Bus Inf Syst Eng 67(4):439–448 (2025)
https://doi.org/10.1007/s12599-025-00951-5

EDITORIAL

Women in IS: A Reflection on Diversity and Inclusion

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Published online: 30 June 2025

1 Introduction

Recently, the US administration has undertaken a rollback of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives across federal agencies, educational institutions, and federally funded programs. This policy shift led to funding cuts. In higher education, institutions like Harvard faced federal funding freezes over their refusal to dismantle DEI and other programs, leading to lawsuits against the administration. These actions have sparked widespread concern among educators, scientists, and civil rights advocates, who argue that the dismantling of DEI programs undermines efforts to promote inclusivity and address systemic inequalities. This policy shift is already affecting DEI programs in other countries, particularly those funded by US-based companies or agencies. These political developments highlight the importance of revisiting the fundamental value of diversity itself – why it matters, what it offers, and what is at stake when it is undermined.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, diversity is defined as "*the practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, etc.*" (Oxford 2025). The importance of diversity lies in its ability to enrich perspectives and experiences. When people from different backgrounds collaborate, they bring a variety of ideas and problem-solving approaches, leading to more innovative and effective solutions. In this context, research has shown that in workplaces, diversity enhances creativity and productivity (Wang and Yang 2024; Hundschell et al. 2022). On a broader scale, diversity strengthens communities by fostering understanding and dialogue among different groups (Stahl and Maznevski 2021). Diversity is important because it can enhance more thoughtful human interaction, drive progress, and help society meet the challenges of an interconnected world, leading the way to a more equal and cohesive future (Qorib 2024).

Diversity has become a topic of discussion in organizations, particularly concerning gender representation in leadership roles. A key issue is the underrepresentation of women in senior management positions, which has led several countries to introduce gender quota regulations requiring the appointment of women directors to corporate boards. Research on gender diversity on corporate boards is a subject that continuously attracts research attention

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(Sudheer and Jadhav 2019). This legislation aims to address the ethical concern that women are underrepresented despite being equally competent as their peers (Terjesen et al. 2015). Despite numerous studies, empirical evidence regarding the impact of gender diversity on a firm's performance remains mixed. While some research finds a positive association between gender diversity and future performance, others reveal negative or null results (Sudheer and Jadhav 2019). Nevertheless, many studies suggest that gender diversity may attract investors and enhance a firm's market valuation, as it is viewed as vital for long-term growth and signals a commitment to progressive gender values while also addressing regulatory risks (Sudheer and Jadhav 2019).

The growing value of teamwork in the production of knowledge, coupled with the educational advancement of women in science and engineering, has brought gender diversity to the front lines, creating new opportunities for scientific discovery (Nielsen et al. 2017). However, only recruiting women is not sufficient. Carefully designed policies and dedicated leadership are essential for scientific organizations to harness the power of gender diversity for collective innovations and discoveries (Nielsen et al. 2017). Furthermore, insights from medical research journals reveal why diversity matters in academic contexts, especially in writing publications. An analysis of 6.6 million published papers from over 15,000 medical journals worldwide demonstrates that mixed-gender teams produce more novel and highly cited papers than single-gender teams. Specifically, mixed-gender teams publish papers that are up to 7% more novel and 14.6% more likely to be top-tier papers than those authored by same-gender teams. These results have been supported across various institutional, team, and individual controls and further generalized by subfield (Yang et al. 2022).

From the perspective of Business and Information Systems Engineering (BISE) and the broader Information Systems (IS) field, a key question is how diversity is reflected within the discipline. Among underrepresented groups in the IS community, women and scientists from the Global South have stood out as a particularly notable minority. This editorial narrows its focus to women as one example of an underrepresented group. This choice is not meant to exclude other groups, who also deserve attention and discussion, but rather to contribute to the broader goal of fostering a more inclusive IS research community. Actually, this editorial aims to encourage further exploration of diversity in IS in all its forms.

Over the last decade, research and practice have increasingly recognized gender diversity, including individuals who are transgender, nonbinary, and others, in popular media, medicine, and the legal sphere (Rubin et al. 2020). This is a change from the traditional binary view of gender, which typically aligns with one's assigned sex (Rubin et al. 2020). When writing this article, which reports on scientific literature and statistics, it was not always clear how the terms woman and female were used in the original sources, whether in the sense of gender or the biologically assigned sex. For most of the sources, we can assume that self-reported gender was used. We try to address this issue by using woman in the sense of gender and instead of the adjective female (which usually refers to the biological sex only), we use woman-identifying. Furthermore, we want to point out that some of the issues and examples raised in this article are also valid for all persons who were not assigned male at birth and do not identify as male.

