

What are the differences in perception of gender disparities in academia? A survey of academics from Russia

Introduction

Gender differences in academia: what is the problem?

Despite significant improvements in promoting gender equality over the last few decades, disparities in social roles, especially in power and status, are still a prevalent part of our cultural and social landscape [Neff, Cooper and Woodruff, 2007; Eagly, 2007]. At present, academia as well as other different areas of society is inclined to different manifestations of gender disparities [Goddard et al., 2021]. Gender inequality in scientific careers is a persistent problem, entailing women's under-representation in senior and decision-making positions and their systematic under-recognition [Bryson, 2004; Gunawardena et al., 2006; Shen, 2013; Kumar, 2016]. Denial of women academics' contributions and breakthroughs have long been well known and identified in most academic communities. In 1993, Rossiter invented the term 'the Matilda effect', implying that men's research contributions are central within science and are therefore sought out more often and evaluated more highly.

Since then, over the past 30 years, women across the world have made considerable inroads into academia, becoming the inevitable part of worldwide and national academic communities [Wyn, Acker and Richards, 2000; Eggins, 2017]. However, despite improvements, for women currently or formerly in academia, gender disparities still persist across various academic inclusion and success measures [Sağlamer et al., 2018; Eslen-Ziya and Yildirim, 2022]. As a consequence, the problems of 30 years ago still do not lose their relevance.

Currently, gender disparities are most evident at the high and highest levels across research fields in the academic profession globally. Specifically, women hold fewer scientific positions than men at later career stages and evidently face related difficulties in terms of research production [see, e.g., Santos, Horta and Amâncio, 2020; Mary Frank Fox, 2019; Nielsen, 2016; Aiston and Jung, 2015]. The representation of women at academic management positions is also consistently low throughout the world [Shepherd, 2017]. Within the academia, various manifestations of gender disparities take place, for example, the persistence of pay gaps, gender segregation across research fields and activities, sexual harassment, and verbal gender-based violence [see, e.g., Kachchaf et al., 2015; Jagsi et al., 2016; Santos, Horta and Amâncio, 2020; Rosa and Clavero, 2021]. Indeed, the process of integration into the academic career and the probability of reaching a permanent academic position may also be strongly gendered [Murgia and Poggio, 2018; Drew and Canavan, 2020]. Therefore, gender imbalances persist at both the top and bottom levels of the academic hierarchy and remain its relevant problem. Without appropriate changes, many fields will not achieve gender equality for decades on their current trajectories [Holman, Stuart-Fox and Hauser, 2018; Dworkin et al., 2020].

The situation is similar in the Russian academic system. Women academics, despite their overall quantitative dominance with approximately 60% of all academic positions, are significantly less represented at the high and highest ranks [HSE, 2021]. Women mostly occupy lower positions such as research fellows, lecturers, and assistants, while senior academic positions, on the contrary, are generally held by men [Bagirova and Surina, 2017; Sterligov, 2017; Pilkina and Lovakov, 2022]. As a possible outcome, women academics in Russia face various gender disparities, e.g., pay gaps, glass ceiling problems, social stereotypes, etc. [see, e.g., Rudakov and Prakhov, 2020; Polihina et al., 2022].

Though there are obvious gender inequalities problems in academia in various dimensions and corresponding studies on them, relatively little attention has been paid to how academics, both men and women, perceive gender disparities in their workplaces. It is widely accepted that gender disparities within academia generate a chilly atmosphere for women, meaning that women's professional role becomes invisible and not valued [Eslen-Ziya and Yildirim, 2022]. However, the perception of the 'chilly climate' itself and the constituent disparities among men and women academics remains under-researched. Thus, considering the existing gendered challenges in academia, up-to-date research on the academics' perception of gender-related problems is needed today.

Previous and recent studies on the perception of gender disparities in academia have focused specifically on some national systems, for instance, Spain and the UK or/and particular research fields [Kessels and Taconis, 2011; García-González, Forcén and Jimenez-Sanchez, 2019; Popp et al., 2019; Makarova, Aeschlimann and Herzog, 2019]. This study explores the perception of gendered issues among academics, ranging from the interpretation of gender-based disparities per se to their possible explanations and the necessity of changes towards gender equality. To that date, we chose one national academic system with relevant gender disparities problems – Russia. The Russian case is of particular interest due to its Soviet academic system that significantly contributed to the consolidation and recognition of women academics that makes the system in Russia different from several Western academic communities [Rudakov and Prakhov, 2020].

The involvement of women in Russia's professional and academic life is closely linked to the Soviet gender equality policy, which began under Lenin's Bolshevik government. The revolutionary government that came to power in Russia in 1917 promoted political equality for women. A radical change in the position of women scientists in academia became feasible only after the October Revolution, when the Soviet government proclaimed a course for the active women's inclusion in professional activities, thereby ensuring the inclusion of women in the academic system [Grishina, 2008].

However, as in the present, the declared equality in the Soviet academic environment was formal. While this period is related to women's professional empowerment, significant restrictions to women's social rights continued and the traditional female role was consolidated. Indeed, the process of integration into academic careers and the likelihood of achieving a permanent academic position was gendered: women were widely represented in academic institutions, but their status positions were generally low [Dolgova, 2020].

