, pronouns, and information from the principal investigators' university websites. For each grant in Germany, we then calculated the proportions of female and male principal investigators and the mean of the gender proportions across funded projects. The FWF in Austria lists only one principal investigator per grant and the SNSF in Switzerland lists only one responsible applicant per grant.

9.2 Results

With RQ3, we asked how men and women proportionally received research grants from national research foundations. In the following we report the results for the funding organizations for fundamental research in the three DACH countries.

9.2.1 Funding by the German Research Foundation DFG

Overall, of the 376 principal investigators of DFG-funded projects, 132 (35%) were women and 244 (65%) were men. Of the 376 projects 166 were led by a single, male PI and 98 were led by a single female PI. In 2009 and 2023, there were more female than male principal investigators, with eight and 15 female principal investigators leading seven and 14 projects, respectively. Figure 5 shows a trend toward more female principal investigators over time. The number of grants that were approved has increased from one in 1993 and in 1994 to a maximum of 22 grants in 2021. However, the number of grants that have been approved and the proportions of male and female principal investigators have been rather volatile.

There is a significant gender gap in principal investigators of DFG-funded grants, and the momentum of the closing of the gap has long lagged behind the job market. Comparing the proportion of 38% female professors in 2019 with the 17% female principal investigators in the same year and 36% female principal investigators in the following year demonstrates this phenomenon. In recent years, the momentum has increased with 47% (2021), 45% (2022), and 75% (2023) female principal investigators (see Fig. 3).

Interestingly, the grants calling for submissions of early career scholars (Walter Benjamin Program, Research Fellowships, Emmy Noether Program, and Heisenberg Program) have gone to more female than male scholars: Seven of these grants have gone to female scholars and five have gone to male scholars since 2002. The programs that fund the large-scale research projects of established scholars (Centers for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, Research Units, Collaborative Research Centers) have also been awarded to more female (63%)

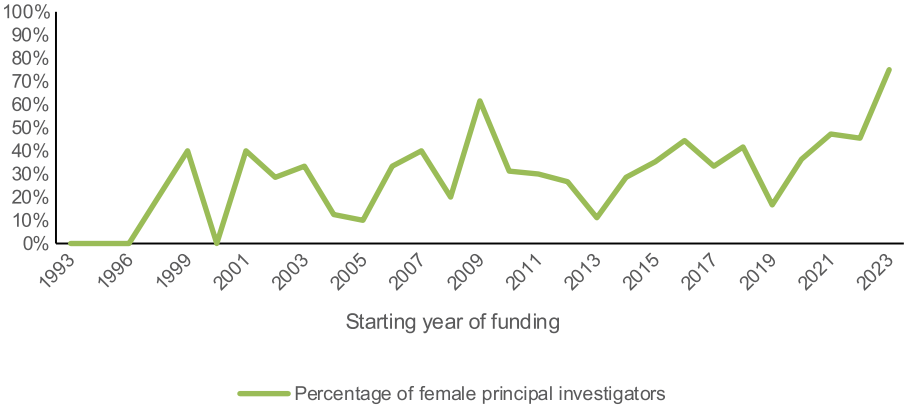

Fig. 3 Percentage of female principal investigators being funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) in communication research

than male (37%) principal investigators. This surprising gender gap can primarily be accounted for by the seven such grants that were awarded to female principal investigators in 2023. Before 2023, the proportion of male principal investigators (54%) was slightly higher than that of female principal investigators (46%) in these programs. Of those scholars with four or more projects that were funded by the DFG overall, there were two women and four men.

9.2.2 Funding by the Austrian Science Fund FWF

Of the 288 grants funded by the Austrian Science Fund in communication and media studies, 110 (38%) had female and 178 (62%) male principal investigators. Figure 4 shows a slight trend toward more female principal investigators over time. The number of grants that were approved by the Austrian Science Fund was rather