To address the question of how women are reflected within the discipline, this editorial begins by examining existing research on gender-related topics in IS publications. It then provides an overview of gender-focused initiatives undertaken by leading IS journals, alongside an analysis of gender distributions on their editorial boards. Turning attention to BISE, we present statistics related to female authorship in recent years. As several members of the author team are involved in the WI-Frauen (Women in Information Systems) network – a collaborative initiative among German-speaking countries – we also reflect on the formation of this network and share key lessons learned from our experience. The editorial closes with a discussion of challenges and hopes to inspire further activities to make the IS field more inclusive and diverse.

2 Gender Topics in Information Systems

In September 2014, Apple proudly unveiled its "*comprehensive*" Health app, promising to track everything from calories and blood alcohol to chromium intake. However, one striking omission drew swift backlash: the app offered no way to record a menstrual cycle (Eveleth et al., 2014). This oversight – trivializing an essential health metric for a large part of the population – became a textbook example of female-blind design. Unfortunately, it was not an isolated case. From voice recognition systems that struggle with female voices (Tatman 2017) to algorithms that inadvertently perpetuate pay gaps (Angwin et al. 2016), the tech industry is rife with instances where homogenous, male-centric perspectives have led to biased outcomes. In the field of IS, which examines the interplay of people, organizations, and technology, such gender issues strike at our core socio-technical mission.

Gender has often been addressed through the lens of workforce diversity, particularly in relation to professional roles in IS. A key example is a study by Gorbacheva et al. (2016), which analyzed over 10,000 LinkedIn profiles of

business process management professionals. Their findings uncovered significant gendered patterns in how competences are presented: women were more likely to highlight coordination and communication skills, while men emphasized technical and leadership expertise. Similar concerns are also highlighted in prior studies. For example, Truman and Baroudi (1994) documented significant gender disparities in managerial positions within IS organizations, raising concerns about discriminatory practices. Igbaria and Baroudi (1995) further demonstrated that even equivalent performance evaluations yielded slower career advancements and lower organizational levels for women compared to men. These differences, the authors argued, could both reflect and reinforce stereotypes, influencing career trajectories in IS professions. This concern is also echoed by Trauth and Connolly's (2021) longitudinal research in Ireland, demonstrating how both environmental and personal factors shaped gender equity in IT careers. Their work emphasizes that socio-economic and policy-driven changes have profoundly influenced women's professional opportunities over several decades.

More recently, gender-related issues have appeared in studies on algorithmic fairness and AI ethics. Simbeck (2020) paper, for instance, explored how unbalanced training data in AI-based video hiring tools can produce disparate outcomes across gender lines. Using a simulated dataset of 10,000 videos, Simbeck demonstrated that even minor imbalances in representation led to significant discrepancies in interview selection probabilities – calling into question the fairness of such systems under current design practices. Broader IS research also highlights that algorithmic decision-making systems frequently embed gender biases, perpetuating inequalities in recruitment, promotions, and service outcomes (Hall and Ellis 2023; Leavy 2018). The concern is also reflected in Young et al.'s (2020) study, analyzing Wikipedia biographies. They found that gender biases emerged from community interactions, where editors sometimes unintentionally overcompensated for existing biases. For instance, in attempts to correct traditional biases that underemphasize women's achievements, editors occasionally portrayed women more favorably than their male counterparts, creating a form of reverse bias. These studies underline the importance of continuous and rigorous evaluation of technological design processes to mitigate embedded biases.