Over the past 30 years, the focus of Russian gender studies in academia has been mostly on the underrepresentation of women in high and the highest academic positions, the causes of gender inequality, the difficulties of women's academic careers and particularly the influence of families' duties on women's professional activity, and gendered academic policy [see, e.g., Sillaste, 2001; Khasbulatova, 2002; Belyaeva and Ermolaeva, 2011; Polihina et al., 2022]. Despite the increase of gender factor in educational studies, only a few works are devoted to the perception of gender disparities in the Russian academic landscape. Gorshkova & Miryasova's [2020] research, based on a survey and in-depth interviews with men and women academics, found that "many higher education employees, especially women, recognize gender inequality issues in higher education" [p. 41]. However, according to the authors, such recognition does not lead to the idea of solving the problem of gender disparities.

This article, through the perceptions of Russian academics about various disparities they face at their working places, displays whether gendered challenges are perceived as a problem of academia. However, both then and now, like in many other countries, the Russian case relates to the pattern of evident gendered barriers for women's equal representation and recognition within academia [Pilkina and Lovakov, 2022; Polihina et al., 2022].

The paper is an original survey aiming at both academics' perceptions of gender disparities as well as their gender-related disparities experience. This study explores the perception of men and women academics concerning the gender disparities in Russian academia. Specifically, the survey aims to reveal the criteria due to which academics might perceive gender-related problems in academia in different ways. To achieve the research goal, the study asks the main research question: How do men and women academics perceive gender disparities? The main research question is operationalised into some sub-questions:

- (1) What type of gender disparities do Russian men and women academics face or not face?
- (2) What are the most and least common gendered challenges men and women academics encounter in their workplaces?
- (3) What are the differences in men and women academics' gender disparities perception generally in academia?

To answer these questions, an anonymous online survey with 901 participants working across Russian academia was conducted. A thorough understanding of this is essential to evaluate the scale of gender disparities and further design possible measures that would be both widely accepted within the community and effective in dealing with gender gaps.

The contribution of this research is twofold. First, by analysing the perception of gender disparities in academia by immediate actors, Russian academics, this article develops the literature on manifestations of gender disparities within academic systems and contributes to the perception of gender differences in the context of a social and specific issue related to the academic environment. Second, this article contributes to the literature on the place of gender and gender differences in relation to academic career analysis.

Materials and Methods

Survey Participants

Using the Web of Science (WoS, Science Citation Index Expanded, Social Sciences Citation Index, and Arts & Humanities Citation Index) database from Clarivate Analytics, we collected journal articles with at least one Russian author, published between 2017 and 2019. From the population of 171,296 academics, we extracted 29,740 academics with Russian affiliation and those whose emails ending with .ru. This approach allows to adopt a non-probability sampling technique that might be applied in the analogous research with the analysis based on the authors database [Rowley and Sbaffi, 2021].

To ensure that our survey method did not introduce any non-response biases, participants were given the option of not responding to each question. Some questionnaires had two-four unanswered questions mostly related to profile (e.g., gender, age, children info), but were included on the basis, as their responses offered useful sights at the same extent as those with all questions filled. The inclusion of such questionnaire accounts is the main reason for the slight differences in the total numbers in responses. Overall, the total of 901 questionnaires were deemed acceptable for

analysis corresponding to a response rate of 3% that is in line with response rates seen on other surveys with academics, ranging from 1,5 to 6% [Rowley and Sbaffi, 2021; Ni et al., 2021]. For more details of the participants profiles, see Table I.

Table I. The demographic and academic profiles of respondents

	<i>Gender</i>		<i>Type of working institution</i>		<i>Academic degree</i>			
	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)		
Women	389	44	Higher Education	417	41	Candidate degree [incl. PhD]	536	60
Men	496	56	Research Centers	570	56	Doctor degree	246	28
Other	4	0,4	Other	37	4	No degree	109	12

Content of the Questionnaire

The survey was presented as a 20-item anonymous online questionnaire with five major blocks: (1) Demographic characteristics (gender, age, children info, the type of current workplace, region of research origin (where the academic started considering themselves per se), country of current workplace), (2) Academic background (academic degree, research area and position), (3) Gender-related background (types of gender disparities the academic had experienced, disparities that might be considered as gendered), (4) Gender issues perception, and (5) Reasons and development directions of gender issues in academia. All questions were addressed in Russian.

The section ‘Gender-related background’ describes the academic experiences of women and men in terms of gender inequality. In this section, the author has listed different types of gender disparities that academics have ever encountered. All questions refer to the researchers’ personal perception, e.g. “What gender inequalities have you personally experienced? Please indicate all the options and note how often this has happened” (see Figures I, II, III below). This approach helps to focus on the real experience, which is a characteristic of gender studies, i.e., to focus on personal experience.

The author has moved away from the perception of the academy as a ‘masculinist working environment’ and does not focus on the complexities that women face while combining work and personal commitments, namely maternity leave. This approach is justified by numerous studies have been carried out on both the problem itself and the influence on women professional activity [e.g., Goulden, Mason and Frasch, 2011; Heijstra, Bjarnason and Rafnsdóttir, 2014; Bos, Sweet-Cushman and Schneider, 2017; Ysseldyk et al., 2019]. Thus, this article is particularly based on the perception of considering men and women academics as equal actors in terms of their professional activity, not as unequal representatives striving for parity. This strategy is actively used by gender researchers as a part of feminist approaches [Beckwith, 2005; Spitzer-Hanks, 2016].