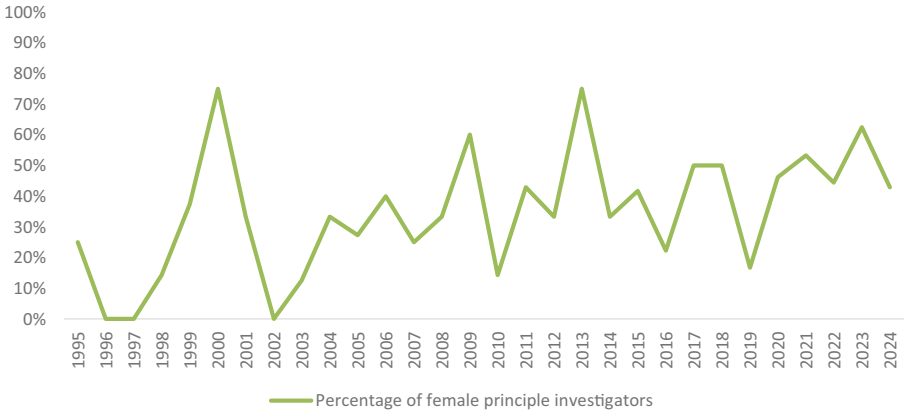

Fig. 4 Percentage of female principal investigators being funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) in communication research

volatile, ranging from four in 1995 to 18 in 2022 and seven in 2024. There is a clear peak in the number of approved grants in the years impacted most by the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2023).

In terms of funding programs for early career researchers (i.e., Charlotte Bühler, Elise Richter, Erwin Schrödinger, Hertha Firnberg, and Lise Meitner Funding), of the 37 grants that funded early career researchers, 30 (81%) went to female and 7 (19%) went to male early career researchers. Crucially, three of these were funding programs specifically for female researchers (Hertha Firnberg, Charlotte Bühler, and Elise Richter), which explains the high proportion of female principal investigators. There were no approved grants specifically for established scholars in communication. The gender gap in researchers with a high number of funded projects is particularly large in Austria with only one (11%) female and 8 (89%) male researchers having received four or more grants. Similarly, of the four grants exceeding a funding sum of €500,000, only one had a female principal investigator.

9.2.3 Funding by the Swiss National Science Foundation SNSF

Of the 406 grants funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation in communication and media studies, 174 (43%) had female and 232 (57%) male responsible applicants. Figure 5 shows a trend toward more female responsible applicants in particular since 2000. Notably, the number of grants that were approved increased from two projects in 1988 to 23 in 2024 with more than ten grants being approved every year since 2005 and a maximum of 26 approved grants in 2014.

There are several specific funding programs for early career scholars (i.e., Doc.CH, Doc.Mobility, Fellowships for prospective researchers, Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowships, Early Postdoc.Mobility, Postdoc.Mobility, Advanced Postdoc.Mobility, Ambizione). Of the 104 grants that funded early career researchers, 67 (64%) went to female and 37 (36%) went to male early career researchers, with the earliest funding being awarded in 1988. The one SNSF professorship in communication went to a male researcher. Importantly, the eight fellowships for advanced researchers, which aim at leading researchers in their respective field, all went to

Fig. 5 Percentage of female principal investigators being funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) in communication research

male researchers. Similarly to results in the German Research Foundation, of the researchers with four or more funded projects, six (32%) were female and 13 were (68%) male.

10 Summary

The data we presented in three studies demonstrate a disconnect between women's contributions to the field of communication and their recognition. Our analysis of the proportion of women in the most important areas of academia—job market, publications, citations, and grants—is helpful to identify exactly where problems have emerged. The large numbers of female PhD students in communication studies (i.e., 67% in Germany, see Study 1), consistent parity of female and male members of scientific associations in DACH countries, and the surplus of female authors in publications since 2018 is not reflected in the number of citations, grants, or awards in our field. This lack of recognition translates into a lack of academic currency (Gardner 2023): less tenure and fewer professorships for women in communication. However, we also see positive trends, such as the relatively recent closing of the publication gap and more awards for young female scholars (except for the DGPuK Dissertation Award), and the increase in female professors has gained momentum since 2019.