Research in IS acknowledges the role of gender in shaping technology adoption and usage patterns, highlighting that technologies do not exist in isolation but are embedded in social contexts that significantly influence user interactions. Lee and Kozar (2006) reveal distinct gender-specific differences in e-commerce interactions, demonstrating how men and women differ in online purchasing behaviors, decision-making processes, and responsiveness to specific website design elements. Gefen and Straub (1997) revealed gender-based perceptual differences in email use, highlighting the distinct social and relational values perceived by women compared to task-oriented views of men. Venkatesh and Morris (2000) similarly identified gender differences in technology acceptance, where women's adoption behaviors were more significantly influenced by ease of use and social norms, contrasting with men's focus on perceived usefulness. Further, studies have examined gender differences in the adoption and continued use of social networking sites, highlighting varied factors such as privacy concerns and social influences that affect men and women differently (Lin et al. 2017). This line of research emphasizes the importance of inclusive design practices that are responsive to diverse user needs and experiences.

Despite these prior contributions, gender continues to be underrepresented as a strategic research theme within IS research. Consequently, increased attention to gender-related issues remains urgent for fostering more inclusive and comprehensive IS research.

3 Gender Diversity Among Authors in BISE

We now shift the focus from the analysis of gender-related research topics to the people within the IS community themselves, beginning with an examination of BISE. In the following section, we broaden the perspective to consider gender initiatives within the wider IS community.

We analyzed the data of the different accepted papers in BISE in the period 2011–2024. In total 438 papers (369 research papers, 37 state-of-the-art articles (SOTA), 12 catchwords, and 20 research notes) have been accepted in BISE in the last years. Of these papers, 22.4% had a female first author.[1] The female authors focused on research papers and SOTAs, as Fig. 1 shows. Overall, 1,587 authors are listed on the papers. After removing duplicate author entries, we identified 1,203 unique individuals who published in BISE during this period. Of the total 1,587 authors, 19.34% were female. Approximately 6% of the papers were single-authored, with only 19.2% of those authored by females. Figure 2 shows the number of accepted papers by author team size, along with the corresponding percentage of female authors in each team. The proportion of female authors remains relatively stable at around 20% for smaller teams but declines as team size increases. However, due to the low frequency of teams

[1] Our data did not include information on gender. We therefore estimated gender by matching names and pictures that we could find online. The analysis is therefore only an estimate. We use "female" in this section as we think that our estimation in most cases fits better to the biological sex than the gender.