In the ‘Gender issues perception’ part, the author explored various dimensions of gender disparities: perceptions of gender inequality in the workplace, academia and generally society, perceptions of gender differences between men and women opportunities and abilities. The fifth part ‘Reasons and development directions’ include

questions, covering the perception towards the development of gender equality agenda within the academic community and possible explanations of the current state of gender-related affairs in academia. Mostly, the responses to the questions with perception review of gendered issues within academia were constructed as 5-point Likert scales with higher scores indicating the strongest agreement and vice versa. Additionally, open, and qualitative comments on the topic and the content of the survey were collected.

Research ethics

The initial survey was sent out in March 2022, followed by a reminder two weeks later. This was a closed questionnaire with survey invitations provided in the email. The data in this study were analyzed anonymously. Data were collected through the website testograph.ru.

At the beginning of the survey, all participants were informed about the purpose and research ethics of the survey and the anonymization of data collection. All responses were voluntary and anonymous. There was neither special promotion and advertisement, nor any incentive for participation. Any personal data, such as academics' names/surnames or their affiliations, were not collected in the survey as a measure to protect personal information. However, respondents interested in the results could leave their email address to receive the survey results later. All the collected data were stored in a database, which was continuously updated during the survey period.

Data analysis

To explore the differences in gender issues perception, several statistical analysis techniques are used. Particular analysis procedures and methods differ by both the scale of dependent variables and the number of variable items. First, we performed descriptive statistics of the respondents' profiles and responses to each question. Also presented are the types of gender inequalities faced or currently facing by male and female academics. Then, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was used to assess the statistical significance of differences (p) between the genders.

Research Results and Discussion

This result section, first, presents the demographic characteristics and academic background of men and women academics surveyed. Using Russian academics' responses in the survey, we assess gendered challenges that men and women academics have ever faced. Next, we explore the perception of gender issues by Russian academics. Finally, we present the attitude towards possible gender equality outcomes for the Russian academic community.

Demographic Characteristics and Academic Background

This section provides a summary of the demographic profile and academic background of the respondents. While this survey included the possibility for respondents not to disclose their gender ($n = 3$), the data presented are limited to those respondents who identified themselves as either men or women [Table I]. The first result shows that the responses by gender differ from the sample that was chosen for the analysis – Web of Science (WoS, Science Citation Index Expanded, Social Sciences Citation Index, and Arts & Humanities Citation Index) and InCites databases. The respondents self-identified themselves as women (44%) and men (56%). The numbers are generally consistent with the overall Russian picture. According to the recent statistical review for the Russian academy, 58% of men and 42% of women academics

are present, which allows the results to be extended to the Russian academic community as a whole, given its gender composition [HSE, 2021].

However, such representation is higher than the proportion (37%) of women unique authors and correspondingly lower of men (63%) in the WoS database, which was taken as the basis for selecting participants [Pilkina and Lovakov, 2022]. The possible explanation has to do with how men and women feel influenced by the gender topic. On the one hand, the gender distribution of the respondents suggests that women academics generally feel more affected by the survey topic that echoes previous findings [Popp et al., 2019]. On the other hand, this result might be explained by the historically men's marginal role in the field of gender issues and, accordingly, their disinterest in a survey topic [Scambor et al., 2014]. This may also be due to the research fields to which the scholars belong. For example, in fields dominated by one sex, mostly men (e.g., STEM), gender issues are a priori less likely to arise and therefore the gender agenda does not seem relevant. Even within the survey, some qualitative comments left by men include insulting and dismissive comments about the survey topic ('the problem of gender inequality in academia is far-fetched'; 'I don't think gender inequality is a problem, no need in this ridiculous research'; 'stop doing nonsense research').

Table I also presents the type of working institutions and academic degree information. Respondents' ages ranged between 22 and 93 without any divisions to age categories.

The demographic characteristics also include data about respondents' country of research origin and the country of current workplace. The absolute majority of respondents (96,8%) name Russia as the place where they started considering themselves as academics. The similar situation is relevant for the country of current workplace with Russia mentioned in 98% of responses. The rest of participants are based in post-Soviet states (0,6%) and Europe (0,9%). Therefore, the analysis of both country of origin and workplace were not included in the analysis due to homogeneous data.

The sampling appears to be broad and diverse by academics with different research fields and positions [Table II]. As the initial database with scholars within was taken from WOS, the research fields were also structured in this way to match the initial differentiation. Respondents were allowed to choose several options in the research fields, so the total number of responses is higher than the total number of respondents. This approach makes it possible to extend the results to the entire academic environment in Russia, without limiting them to a specific field of research.