11 Discussion and policy recommendations

Equal representation and recognition of people of all genders should be the aim in every part of academia—including conferences, scientific associations, publications, citations, awards, and grants—across all career stages. Measures such as a consequent promotion of gender diversity in tenure and training or mentoring programs targeting female academics seem to pay off in terms of the number of women choosing communication. We argue that the next steps in promoting gender diversity should be to tackle recognition rather than representation, while keeping in mind that women do make up at least half of communication scholars. Women's contributions to the field should be acknowledged in terms of citations, awards, and in the job market. In other words, a person's academic output should translate to their academic capital and epistemic authority regardless of their gender.

The areas that we would consider the most important playing fields in academia must contribute equally to changing this under-recognition of women. We next consider the ways in which scientific associations, those recruiting faculty, and all academics who are collaboratively engaged in journal publishing (e.g., reviewers, board members, editors) can and do contribute to the process.

Scientific associations actively use their political weight to shape an inclusive and diverse culture in communication through mentoring programs, publications (Klaus 2003; Prommer et al. 2006; Prommer and Riesmeyer 2020), and the reporting of gender diversity in their journals (Beck et al. 2023; Bleicher et al. 2023; Domahidi et al. 2024; Fürst et al. 2023) and at their conferences. The DGPuK along with

their Swiss and Austrian counterparts jointly support the task force on publication diversity and visibility in DACH communication, which is aimed at increasing gender diversity in communication in the DACH region. This task force promotes the visibility of the issue of gender diversity and suggests gender diversity measures to the associations. The DGPuK also offers a mentoring program for women: the Gertrude J. Robinson Mentoring program.

Similarly at the international level, the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) committee of the ICA aims to improve the inclusiveness and diversity of communication via an ethics code, conference and submission guidelines, scholarships for underrepresented groups, guidelines for journal editors and editorial board members, and a fund dedicated to diversity and inclusion (ICA IDEA Standing Committee 2022).

While the associations are well on their way to encouraging gender diversity, there remains a lot to be done so that one day such committees will become obsolete. However, in order to get there, scientific associations need to democratize trainings that focus on building the skills needed to succeed in communication science, support all caregivers so they can attend conferences, and include their leaders in making the field an inclusive space where people of all genders and backgrounds can participate and their work is recognized (Dobbin and Kalev 2022; Kalev and Dobbin 2024).

Interventions to increase the proportion of female leaders are often aimed at changing individuals (Dobbin and Kalev 2013). Young female scholars are offered specific programs that aim to help them advance their careers by applying for scholarships, mentoring programs, and taking part in skill-based trainings aimed specifically at women. However, as pointed out in Sect. 2 (“Gender as a Category”), gendered practices are more often structural and systemic. Hence, also structural and systemic change is needed to achieve gender diversity in the job market (Ahn et al. 2021; Dobbin and Kalev 2022; Kalev and Dobbin 2024). Such measures can increase the resilience of academic institutions and increase the attractiveness of academia as a workplace (Ahn et al. 2021). One successful example of a systemic change that was introduced at the state level is the “Cascade Model” in North Rhine-Westphalia. North Rhine-Westphalia currently aims to achieve a quota of 74% women in newly tenured professors and has increased the proportion of female professors from 33% in 2014 when the measure was introduced to 44% female professors (Netzwerk Frauen- and Geschlechterforschung NRW. 2024). The model works as follows: Every three years, universities determine the gender ratios of those who qualify for a professorship in a subject area. Universities are then bound to achieve the same level of gender ratios in professorships for as long as there are fewer female than male professors (Netzwerk Frauen- and Geschlechterforschung NRW. 2024). With this idea of cascading, the pyramid (Prommer et al. 2006) or leaky pipeline (Pell 1996), which has been referred to in earlier research, is actively taken into account to introduce change.

As is true for many individuals in academia, women in communication struggle with the lack of stability and the precarity of academic work (Bahr 2022; Bozzon et al. 2019; Engesser and Magin 2014; Mauer 2024). There is thus a need for more plannability in academic careers (Löther 2022; Rohn 2011). Additionally, the strong focus on agentic traits and on the brilliance of individuals as the factors that

cause their success in the academic system should give way to a more inclusive work culture that recognizes that research is teamwork and that being a successful academic requires a diversity of traits (Hannak et al. 2023; van Veelen and Derks 2022). Doctoral supervisors play a key role in young scholars' perceived fit in academia and their mental and physical health (Nicholls et al. 2022).