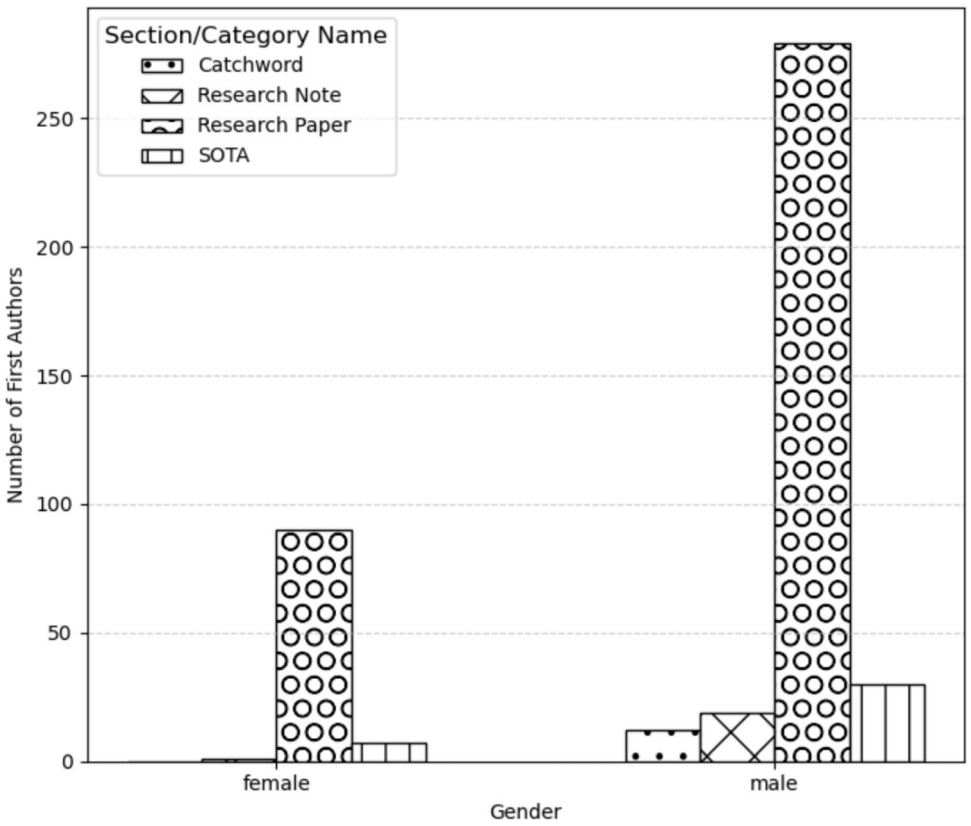

Fig. 1 Overview of the first author's gender by paper type

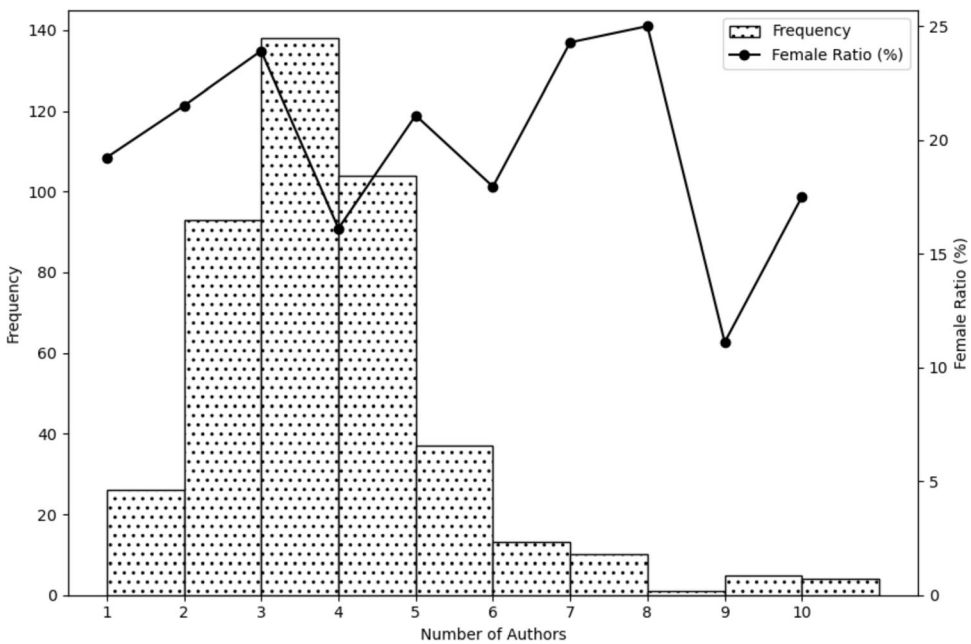

Fig. 2 Overview of the author team sizes and the female ratio in these teams

with size 9 and larger, this pattern may not be reliable. Please note that larger author teams did exist during this period, but they are not reported here due to insufficient sample size.

Next, we analyzed the number of papers that authors have published in BISE. Figure 3 shows that the female percentage is largest for the authors with only one BISE paper accepted during this time period and then drops. There is an exception for the few authors who have published four papers in BISE.

In sum, while female representation among BISE authors has historically been low, the data shows an