Table II. The research fields and positions of respondents

<i>Position [n = 1115]</i>			<i>Research Area [n=1492]</i>		
	Frequency	(%)		Frequency	(%)
Professor	87	8	Physics	198	13
Assistant Professor	149	13	Chemistry	214	
Senior Lecturer	21	2			14
Lecturer	19	2	Materials Science	144	10
Assistant Lecturer	11	1	Geosciences	141	9
Rector or vice- rector	5	0,5	Engineering	107	7
Dean or deputy dean	1	0,1	Mathematics	95	
Head of department	27	2			6
Head of laboratory	96	9	Medicine	34	2
Head of another unit	40	4	Biology & Biochemistry	126	8
Junior Researcher	67	6	Plant & Animal Science	43	3
Researcher	119	11	Space Science	8	1
Senior Researcher	214	19	Microbiology	17	1
Chief Researcher	57	5	Environment/Ecology	57	4
Leading Researcher	115	10	Social Science	75	5
Administration staff	7	0,6	Computer Science	32	2
Teaching auxiliary staff	18	2	Pharmacology & Toxicology	21	1
No full-time position	11	1		20	1
Other	51	5	Neuroscience & Behaviour		
			Molecular Biology & Genetics	50	3
			Agricultural Sciences	15	1
			Psychiatry/Psychology	15	1
			Immunology	10	1
			Economics/Business	30	2
			Other	40	3

Gender Disparities Experience

The results show the presence of gender differences that men and women academics have ever or never experienced during their academic careers. In most cases – 74% men and women academics have never experienced any of the gender disparities listed. The proportion of academics who have never experienced gender disparities ranges from 57% to 87% of cases, all disparities taken together. This finding echoes a similar previous study, but using Morocco as an example, and shows that academics may believe that there are no gender disparities in their work environment, despite experiencing gender discrimination [Llorent-Bedmar, Llorent-Vaquero and Navarro-Granados, 2017].

As for the disparities that Russian academics have ever encountered, Figure I displays the experiences of such manifestations. Among the 26% of academics who have experienced gender disparities, the share of all given gender disparities that women academics have ever experienced during their academic careers is higher than for men. This fully confirms previous research showing that women academics are more likely to experience gender inequality than men [see, e.g., Ceci, Williams and Barnett, 2009; Larivière et al., 2013; García-González, Forcén and Jimenez-Sanchez, 2019; Westoby et al., 2021].

Figure I. The share of men and women academics in Russia who have ever had such an experience

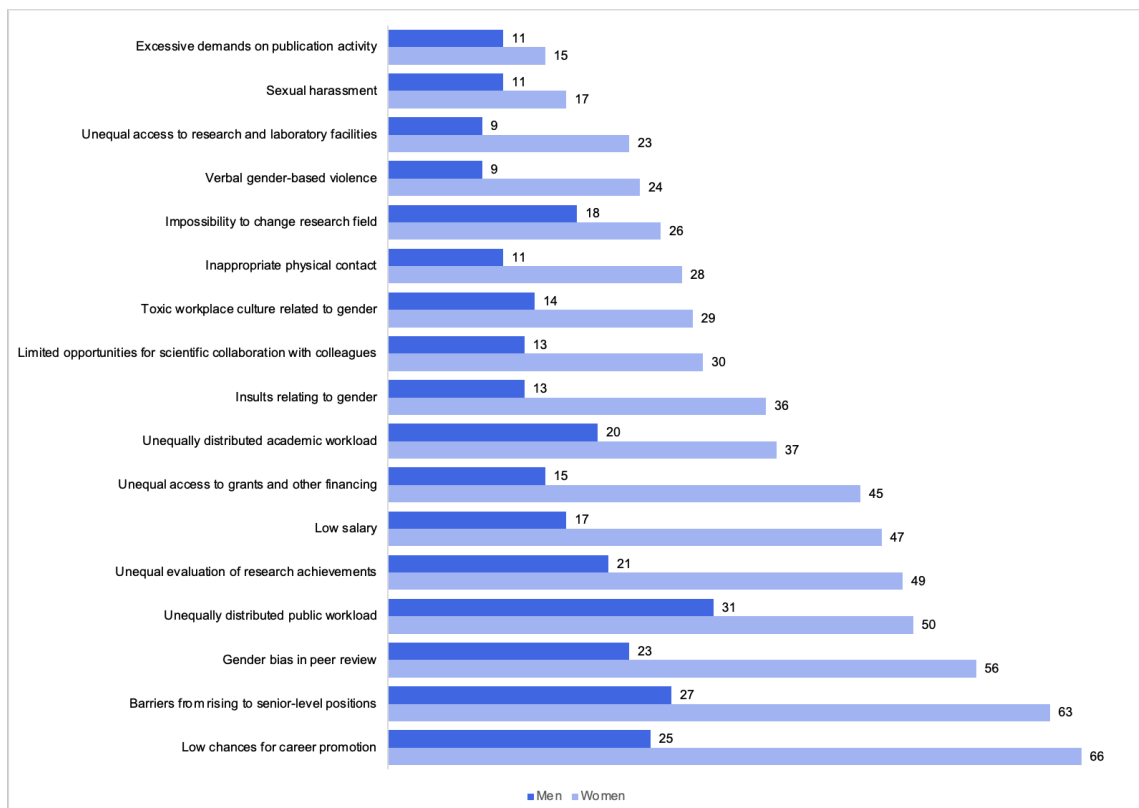


Table 3 also shows the result of the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-test on the 17 statements about experiences of gender inequality, clustered according to the sub-sections of the questionnaire. Only 2 disparities without statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) between women and men are highlighted in grey. The gap between

women and men experience percentage is the largest for various disparities, namely low chances for career promotion (66 points difference), barriers from rising to senior-level positions (63), gender bias in peer review (56), and unequally distributed public workload (50). This implies that the most common gender disparities for women in Russian academia are related to the problem of leaky pipeline which refers to the decrease in the number of female employees at every stage of the career path [Aktepe, 2020]. Women are shown to be less likely to pursue academic careers, to become tenured, and to gain high/highest positions.