In the following, we primarily refer to means and measures that are led by institutions (see Fig. 6 for an overview). According to the principles of structural mechanisms, penetrating gendered disadvantages referred to in the "Gender as a Structuring Category" section, we highlight transparency, recognition, and inclusive working environments and how these may be supported by the most important institutions surrounding communication scholars (i.e., universities, academic associations, and journals). We would like to stress that of course it is not the institutions that are the agents in this process, but the people who populate these institutions. Journals, universities, and associations are not ends in themselves but are to be understood as 'houses' that do not accomplish the work that is associated with diversity goals but rather provide a roof for the many people who are engaged in the hard work of accomplishing this goal.

The first goal in reaching gender diversity is **transparency**. Transparency is a necessary step toward improving diversity in academia (Denissen 2024; Dupree and Boykin 2021; Zurn et al. 2020). The importance of regular monitoring of diversity was recently shown in studies that found at least gender parity or even a surplus of female authors in international and national communication outlets, a trend that we did not see in earlier work (Trepte and Loths 2020). The annual publication of data on the gender diversity of both, the submitting and published authors in editorials is therefore a very important step that should be continued. Data on special issues, contributing authors, and special issue editors would be a helpful addition for examining the effect that special issues may have on gender diversity, as submissions to special issues may be more strongly influenced by personal networks than general submissions are.

General measures for increasing the transparency of the research publication process are also helpful in establishing gender diversity. With the continuing gender gap in the higher ranks of education, author contribution statements are one way of highlighting the work and skills that authors from all academic ranks have added to publication teams. In journal boards, gender parity has to be established through active recruitment efforts by the editors and publishers.

Regularly assessing progress toward the goal of gender equality in communication and maintaining transparency in reporting results to the (scientific) public are critical steps in holding institutions accountable. We need to publicize data on gender diversity across the field of communication, at universities, in scientific associations, in journals, in publications, and in science communication. In addition to data on the representation of women, conducting anonymous surveys, where privacy concerns make anonymity necessary, can provide valuable insights into the experiences of communication scholars, their perceptions of gender equality, and their career trajectories (Howe-Walsh and Turnbull 2016; ICA IDEA Standing Committee 2022). We need transparent procedures and quantifiable criteria to combat a potential bias in reviews for conferences, publications, awards, and grants.