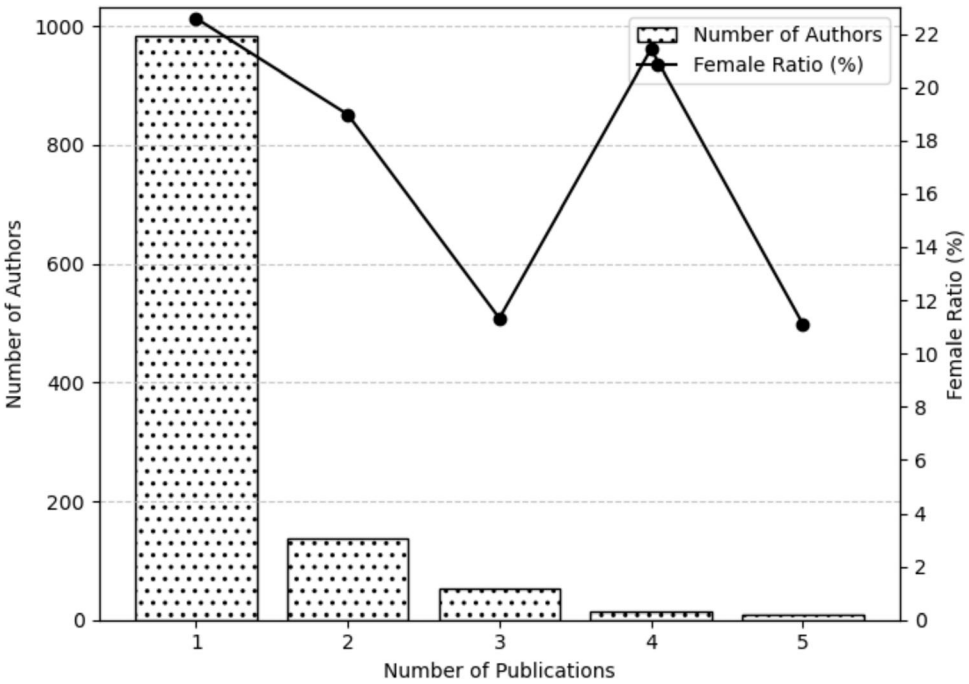

Fig. 3 Overview of the number of publications by person and the female ratio

upward trend over the years, with the proportion of female authors exceeding 25% in past years – indicating a positive shift toward greater gender diversity in the BISE research community (see Fig. 4). An exception is the year 2022, which might be some outlier, or it might be related to the Covid-pandemic in which many females may have struggled because of family care, see Viglione (2020) but also the work by Jemielniak et al. (2023) who find only strong differences between genders in very view research fields, for example psychology.

4 Gender Initiatives in the IS Community

4.1 In IS Journals and the AIS

The Association for Information Systems (AIS) has undertaken initiatives to promote DEI, with a particular focus on gender equity and global representation (Marabelli et al. 2023). In 2014, the AIS Women's Network College was established to support women scholars in IS and to foster mentorship relationships. Similarly, the Special Interest Group on Social Inclusion (SIGSI) was created to provide a scholarly space focused on issues of social

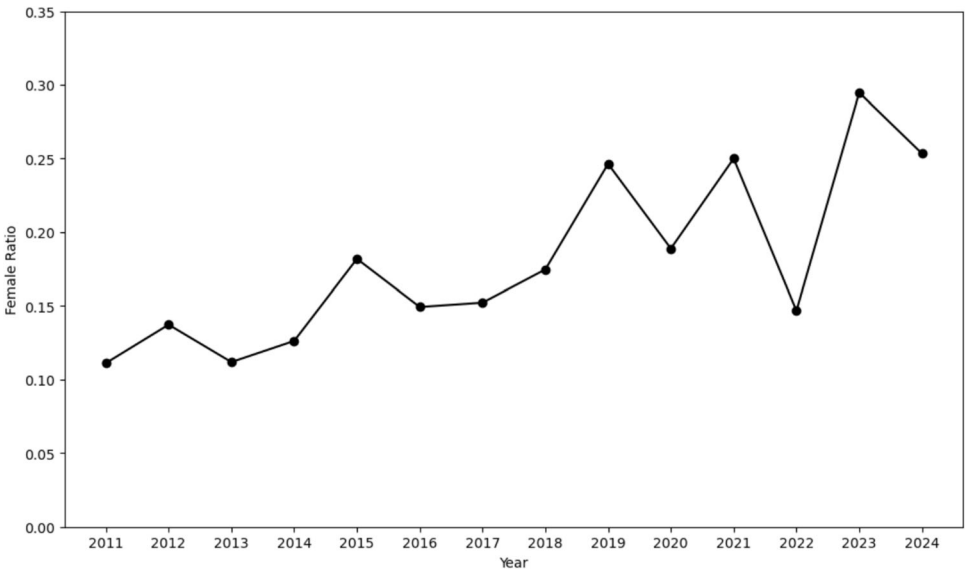

Fig. 4 Female ratio among authors over the years

disparity and inclusion. In 2017, a dedicated task force on diversity and inclusion began to identify and address systemic barriers within the AIS community. This led to the formal adoption of a Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) statement in 2018 and the subsequent establishment of a standing D&I committee, which is now called DEI and Belonging (DEIB) Standing Committee. More recently, AIS appointed its first Vice President for DEI, further institutionalizing its commitment. In addition, AIS partnered with the NSF-funded ImPACT IT initiative to investigate gender disparities in academic promotion within IT disciplines. This project specifically examines the underrepresentation of women and other marginalized groups in promotions from associate to full professor. The need for such work is underscored by troubling statistics in the US: only 10% of IS full professors are women, and women make up just 25% of professors overall. Moreover, women faculty in IS report significantly lower job satisfaction than their male counterparts. Within AIS itself, only 10% of top leadership roles over the past 22 years have been held by women, and just 10.5% of the association's top awards (LEOs) have been granted to women. Further details on the ImPACT IT initiative can be found at https://impactit.pages.wm.edu/initiatives/. Currently, the percentage of women among AIS members is 34%, male 56%, and 10% preferred not to indicate gender.