Table III. Mann-Whitney U-test between groups for gender (all statistically insignificant differences between men and women are highlighted in grey)

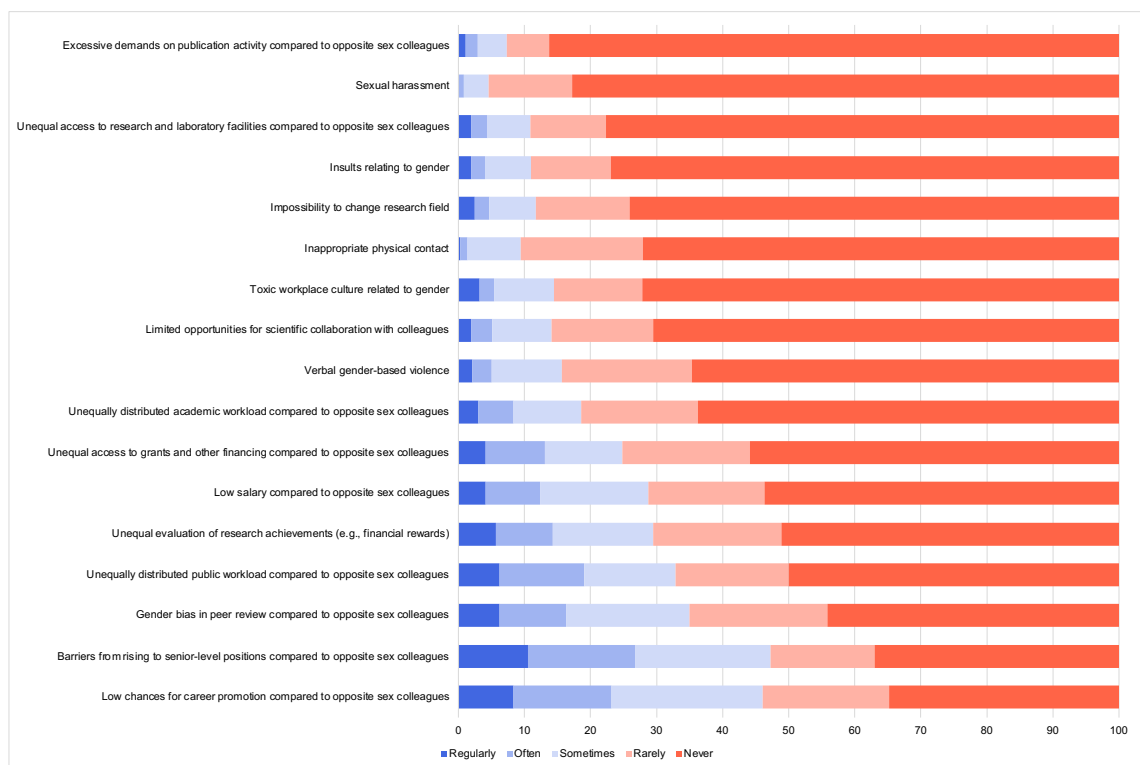
Statement	Mann-Whitney U test	<i>p</i>
Low salary compared to opposite sex colleagues	61308,000	0,000
Low chances for career promotion compared to opposite sex colleagues	40775,000	0,000
Barriers from rising to senior-level positions compared to opposite sex colleagues	43623,500	0,000
Unequally distributed academic workload compared to opposite sex colleagues	62462,000	0,000
Unequally distributed public workload compared to opposite sex colleagues	51756,500	0,000
Gender bias in peer review compared to opposite sex colleagues	48690,000	0,000
Unequal access to research and laboratory facilities compared to opposite sex colleagues	75171,500	0,000
Impossibility to change research field	75992,500	0,016
Excessive demands on publication activity compared to opposite sex colleagues	83378,500	0,277
Unequal evaluation of research achievements (e.g., financial rewards)	56023,000	0,000
Limited opportunities for scientific collaboration with colleagues	69517,500	0,000
Insults relating to gender	69200,500	0,000
Inappropriate physical contact	73977,000	0,000
Toxic workplace culture related to gender	64500,000	0,000
Sexual harassment	83330,000	0,051
Excessive demands on publication activity compared to opposite sex colleagues	60633,500	0,000

In contrast, the most common types of gender disparities that both men and women occasionally or regularly face are (1) fewer opportunities for career advancement compared to colleagues of the opposite sex, and (2) barriers to advancement to senior positions compared to colleagues of the opposite sex (43% for both), (3) unequal distribution of public workload compared to colleagues of the opposite sex (39%), and (4) gender bias in peer review (37%). It correlates with previous gender-based survey of academics, displaying that men and woman can prioritize some similar factors that both genders agree are important [Rowley and Sbaffi, 2021]. This trend may indicate the apparent dominance of career advancement

gaps for both men and women academics from Russia. At the same time, Russian academics are least likely to experience (1) excessive demands for publication activity (13%), (2) sexual harassment (14%) and (3) unequal access to research and laboratory facilities (15%) compared to their colleagues of the opposite sex.