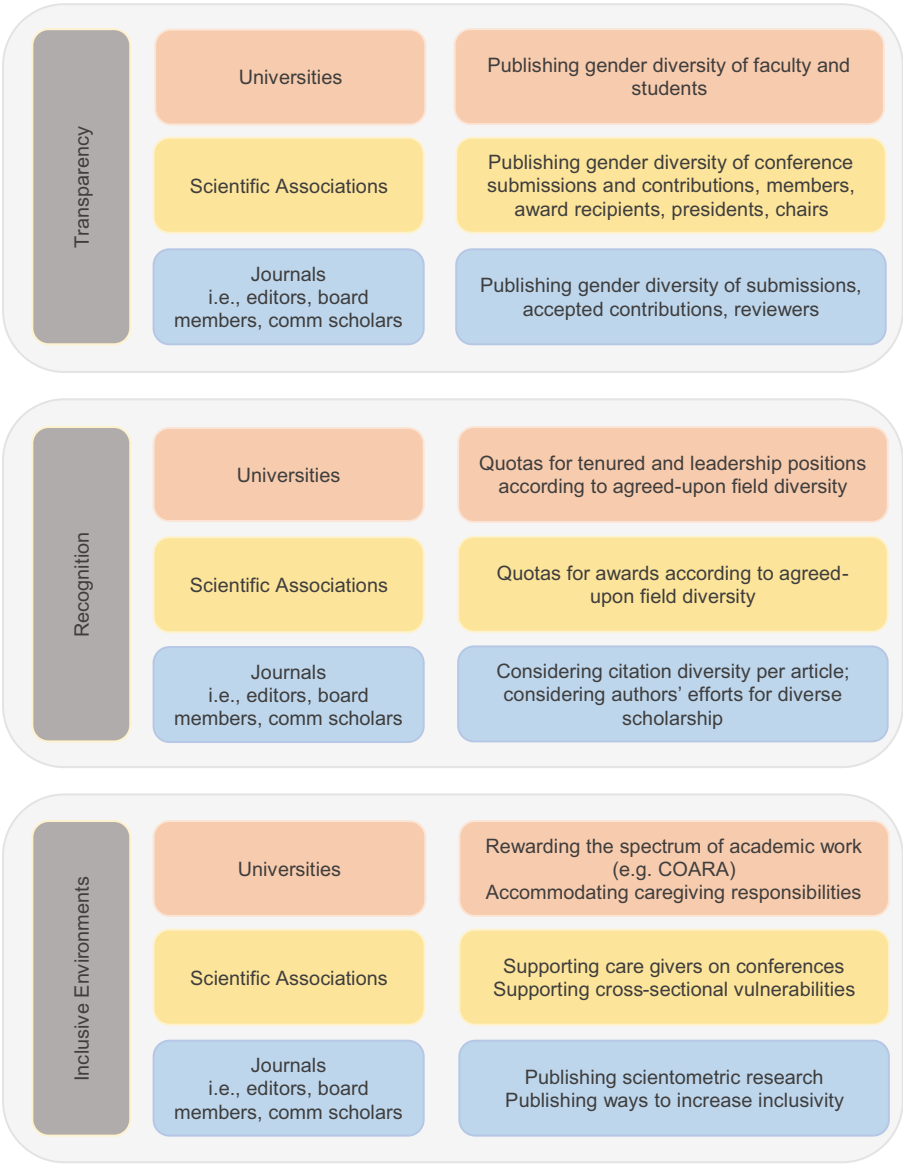

Fig. 6 Proposed means and measures for supporting gender diversity in communication

Additionally, we need to spread awareness of the contributions made by female communication scholars through panels and awards designed to specifically highlight female scholarship but also by making sure that awards and tenure procedures take the entire communication community into account, potentially by establishing quotas based on agreement about the field diversity.

One instrument for achieving more awareness of a potential gender bias in one's citations are tools that automatically assess the gender diversity across the papers

cited in a manuscript. The Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience has implemented a "Gender Citation Balance tool" in their submission process and reports that the tool reduced gender citation bias in publications by mixed gender and female-only author teams after one year of voluntary use (Postle and Fulvio 2021). Specifically for communication, the easy to use web application *diversity-x.de* (Trepte et al. 2024) accesses 45,000 name-country combinations that were gender-coded in previous scientometric analyses of publications and conference contributions in communication. The tool's output shows the distribution of authors' gender and countries of affiliation for all references that include a digital object identifier (DOI). The proportion of cited female authors should then always be interpreted with the knowledge that over 50% of authors in scholarly communication articles are female and that an unequal representation of authors in citations may indicate that the paper is missing important previous findings. Tools for assessing gender diversity in citations can be used as a voluntary self-check, but they may prove most useful when they are integrated into the submission process of journal submissions and in reviewer guidelines. This would also demonstrate a commitment to gender diversity on an institutional level.

The second goal that builds on transparency is **recognition** of the wide variety of work. Research institutions, legislators, and scientific associations should join transnational and transdisciplinary efforts to establish new measures for recognizing academic performance (Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment 2022; Declaration on Research Assessment [DORA] 2012; Gärtner et al. 2023). Such new measures for the recognition of scholars' academic work usually include publications, citations, and grants. We propose that emphasis should also be placed on the recognition of teaching, leadership behavior (e.g., mentoring and supervision of early career scholars and students, administration of research projects), the participation in academic self-governance (e.g., committees and working groups in universities and scientific associations), and societal influence (e.g., science communication, contributions to policies; Gärtner et al. 2023). Further, all scholars benefit from access to peer support networks and mentorship and a clearly defined perspective on career progression (Nicholls et al. 2022). The proposed changes in legislation, culture, and transparency are aimed at making communication an attractive field of work for people of all genders (Dobbin and Kalev 2022; Kalev and Dobbin 2024).