The AIS offers several initiatives towards gender equity and diversity, and there are more groups in subfields of IS, such as the "women in process mining group". The eleven journals of the AIS Senior Scholars' List of Premier Journals mostly focus on publishing papers that are related to diversity issues. Most of them are about diversity or gender research on IS topics, but there are also some dedicated to women in IS research.

Among IS journals, MISQ stands out as a pioneer in its commitment to diversity, particularly regarding gender. In 2021, MISQ took a major step by appointing Saonee Sarker as its inaugural Director of DEI. The journal also formulated a formal Editorial Board position statement on DEI, accompanied by concrete action items and key performance indicators (KPIs). MISQ distinguishes between diversity in terms of scholars (authors, reviewers, editors) and scholarship (research topics and methodologies). KPIs for scholarship include the number of submissions and publications related to DEI-focused IS research, while scholar-related KPIs involve data-driven assessments of diversity among authors and editorial board members, the continued role of the DEI Director, and the incorporation of DEI criteria in the appointment and reappointment of associate and senior editors (Burton-Jones and Sarker 2021). During the early stages of MISQ's DEI efforts, a dedicated workgroup identified two critical issues: (1) unequal access to mentoring across global regions, resulting in disparities in submission volume and success rates; and (2) perceived bias in the single-blind review process at senior levels, where editors may show preference or bias based on author identity, research topic, or methodology. To address the second issue, MISQ launched the Scholarly Development Academy, initially focusing on supporting untenured woman-identifying academics, in light of longstanding gender biases in science (e.g., Walters et al. 2022) and within IS specifically (e.g., Windeler et al. 2020). Participants in the academy reported experiencing discriminatory job interview questions and unreasonable expectations from supervisors (Burton-Jones and Sarker 2023). Recognizing the need to do more, MISQ initiated a series of global listening sessions to hear directly from scholars – particularly from the Global South and Asia. Members of this author team, in their roles as members of "WI-Frauen") in German-speaking countries, participated in one such session, where Andrew Burton-Jones engaged with them in a discussion about the specific challenges women face in the IS field.

Although the other journals of the AIS Senior Scholars' List of Premier Journals do not show as extensive engagement as MISQ on DEI topics, they have at least some activities such as the one that we aim with this article: they show awareness by focusing an editorial on women-related or, in the broader sense, DEI related topics. For example, the Journal of Strategic Information Systems (JSIS) has two editorials specifically dedicated to diversity in IS: one from 2023 and one from 2024 proposing "a coordinated, strategic focus that our field, our journals and conferences, and our association (AIS) can take to further improve diversity and inclusion for both junior and senior minority colleagues" (Federowicz et al. 2023). Also, Information Systems Journal addresses DEI topics in an editorial (Davison 2021) as well as the European Journal of Information Systems (Rowe 2010). Besides editorials, we can find statements on the journals 'webpages. Information Systems Research (ISR) published a short statement about INFORMS commitment to diversity, in general. On its website, Decision Support Systems (DSS) made an announcement in 2021 pledging its commitment to improving diversity on the editorial team. BISE publishes the Bylaws on its webpage, which provides a common understanding of the main roles and responsibilities within the Editorial Board. BISE strives for diversity and would like this to be reflected in the composition of the editorial board. In case there are three Department Editors, they cannot be of the same gender.

In addition, several journals share statistics on gender diversity of editors and editorial board members. JSIS has 38% woman (2% prefer not to disclose), Information and Organization 42% woman, Information & Management 25% women (9% prefer not to disclose), DSS 20% women

(4% prefer not to disclose), ISR 26% women (7% gender expansive or nonbinary or prefer not to answer). BISE has 29% (3% prefer not to disclose). Compared to the percentage of women among AIS members of currently 34% most are below average.