Figure II displays what gender disparities were and still are the most and least common for women academics in Russia. 86% and 83% of women academics have never faced excessive demands on publication activity and sexual harassment respectively. Women academics are also less likely to experience unequal access to research and laboratory facilities, any gendered insults and inappropriate physical contact, limitations to change the research field.

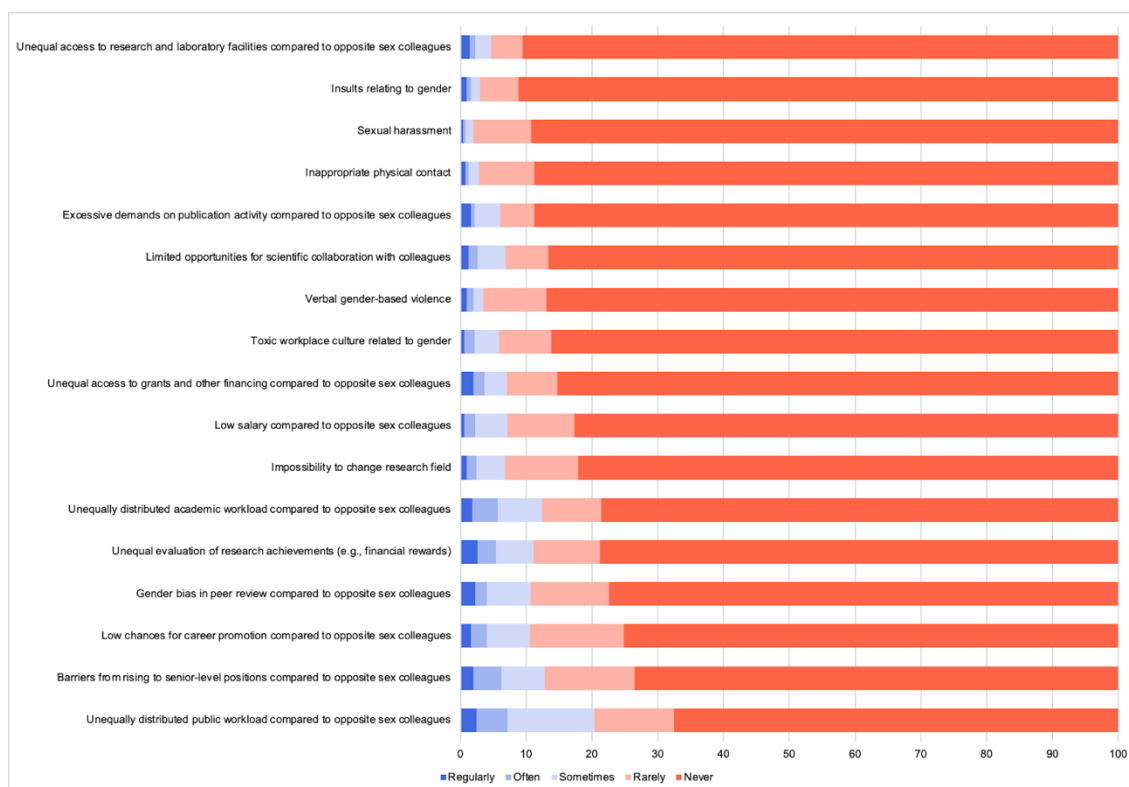
Figure II. The share of gender disparities faced by women academics in terms of frequency



The most common gendered challenge women academics are dealing with regularly is about low chances for career promotion and barriers from rising to senior-level positions (65% and 63% of women compared to their male colleagues). This trend might be explained by the fact that Russian women usually occupy lower positions such as associate professors, lecturers, and assistants, while being less represented at the higher and the highest academic ranks [Bagirova and Surina, 2017; Sterligov, 2017; Pilkina and Lovakov, 2022].

Figure III also shows the most and the least common gender disparities but relevant for men. More than 68% of men academics have never experienced any gender disparities in their workplace, ranging from 91% for unequal access to research and laboratory facilities and gendered insults to 68% for unequally distributed public workload. Other less common gender disparities for men include sexual harassment, inappropriate physical contact, excessive demands on publication activity, and limited opportunities for collaboration with colleagues.

Figure III. The share of gender disparities faced by men academics in terms of frequency



The share of disparities men academics has ever faced is comparatively low and is 4% on average. Men mostly refer to unequally distributed public workload (32%), barriers from rising to senior-level positions (26%), and low chances for career promotion (25%) as disparities they usually or occasionally face in their workplace. Correspondingly, for women academics in Russia the most common gender disparity relates to career promotion while for men it is about public workload. This does not quite correlate with the vast majority of studies that found women engage in more campus service and generally public activities than their male colleagues [see, e.g., Carrigan, Quinn and Riskin, 2011; O’Meara et al., 2017]. Some contradicting studies, however, demonstrate that only a few gender differences in public workload remain significant after considering academic profiles such as academic degree and position, research area, discipline, and institutional type [see, e.g., Porter, 2007; Mitchell and Hesli, 2013]. Conflicting findings seem to stem from scholars using different methods, controlling for different sets of variables [O’Meara et al., 2017], but in this study, based on the academics’ perception of gender disparities, unequal public workload seems relevant for both men and women academics.