Furthermore, **inclusive environments** are needed, where gender no longer plays a role in who succeeds in communication. In order to tackle the leaky pipeline, we need a change in research practices and academic culture, which is sometimes perceived as a rather hostile environment (Biggs et al. 2018; Hannak et al. 2023; van Veelen and Derks 2022). Counteracting this perception may be effective in sealing some leaks in the pipeline. Scientific associations and educational institutions shoulder a large responsibility, as they can build on previous efforts to publish guidelines for teaching (Ebenfeld 2017) and include diversity in guidelines for good research practice (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft 2022). Success in this endeavor will require the active engagement not only of female communication scholars, but of scholars of all genders working together (Gardner 2018). We call on all communication scholars to take action to reflect on their gender biases, especially in roles as authors, editors, program managers, and tenure committee members and to implement the measures necessary to address existing inequalities.

A lot remains to be done in the field of gender diversity in communication and in wider academia (Claeys-Kulik et al. 2019). The measures we propose concern transparency, the recognition of female scholarship, and systemic changes. Figure 6 summarizes our call for action. We call all institutions in communication and all individual communication scholars to join us to make communication a field where people of all genders and all social groups contribute and where their contributions are recognized as such.

12 Limitations and future research

Our research is limited in several respects. First, it primarily reflects a binary conceptualization of gender and does not adequately account for intersectional perspectives. Individuals who do not identify as men or women were scarcely represented in our sample, which risks reinforcing binary assumptions about gender in research. Beyond examining the structuring role of gender, future studies should also incorporate additional dimensions of diversity—such as age, family status, or migration background. Adopting a cross-sectional perspective and systematically comparing two or more categories of diversity will be essential for assessing the relative significance of gender as a category with greater precision (Gardner 2023).

In Study 1, we could not conduct a satisfactory and complete comparison of the job hierarchies across Austria, Switzerland, and Germany, as they were structurally different. Thus, the comparison remained problematic. Furthermore, scholars at universities of applied sciences might be underrepresented in our study because we could include only those who were members of the German association DGPuK.

In Study 2, we compared the large market of English-language journals with a very small proportion of German-language journals. Also, we referred to a large population of international scholars and compared them with the smaller population of DACH scholars. The different sizes of the subsamples cause a different logic in their distributions with larger samples producing narrower confidence intervals and smaller error estimates. Further, this comparison involves comparing apples with oranges because the international field is of course not a homogenous one. In addition, although the data set was extensive, it was not exhaustive. We faced data losses due to issues such as limited accessibility, missing data, and technical challenges in name encoding. Moreover, around 6.2% of author names could not be processed by the gender inference tool—for example, due to initials, rare or transliterated names, culturally ambiguous names used across gender contexts, or inconsistent formatting. While these excluded cases represent a minority, they may systematically underrepresent scholars from non-Western or multilingual backgrounds, and thus slightly bias the observed gender distributions.

Last, in our Study 3, funding agencies did not provide information on the amount of funding attributed to each project, another important academic currency. Additionally, our picture was limited with regard to data on funding agencies that provide funding for applied research.

13 Conclusion

In order to attract and retain the best and brightest in communication, to do high-quality communication research, and to shape the next generation of excellent communication scholars, communication must be molded into a diverse and inclusive field. In an inclusive environment, members of all social groups have equal opportunities, are included in decision processes, and are treated fairly; plus, they and their contributions are valued (Shore et al. 2018). To reach these goals, we will need both scientometric research contributing to a systematic understanding of our field's status quo on the one side, and the strong force of scholars who have been debating the diversity in our field for decades. We hope that our studies contribute to a more systematic understanding of the state of diversity in communication research within the DACH region, and in doing so, support the body of gender scholarship on which we build, and which has paved the way for our work.

Acknowledgements With our work, we contribute a scientometric perspective to a long-lasting tradition of debate around diversity in the field of communication of the DACH region. Hence, we would like to pay tribute to the ones who have started this debate, provided important theoretical and empirical work and raised the necessary awareness for gender diversity and equality, particularly (but not exclusively), Marie-Luise Angerer, Johanna Dorer, Brigitte Geiger, Friederike Herrmann, Brigitte Hipfl, Susanne Kinnebrock, Elisabeth Klaus, Margreth Lünenborg, Irene Neverla, Elizabeth Prommer, Jutta Röser, and Ulla Wischermann.

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