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VIRTUAL MEETINGS DURING THE PANDEMIC: BOON OR BANE FOR GENDER INEQUALITY

Research in Progress

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Abstract

Prior research has revealed gender inequalities in (pre-pandemic) face-to-face meetings in terms of the inclusivity of meeting participant composition and the difficulty of participants to speak up during meetings. Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the majority of meetings have been held virtually. The virtual nature of meetings offers flexibility in terms of including participants and it neutralizes some physical cues related to power dynamics. However, gender inequalities have also been identified related to the lockdown and work-from-home measures. Therefore, we set out to explore how the sudden switch to virtual meetings impacted gender inequalities in workplace meetings, in terms of the number of meetings participated in and difficulty to speak up, while controlling for hierarchical rank. Based on survey responses of 542 academic researchers, our exploratory findings indicate that virtual meetings mirror organizational gender inequalities and that these inequalities have exacerbated since the pandemic.

Keywords: Workplace meetings, Virtual meetings, Gender inequality, Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI).

1 Introduction

Workplace meetings are a key vehicle for achieving task-related and social objectives. Despite studies pointing out the benefits of diversity and inclusion (Shore *et al.*, 2009), workplace meetings have been associated with gender inequality in the pre-pandemic age. A first issue relates to inequality in meeting participant composition. Indeed, there is evidence for women participating in relatively fewer meetings and being relatively less represented, especially for strategic, high-level meetings (Adams and Ferreira, 2009). For instance, Deloitte's yearly study on women in the boardroom showed that women hold less than 17% of board seats worldwide.¹ A second issue relates to actual participation during the meeting in terms of speaking up, turn-taking and speaking time, which are key precursors for having an impact on the meeting outcomes. In particular, prior academic research has found women have difficulty speaking up in meetings (Heath, Flynn and Holt, 2014) and this also played a prominent role in the media during the pandemic.²

While prior academic research has uncovered these issues in the pre-pandemic era, in which face-to-face was the dominant mode for meetings, virtual meetings have suddenly become mainstream since the pandemic (Reed and Allen, 2021). Indeed, the share of virtual meetings increased from about 40%

¹ The full report can be retrieved from: <https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/risk/cyber-strategic-risk/articles/women-in-the-boardroom-global-perspective.html>.

² This piece characterizes media coverage: A.H. Gupta (2020, April 14). "It's not just you: In online meetings, many women can't get a word in." *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/14/us/zoom-meetings-gender.html>.

before the pandemic to close to 100% during the pandemic (Gartner, 2020) and it seems safe to state that “video-conferencing is here to stay” in the post-pandemic era (Bailenson, 2021, p. 5). As part of this permanent shift, virtual meetings will not only replace face-to-face meetings that required extensive travel, but also those involving attendees that used to be co-located (in the same office building), but who might be working increasingly from remote places in the post-pandemic world (Standaert, Muylle and Basu, 2022).

Early evidence has indicated that meeting dynamics have changed because of the sudden switch to virtual meetings (Waizenegger *et al.*, 2020; Reed and Allen, 2021). In fact, in virtual meetings power dynamics of the physical world, such as taking the head of the table or having the meeting in one person’s office, are no longer at play. Also, instead of taking the floor based on who speaks loudest, a virtual “raising hand” feature allows tracking who wants to speak and the order in which they indicated their desire to do so. The evidence for such digital equity and the potential equalizing effect are anecdotal and have not been confirmed through academic research. Moreover, gender inequalities have been identified in terms of the impact of the work-from-home (WFH) and lockdown measures related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Indeed, the work of women was generally more negatively affected (Anderson and Kelliher, 2020).

Against the background of these potentially conflicting gender inequality dynamics, we set out to explore the research question: *How does the shift to virtual meetings during the Covid-19 pandemic while home-working relate to gender inequality in meetings?* To address this question, we analyzed data collected via an online survey with 542 respondents from 5 Belgian universities one month into the lockdown. The higher education setting was chosen because, similar to hospitals and food retail shops, it is considered an essential service (in Belgium) and therefore is required to continue operations during lockdown. A second reason was related to convenient and rapid access to a large set of potential respondents. The data collection effort, which is part of a larger project,³ allowed us to compare practices in (mostly face-to-face) meetings before the pandemic with those in (only) virtual meetings early in the pandemic. In this paper, we analyze the number of meetings participated in and difficulty to speak up across meeting modalities and compared across genders, while controlling for hierarchical rank.