The general trend is possible due to several reasons. First, men academics are less aware of gender bias and its implications at their workplaces [Flood and Russell, 2017] while women, on the contrary, are more prone to experience gendered challenges [Williams and Ceci, 2015; Popp et al., 2019]. This means that men are not only less likely to experience gender disparities, but rarely notice any gender-related problems in their professional academic environment. Second, the perception of gender disparities per se might be different. For example, while for some women verbal gender-based violence is considered only as evident gendered insults (e.g., allusions to weakness and femininity for women), the others would perceive whistling as a gender disparity.

Thereby, different dimensions of gender disparities among both men and women academics might have a significant influence on the results.

Gender Disparities Perception

Figure IV shows gender differences in the perception of gender inequality and, conversely, equality. The percentage of women who consider gender inequality as a problem of academia exceeds that of men by two times. However, it remains low for both genders. Only 12% and 27% of male and female academics completely or just agree that gender inequality is relevant to the Russian academic community. Correspondingly, men academics strongly disagree (46%) and disagree (32%) that gender inequality is a problem in academia. In contrast to men, the proportion of women who strongly disagree with the existence of gender inequality in the academic environment is smaller (19%), but the same proportion of those who disagree (32%) as men. This finding echoes previous studies that indicate that men academics usually do not recognize the presence of gender inequality issues to the same extent as women and even evaluate the confirmation of gender disparities as less meritorious than do women [Handley et al., 2015].

However, in terms of considering gender inequality as a social problem, the proportion of men and women academics who agree is increasing. Indeed, 54% of women (24% and 30%) and 31% of men (19% and 12%) academics agree and strongly agree that gender inequality is a social problem. The proportion strongly disagreeing has correspondingly decreased: 24% of men and 8% of women. This implies that gender inequality is evaluated more as a social problem in general, but not specifically an academic problem.