4.2 WI-Frauen, an Initiative in the German-Speaking Countries

In the German-speaking countries, the initiative "WI-Frauen" started in 2020. Four of the authors of this editorial joined the initiative upon recognizing that there remains considerable progress to be made in enhancing DEI. A range of personal experiences has motivated the initiators to intrinsically decide to initiate change. In their initial academic experiences, numerous peers flaunted their programming abilities and hardware knowledge, prompting others to question their own competence and suitability for pursuing Information Systems studies and an ensuing academic career. Self-reflective inquiries such as '*Are we good enough? Are we sufficient?'* remain a prevalent concern among women, as we observe it in several activities. One of the reasons why the initiative offers some of its activities only for woman-identifying scientists is to provide a safe place conducive to sharing of inner beliefs. Furthermore, woman-identifying researchers are less prominent in our community relative to their man-identifying counterparts, primarily due to their lower numbers.

The inaugural event took place at the International Conference on Wirtschaftsinformatik in Potsdam 2020 with a Women's Breakfast. In the same year, the initiative also started brainstorming about future initiatives. One of the main results of the first meetings was the decision to form working groups aimed at identifying different needs in terms of visibility, support, and motivation of the young woman-identifying scientist, and to organize specific events to fulfill these needs. One of the initiative's action points was to start a LinkedIn group, which serves as a communication platform and promotes various activities within the community. Informed by the working groups and their results, the initiative then decided to establish the WI-Frauen network in German-speaking countries in 2022 as part of the non-profit association „ Die Wirtschaftsinformatik e.V.". WI-Frauen has three main goals: (1) to support woman-identifying scientists in their careers through events for scientific exchange and further academic qualification, (2) to promote the visibility of the academic activities of these woman-identifying scientists through suitable infrastructures and network activities, and (3) to motivate woman-identifying students to research and teach and thus encourage them to embark on the exciting path of an academic career. These goals are pursued by conducting different events, workshops, meetings, and listening sessions. Annually, the WI-Frauen coordinate a Women's Breakfast or lunch at the international conference of Wirtschaftsinformatik, host at least one meeting of the spokeswomen of our women's network, and arrange a networking event, typically on International Women's Day. Besides that, they conduct workshops such as "How to become a professor in Germany", "improvement of presentation skills", or "women career". All these formats aim to support and encourage woman-identifying scientists in their academic careers. For instance, the initiative decided to perform a presentation skills workshop for woman-identifying scientists. Moreover, some members of the initiative had the opportunity to have a listening session with the editors of MISQ about DEI in IS.

In order to know which topics are of relevance to the participants of our WI women's network, the initiative conducted a survey among them. A total of 23 people took part in the survey. At 34.8%, the largest proportion of participants were woman-identifying post-doctoral students, followed by 17.4% woman-identifying participants in the middle of their doctorate and 17.4% woman-identifying professors. 13% were at the end of their doctorate and 13% were assistant professors. With 4.3%, one woman-identifying participant was in the first year of her doctorate.

The following topics were available for selection, which could be rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 corresponded to no interest at all and 7 to very high interest): Networking, managing academic career and family, work-life balance and mental health, meet the editor formats, professorship recruitment procedures, pathways to professorship, publication strategy, dealing with conflict situations, and from PhD to industry. In addition, the respondents expressed a need for insights into the raising of third-party funding in a free text field. Based on the mean values, the topics were ranked as follows: Networking (6.17), Managing academic career and family (5.74), Work Life Balance and Mental Health (5.61), Meet the Editor (5.61), Professorial appointment process (5.17), Pathways to Professorship (4.96), Publication strategy (4.96), Dealing with conflict situations (4.74), from PhD to Industry (3.30).

Networking is an essential part of improving one's career because of getting access to information, resources, and support. In addition, networking can facilitate access to collaborative projects, research funding, and publication opportunities. However, despite the benefits, young woman-identifying scientists face specific barriers to networking, which may be explained by the fact that they may have less experience in academic culture and may need more time to navigate social networks. Often, networks are already so established that it is difficult to join them.