This research-in-progress empirically studies important gender inequality issues in virtual meetings during the pandemic, thereby responding to a call for research on the societal and organizational aspects of the pandemic in the Information Systems literature (Waizenegger *et al.*, 2020). In particular, we uncover organizational practices that create and perpetuate inequality (Amis, Mair and Munir, 2020), “laid bare in this pandemic” (Munir, 2021, p. 4). In addition, we suggest socio-technical ways to address these issues, by rethinking meeting practices and considering the design of technology that “aims to improve meetings” (Chen, Hand and Wu, 2021). The collected data is unique and provides insight into a massive, real-life work-from-home experiment (DeFilippis *et al.*, 2020) – an exceptional opportunity to gather insights. Despite the pandemic situation in which a unique set of factors was combined, we believe the findings of this study can be generalized, with caution (Richter, 2020). As such, we contribute to research on gender inequality in workplace meetings (Allen, Lehmann-Willenbrock and Rogelberg, 2015) and in virtual work (Carli, 2020).

In the remainder of this short paper, we review related literature, present our research methodology, discuss our preliminary findings, and suggest potential next steps for this research project.

2 Literature Review

In this section, we briefly review three literature streams related to this study: (1) Gender inequalities in face-to-face meetings (pre-pandemic); (2) The shift to virtual meetings during the pandemic; and (3) Gender inequality during work-from-home.

³ The goals of the larger research project are: to examine how dynamics in organizations, and in workplace meetings more specifically, have changed due to the Covid-19 pandemic; to understand to what extent these changes and their implications have a lasting impact; and to develop managerial and technological recommendations in response.

2.1 Gender Inequalities in Face-to-Face Meetings (Pre-Pandemic)

Gender has been identified as a factor influencing the difficulty of speaking up in different contexts (James and Drakich, 1993; Leaper and Ayres, 2007), including workplace meetings (Wey, 2009; Heath, Flynn and Holt, 2014). Indeed, during meetings, women are “often negotiating between not wanting to interrupt current speakers, not wanting to miss out altogether on opportunities to speak, and waiting for pauses or openings to jump in” (Wey, 2009, p. 122). Turn-taking is associated with power play and men have been observed to generally display more competitive behavior to claim speaking time (Byrne, 2004). Often, men are found to interrupt women during meetings, only to actually pick up their ideas and share it as if their own (Hemshorn de Sánchez and Meinecke, 2020), a behaviour that has been referred to as “mansplaining” (Turesky and Warner, 2020). Stereotypical female communication is characterized as less direct and decisive than male communication (Leaper and Ayres, 2007), as a result of which women are less recognized for their contributions (Turesky and Warner, 2020). Indeed, women feel less heard in the workplace, with a study by McKinsey and LeanIn.Org reporting that men more often than women feel they contribute meaningfully and are valued for their contributions in meetings, relative to women (Yee *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, women are advised to be more assertive in their communication and to ‘learn to interrupt’ (Barrett, 2004). However, at the organizational level, the benefits of women communicating more like men can be questioned, as diversity of perspectives is associated with better outcomes, in terms of innovation and competitiveness (Shore *et al.*, 2009). Moreover, a woman-led meeting may be more inclusive and involve more commitment to the meeting outcomes by all participants (Byrne, 2004).

Finally, women have been found to participate in fewer meetings (Rogelberg *et al.*, 2006), especially in strategic, high-level meetings (Adams and Ferreira, 2009). As meetings are recognized as a “status arena” (Jay, 1976) in which candidates for promotions and leadership positions are identified (Byrne, 2004), this is problematic for career advancement. The differences in career advancement are telling: while at entry level, 46% of employees is female, only 19% of C-suite employees is (Yee *et al.*, 2016). However, female management is more likely to be sensitive to gender issues (Turesky and Warner, 2020). As long as the male culture dominates in organizations and meetings (Acker, 1990), inequality is likely to perpetuate (Amis, Mair and Munir, 2020), for instance in the form of a gender bias in recognizing potential candidates for promotion (Barrett, 2004).