Figure IV. Gender differences in perception of gender issues within academia

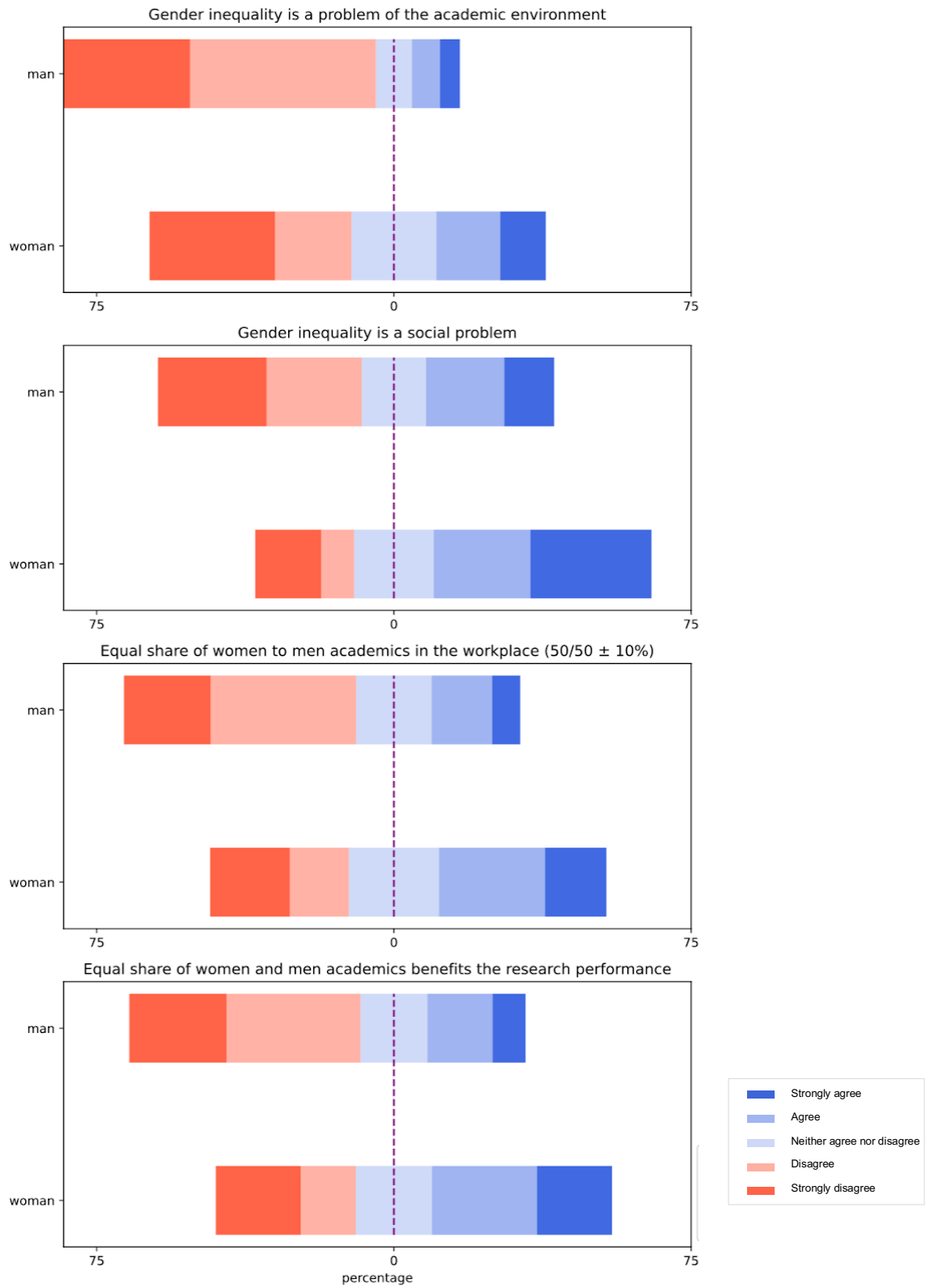


Figure IV also compares the perception of gender parity issues within the Russian academic environment. The strong disagreement with the suggestion to work on equal share of women to men academics is reported more often by men (31%) than women (12%), resulting in an average of 23% among all respondents. Men correspondingly less agree (13%) and strongly agree (6%) with the need to have an

equal gender share of academics. By contrast, 34% women both strongly agree and agree for equal representation at academic positions. This trend displays men are less likely to agree on the need for gender equality in the Russian academic community.

It is the same with the perception of an equal gender share potential benefits for research performance. When respondents were asked whether the equal share of men and women academics benefit the research performance, 28% of men agreed (strongly agree/agree/somewhat agree). In contrast, women’s perceptions of equality were significantly higher and 46% agreed with that statement, while 38% of them strongly disagreed, disagreed, or somewhat disagreed with the benefits from gender equality in academia. This trend might be explained by a recent shift toward a more gender inclusive climate in science, which exposes fewer young women to biased behavior than at the time today’s senior women scientists started their career.

The tendency towards a different perception of gender issues between men and women academics is evident. Indeed, Table 4 also shows the result of the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-test with a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) between women and men, which is relevant for all statements on gender (in)equality.

Table IV. Mann-Whitney U-test between groups for gender

Statement	Mann-Whitney U test	<i>p</i>
Gender inequality is a problem of the academic environment	60677,500	0,000
Gender inequality is a social problem	62924,500	0,000
Equal share of women to men academics in the workplace (50/50 ± 10%)	77604,500	0,000
Equal share of women and men academics benefits the research performance	74507,500	0,000

Overall, these results show that in the Russian academic system women have a more positive perception about possible equal share of men and women academics in their workplaces and commitment to benefits from gender equality than men do. Importantly, the results demonstrate that both women and men tend to consider gender inequality as a social problem but still not the academia issues.

However, attitudes towards gender issues may change for the better in the foreseeable future. Indeed, a recent study by Kataeva et al. displays that in post-Soviet countries, including Russia, gender research is developing in many fields, including sociological and politically oriented research (2023). This means the study and integration of gender issues in various academic fields will lead to a greater demand for gender in society and in the academic sphere and, as a result, to a greater awareness of gender-related problems.

Conclusion

The present study is the one showing various gender disparities relevant for men and women academics and assessing perception of gender inequality and, conversely, equality. The survey of Russian men and women academics has demonstrated that gender disparities remain an unpopular and ‘unserious’ issue in Russian academia. Women generally feel more affected by the survey topic than their men colleagues but the overall motivation for possible changes to improve gender inequality in academia remains insignificant.

The results show gender disparities experience in Russian academia (e.g., in terms of career promotion, pay gap, gender biases) are reported more often by women (38%) than men (17%), resulting in an average of 26% among all respondents. The most common gender disparities women academics usually or occasionally encounter are low chances for career promotion (65%) and barriers from rising to senior-level positions (63%) while men face disparities in terms of unequally distributed public workload (32%) and also barriers from rising to senior-level positions (26%). This implies that women academics significantly suffer from the leaky pipeline issues while men also face difficulties in career promotion but to a lesser extent.

The findings also provide significant evidence that men and women academics in Russia have a different understanding of the gendered challenges in the academic environment. Our results show that women perceive greater gender inequality as a problem than men do. However, although men academics appear less receptive to this matter, both men and women consider gender inequality as a social problem to a greater extent. This implies that gender challenges are more relevant for academics in general in society than in their workplace. Gender disparities may be of concern in terms of global problems because of their more obvious manifestations (e.g., overall statistics on gender pay gaps, official career restrictions for women). Another explanation might be the lack of awareness of the problem of gender inequality in the Russian academic community. Notwithstanding the value of the contribution of this study, there is considerable scope for further research into the often hidden facets of gender disparities and the reasons for the comparatively low relevance of gender issues in the academic environment.

This research also has certain limitations. First, our sample of academics is limited by the WoS database. It means the analysis includes only those Russian academics who have published in journals included in WoS indexes. Thereby, the findings describe only that part of Russian academics that publish their papers in the international journals. Future research may take a broader sampling by having academics who publish, for example, in local journals. However, the available databases with academics' emails are not available for local Russian journals. Second, the analysis is limited to specific gender disparities that the author has proposed to surveyed respondents. This might somehow influence the results since the authors were inclined to specific gendered challenges. However, a closed list of disparities was followed by a final open-ended question where academics were open to write additional gender difficulties they encountered.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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