In the context of work-life balance and family, woman-identifying scientists are often confronted with the challenge of following career goals to further qualify

themselves for the job market by completing a PhD thesis or deciding on an academic career. However, this always comes with family commitments. This twofold responsibility can lead to increased pressure and a heavier workload. Stress and mental pressure can be a consequence, particularly due to ongoing deadlines and the competition associated with them. This explains the desire for formats in the two areas of work-life balance and family.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

Diversity promotes innovation and drives societal progress. While many industries and academic fields have begun recognizing the value of diversity, gender representation remains a persistent issue – especially in leadership roles and scientific research. In IS, gender continues to be underrepresented, both as a research topic and within the academic workforce. The empirical evidence regarding the impact of gender diversity on performance is mixed, yet many studies suggest it enhances innovation and signals long-term commitment to inclusive values. Notably, gender-related design oversights highlight the risks of homogeneous development teams. Within the IS community, institutional actions by the AIS and journals, as well as more local efforts such as the WI-Frauen initiative, demonstrate growing momentum toward change. This editorial aims to amplify these conversations, encourage introspection, and inspire a more inclusive and equitable IS research culture.

From our own experiences, we want to conclude with some challenges that are related to one major problem that we see, the loss of talent in science: A recurring observation within the scientific career is that woman-identifying researchers with potential give up on an academic career. It seems that in particular young woman-identifying scientists stop pursuing their careers (Baker 2010; Edmunds et al. 2016; Grönlund 2020), which might be caused by certain conditions (see also Spoon et al. 2023):

Missing role models There is still a lack of role models for young woman-identifying scientists from whom from whom they can learn how to develop their scientific career (Hermann et al. 2016).

Limiting beliefs Women and men are often raised differently due to traditional role models. These can form limiting beliefs and dogmata that can hinder scientific paths. Research consistently indicates that from early stages, women internalize stereotypes about their capabilities, particularly in STEM-related fields (Cimpian et al. 2016). These can lead to lower self-esteem and reduced self-confidence compared to male peers, particularly during critical developmental periods (Bleidorn et al. 2016). Such differences notably affect women's self-presentation, their willingness to visibly contribute in academic environments, and their readiness to seek assistance publicly (Muradoglu et al. 2021). Moreover, these internalized limitations may also reduce women's propensity for professional self-promotion, as evidenced by gender disparities in academic self-citations (King et al. 2017).

Invisible Labor and Unequal Service Burden A persistent yet often overlooked challenge is the disproportionate burden of academic service, mentorship, and community-building work carried by female faculty members (Guarino and Borden 2017). Women are more likely to be asked to serve on committees, organize events, or mentor students – activities critical for departmental life but undervalued in promotion criteria. This invisible labor diverts time and energy away from research, which further compounds gender disparities in publications and grant acquisition. At the same time, we acknowledge the good intentions and necessity of more diverse groups and committees. One solution might be the formal recognition or structural compensation of such services.

Flexibility to manage family and career Traditional role models can lead to unequal distribution of family work, restricting available time and energy that women have for their professional careers (Cech and Blair-Loy 2019). When partners have career aspirations themselves, the requirement to remain fully flexible in order to be able to accept the first available professorship may impede essential steps in their professional development. That said, when it comes to childcare, inequalities are not caused solely by socially constructed role models. Biological differences also play a role, and regardless of how engaged both partners are, pregnancy, nursing, and the resulting bonds and dependencies are difficult to overcome.

Lack of Structural Support for Intersectionality Current diversity efforts often focus on gender as a singular category, without accounting for intersecting identities (e.g., race, disability, migration background, socioeconomic status). As a result, initiatives risk being exclusionary themselves. For example, the challenges faced by a white, able-bodied woman-identifying professor differ from those of a first-generation immigrant PhD student with a chronic illness. Without structures that actively consider intersectionality, diversity work may inadvertently reproduce marginalization within its own ranks.

Freedom in research Current international developments shape current and future developments, especially with regard to freedom of research. Research topics should promote diversity and equality, regardless of gender and origin, and not restrict it. Research and projects are more successful when we consider different perspectives and can openly and honestly express ourselves on topics beyond supporting women in science.

In recent years – particularly with developments such as the anti-woke movement – it has become evident that DEI is a delicate matter. Achieving progress in this area remains a major challenge, especially without losing the support and consensus of large segments of society. These difficulties are deeply embedded in broader societal dynamics and cultural transformations. Nonetheless, addressing them is essential, as DEI is not merely an institutional objective but a foundational democratic value – one that affirms the rights, dignity, and equitable participation of all individuals.

Funding Open Access funding enabled and organized by Projekt DEAL.

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