2.2 The Shift to Virtual Meetings during the Pandemic

Before the pandemic, virtual meetings were mostly used for meetings among remote collaborators, either within or across global organizations (Jarvenpaa and Keating, 2021). Prior research has compared and explained the effectiveness of different virtual meeting technologies, including audio-conferencing, video-conferencing, and telepresence (Standaert, Muylle and Basu, 2021). At the beginning of the pandemic, it quickly became clear that virtual meetings would be the hallmark of the imposed shift to working-from-home (Marks, 2020; Richter, 2020). Qualitative and quantitative research on virtual meetings during the pandemic quickly emerged. For instance, Waizenegger *et al.* (2020) conducted a qualitative study on the affordances of team collaboration during the pandemic, observing that “virtual meetings and check-ins are too frequent and unnecessary, affecting [their] wellbeing and productivity” (p. 437). Also, DeFilippis *et al.* (2020) compared calendar data about meetings pre- and post-pandemic. They found that while the number of meetings had increased, their duration was shorter.

Subsequently, the (scholarly) conversation shifted to ‘Zoom fatigue,’ referring to increased exhaustion in virtual meetings (Fosslien and West, 2020). Bailenson (2021) argued that this phenomenon could be explained by psychological consequences of nonverbal overload. In particular, the author identified four causes of video-conferencing interfaces (like Zoom): close-up eye gaze, increased cognitive load due to sending and receiving extra cues, physical immobility, and looking at your own video. Bailenson added that “[p]erhaps a driver of Zoom fatigue is simply that we are taking more meetings than we would be doing face-to-face” (2021, p. 5). The author concluded by suggesting to change default habits and settings, such as meetings being audio only or at least without self-view. A follow-up study empirically

confirmed the impact of these theoretical nonverbal mechanisms on fatigue, based on a convenience sample of 10,591 respondents (Fauville *et al.*, 2021). Also, the authors found that women perceived higher levels of fatigue and this gender gap was explained by the “all day mirror” mechanism (i.e., self-view) that can trigger anxiety and depression (Fauville *et al.*, 2021).

2.3 Gender Inequality during Work-From-Home

While WFH (or telework, remote work, telecommuting) was associated in the pre-pandemic era with positive impact on productivity, work-life balance, job satisfaction, and wellbeing (Allen, Golden and Shockley, 2015; Bloom *et al.*, 2015), the pandemic has complicated the situation due to “the lack of clear delineation between the office and home” (DeFilippis *et al.*, 2020, p. 9). Indeed, multiple times during the pandemic (i.e., at the height of the different waves), schools were closed in many countries. For employees with school-aged kids, this was associated with the paradoxical combination of WFH with “kids-at-home” (Anderson and Kelliher, 2020), leading “to a complete blurring of work-life boundaries and role conflict of working parents and caregivers” (Waizenegger *et al.*, 2020, p. 436). Because of home-schooling, women indeed experienced an increased time demand for childcare during lockdown (Anderson and Kelliher, 2020). In addition, working people may have had health issues themselves or needed to take care of elderly (sick) people, all leading to increased anxiety and stress. These effects have been reported to be worse for women, who generally take up more responsibility in family care (Gabster *et al.*, 2020).

Research by the Boston Consulting Group and Ipsos⁴ showed that, consistently across countries and industries, there was an over-solicitation of women, implicit or explicit, to take care of the home and of the restricted and extended family. In the academic world, this over-solicitation has been reflected in the productivity of women, which has decreased, particularly at the level of their new projects and their publications (Viglione, 2020). Critically, these two elements constitute the most important criteria for progression in an academic career.

3 Research Question

There is a lack of empirical research at the intersection of the three literature streams reviewed above. Prior research has identified gender inequality in face-to-face meetings, but has not reflected on how the meeting mode relates to this, neither on how meeting practices could be adapted to improve equality. Gender inequality has been identified in the context of WFH during the pandemic, but not how this may manifest in workplace meetings. Therefore, we formulate the research question:

How does the shift to virtual meetings during the Covid-19 pandemic while home-working relate to gender inequality in meetings?

To operationalize gender inequality in meetings, we consider the number of meetings participated in and the difficulty to speak up. Prior research has found that the shift to virtual meetings during the pandemic has been associated with an increase in the number of meetings (DeFilippis *et al.*, 2020), which may be related to the crisis situation and the lack of ad-hoc encounters (Waizenegger *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, we examine whether the increase in the number of meetings is equal for men and women. As employees higher in rank have been found to have more meetings (Rogelberg *et al.*, 2006), we also control for this factor. In addition, we operationalize gender inequality during meetings by examining the difficulty to speak up in meetings across gender, again controlling for hierarchical position.

4 Research Methodology

We developed an online questionnaire with measures that were adopted from existing research (i.e., number of meetings attended per week (Rogelberg *et al.*, 2006)) or advanced for this study (i.e.,

⁴ See <https://www.ipsos.com/fr-fr/crise-de-la-covid-19-un-retour-en-arriere-pour-la-parite-femmes-hommes-au-travail>.

difficulty to speak up). The question for gender was: “You identify yourself as...” with three response options: female, male, other or prefer not to say. In the useful sample, there were no respondents that indicated the “other or prefer not to say” option. Finally, hierarchical rank was measured as follows: Lowest rank: “No one works under your responsibility”; Middle rank: “One or more people work under your responsibility and you yourself have one or more managers”; Highest rank: “You are responsible for a part of the Institution, for example a service, a department, a faculty or a research institute.”

The questionnaire was circulated through email distribution lists at five of the largest Belgian universities, which were selected based on connections of the authors. Survey participants across the five universities had access to video-conferencing tools with comparable capabilities (i.e., Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Cisco WebEx, or LifeSize). While the participants’ prior experience with virtual meetings may differ (Nash, 2020), they all had equal access (Kettinger and Grover, 1997) to video-conferencing tools at the time of data collection. To minimize the influence of social desirable responses, respondents were ensured anonymity (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013). Furthermore, we did not mention the examination of differences across gender as a goal of the study and the variables of interest were measured through a larger questionnaire on virtual meetings, it is therefore unlikely that there is a bias based on self-selection to participate in the study.

Out of 1,118 responses, 304 were deleted because of suspicious repetition or missing values. The final sample includes 814 respondents, with an average age of 41 years and a gender split of 38% men and 62% women. We obtained data from four different roles in universities (professors (31%), (PhD) researchers (36%), administrative (25%) and IT/technical (6%) employees). For reasons of comparability in the contents of the job, we have based our preliminary analysis on responses from professors and researchers, for a total of 542 respondents (57% women; 43% men).⁵

5 Findings

In this section, we present our findings on the differences across gender in terms of the number of meetings and the difficulty of speaking up in virtual meetings, controlling for hierarchical rank.

5.1 Number of Meetings

Overall, the number of meetings has increased, from 5.50 on average per week before the pandemic (mostly face-to-face) to 6.08 (virtual) meetings during the pandemic, which is a significant increase (Paired Samples T-Test: $p < 0.01$). For a comparison across gender, Table 1 presents the average number of meetings per week pre-pandemic and during the pandemic, as well as the significance level for the increase before-during row-wise (directional Paired Samples T-Test) and for gender differences column-wise (Independent Samples T-Test).

	Pre-Pandemic (Face-to-face)	During Pandemic (Virtual)	Row-wise significance level
Women (N = 294)	4.58 (3.56)	4.74 (4.32)	0.16
Men (N = 216)	6.75 (5.14)	7.90 (7.55)	< 0.01
Column-wise significance level	< 0.01	< 0.01	

Table 1. Average Number of Meetings per Week across Gender (standard deviation between brackets).

⁵ These percentages suggest women are slightly overrepresented in our dataset. In both Flemish and Walloon universities, the gender split for researchers and young professor is (close to) 50/50, whereas for more senior professors, the percentage of women is around 30.

The findings show that:

- The increase in the number of meetings was not significant for women;
- The increase in the number of meetings was significant for men;
- The difference between women and men before the pandemic was significant;
- The difference between women and men during the pandemic was significant.

Combined, these findings reveal that the gender gap – and thus gender inequality – has increased during the pandemic.

To control for hierarchical position, we further refined our analysis as presented in Table 2. The table includes the results of directional Paired Samples T-Tests for each row.

Rank	Gender	Pre-Pandemic (Face-to-face)	During Pandemic (Virtual)	Row-wise significance level
Lowest	Women	3.17 (2.12)	3.59 (3.00)	0.02
	Men	3.61 (2.43)	4.09 (3.73)	0.08
Middle	Women	6.28 (4.33)	6.23 (5.66)	0.51
	Men	6.93 (4.50)	8.13 (7.50)	0.03
Highest	Women	7.56 (2.97)	6.96 (4.26)	0.69
	Men	10.71 (5.38)	13.02 (8.67)	0.01

Table 2. Average Number of Meetings per Week across Rank and Gender (standard deviation between brackets).

The findings show that:

- For lowest ranked employees, the increase is significant for women and marginally significant for men;
- For middle ranked employees, the increase is significant for men but not for women;
- For highest ranked employees, the increase is significant for men but not for women.

These findings indeed refine the above, as an increase is observed for women of the lowest rank, but for both middle ranked and highest ranked women, there is even a slight decrease in the number of meetings reported (albeit non-significant). In conclusion we can state that while for men there are significant increases across ranks, there is only a significant increase for women at the lowest rank.

5.2 Difficulty to Speak Up in Meetings

We now turn to an analysis of the difficulty to speak up in virtual meetings during the pandemic, relative to in face-to-face meetings before the pandemic. In general, 69% reported no difficulty to speak up, 5% reported less difficulty than in face-to-face meetings before the pandemic, and 26% reported more difficulty. Table 3 presents the difficulty to speak up across gender.

Since the start of the pandemic, during your virtual meetings, did you speak up:			
Gender	Without difficulty	With less difficulty than in face-to-face meetings (before lockdown)	With more difficulty than in face-to-face meetings (before lockdown)
Women	63%	6%	31%
Men	77%	3%	20%

Table 3. Difficulty to Speak Up in Virtual Meetings across Gender.

The Chi-Square test ($\chi^2(2) = 11.26, p = 0.04$) reveals there are significant differences. Notably, the percentage of women reporting more difficulty (31%) is much higher than the percentage of men (20%).

To control for hierarchical rank, Table 4 presents the difficulty to speak up across both rank and gender.

		Since the start of the pandemic, during your virtual meetings, did you speak up:		
Rank	Gender	Without difficulty	With less difficulty than in face-to-face meetings (before lockdown)	With more difficulty than in face-to-face meetings (before lockdown)
Lowest	Women	57%	8%	35%
	Men	76%	5%	19%
Middle	Women	73%	5%	22%
	Men	77%	0%	23%
Highest	Women	68%	0%	32%
	Men	80%	2%	19%

Table 4. *Difficulty to Speak Up in Virtual Meetings across Rank and Gender.*

The Chi-Square test ($\chi^2(2) = 8.63, p = 0.01$) reveals that there are significant differences at the lowest hierarchical level. Notably, the percentage of women reporting more difficulty (35%) is much higher than the percentage of men (19%). Although not significant, there is also a seemingly big gender difference at the highest hierarchical level. Overall, these findings indicate that speaking up in virtual meetings is an issue for everyone and even more so for women.

6 Discussion – Next Steps

Consistent with articles in the popular press,⁶ our observations point to (virtual) meetings being silent witnesses of gender inequality, which has been exacerbated during the pandemic (Munir, 2021). As such, we broaden the perspective on meetings beyond how they are usually perceived in the Information Systems field, namely as a purposeful vehicle for collaboration (Dennis *et al.*, 1988; Scott *et al.*, 2015). Indeed, meetings reflect organizational culture and practices, they are a social space in which power is exerted, relationships are formed and confirmed, and leadership positions are staged (Scott *et al.*, 2015). Our observation of inequality, across gender and age, motivates further research on other types of inequality (e.g., race, ethnicity, social class, cultural identity or language (Arsel, Crockett and Scott, 2022)) in the context of meeting participation and career advancement. Indeed, our research revealed that inequalities are inscribed in meeting structures and routines, as they are in other organisational elements.

This study merely makes observations about gender inequalities in virtual meetings during the pandemic and such recognition, while critical, is only a first step towards overcoming inequalities (Amis, Mair and Munir, 2020). Therefore, we extend an invitation to question the reasons why women participate in relatively fewer meetings and have more difficulty expressing themselves during meetings. What has been the role of the WFH context, where women might be less likely to have their own private office? Is WFH shifting gender inequalities from the workplace to the personal situation at home? Of course, the same situational factors may hold for men with kids at home and by including the number and type of dependents of respondents, we could distinguish such factors from gender effects. The personal situation could also be related to the difficulty to speak up, in addition to ongoing distractions in the environment. Furthermore, a better understanding is needed for what personal characteristics (e.g., personality, physicality, and mother tongue in relation to the language spoken in the meeting), for both men and women, relate to perceived difficulties to speak up. As to the gender effect of ‘Zoom fatigue,’ previous research suggested the self-view affects women more, but then if men attend more meetings, the resulting wellbeing effects may be similar. Finally, what about the technology features, such as the

⁶ This piece characterizes media coverage: J. Medina & L. Lerer (2020, April 23). “When mom’s Zoom meeting is the one that has to wait.” *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/22/us/politics/women-coronavirus-2020.html>.

strength of the internet connection, and potential anxiety to use technology? The functionalities offered by different virtual meeting tools, for instance the number and size of video images simultaneously shown on screen, are not completely (experienced) the same. Examining the role of such factors presents important avenues for future (qualitative) research.

We also want to bring to the fore that instead of reproducing inequalities in the workplace, meetings could be a vehicle for upheaval of established (male) practices, as changes in meeting practices or technological solutions may be proposed (Amis, Mair and Munir, 2020; Bailenson, 2021). For instance, the facilitator can play a key role in making meetings more inclusive and in larger virtual meetings, two people could be required to lead the meeting (Allison, Shuffler and Wallace, 2015). If human resources are not available, Artificial Intelligence could also be deployed to help with moderation, monitoring equal participation of speaking time and making suggestions on turn-taking (Samrose *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, future research can empirically establish the relationship between (forced) equality of participation and meeting outcomes, such as effectiveness or satisfaction.

Also, given our data was collected at universities, we can draw tentative implications of our findings for women in academia. Indeed, the proportion of women in academic positions in Europe is lower than that of men and this gap is more striking at more advanced career stages.⁷ Moreover, since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, lower levels of productivity for women are reported (Gabster *et al.*, 2020; Viglione, 2020), including in the IS field (Van Osch, Leidner and Beath, 2020). Our observations related to women's participation in virtual meetings suggest that there may be a reinforcing impact of the pandemic (Munir, 2021), in terms of slowing the progress in academic careers for female scholars, because of the (widened) gender gap in meeting participation and the critical role of meetings in career advancement. Unsolicited work-from-home, as it has unfolded in the context of the pandemic, therefore seems to have worsened the inequalities in academic career progression, to which virtual meetings so vividly testify. An interesting avenue for future research is to examine the relationship between gender inequality in meetings and career advancement, across different academic disciplines as well as in work contexts outside of academia. Indeed, organizational cultures, and meeting practices more specifically, may substantially differ across industries.

The research design has certain limitations. The study is cross-sectional, so we cannot infer causality. Also, using a single instrument for all measures introduces a possibility for common method bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Self-reporting the number of meetings, while common in the Meeting Science literature (Rogelberg *et al.*, 2006), is also potentially unreliable. Moreover, we cannot exclude a gender effect in the response style, for instance men or women might systematically over- or under-estimate the number of weekly meetings they participate in. In addition to these internal reliability issues, the generalizability of the findings may also be limited, especially for situations outside of lockdown-related WFH measures. Moreover, the data was collected from respondents at Belgian universities and so the generalizability to other universities or other countries may be limited. Also, (young) women seem to be overrepresented in our dataset, relative to general figures for professors and researchers. As mentioned above, we don't think there is an issue of self selection bias, because of the gender inequality topic not being prominent in the survey, but it may indicate that women were more willing to share about virtual meetings in general.

In conclusion, despite several calls to focus more on gender, gender inequality is still an underdeveloped topic in the IS field (Masiero and Aaltonen, 2020), in particular this study adds to the question "what do we know about the role of gender in technology adoption and use?" (Trauth, 2013, p. 278). As has been said before, "even when revealed, gender biases are often ignored, discounted, or unsupported," (Burton-Jones and Stein, 2021, p. xii) nevertheless our hope is that this research can plant the seeds for the creation of more inclusive communication environments (Gefen and Straub, 1997) in order to "break with patterns of inequality associated with people's lives in and as members of organizations" (Amis, Mair and Munir, 2020, p. 24).

⁷ The European University Institute discusses the gender gap in academia here: <https://www.eui.eu/ProgrammesAndFellowships/AcademicCareersObservatory/CareerComparisons/GenderComparisons>

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