Qeios

Peer Review

Review of: "A Blueprint for Gender-Equitable Conferences"

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Strong, well-structured commentary with clear practical relevance and solid grounding in existing evidence. Minor improvements could enhance depth and applicability, but overall it is a high-quality and impactful contribution.

1. Summary of the Manuscript

The manuscript provides a structured and practice-oriented commentary on gender inequality in academic conferences. Drawing on the authors' professional experience and existing empirical evidence, it outlines concrete recommendations for conference organisers and session chairs to improve women's participation and visibility. The piece argues that gender imbalance is primarily structural rather than behavioural, and offers actionable guidance to support more equitable conference design. As the authors state, "None of this is difficult to do. It is, however, easy not to do," emphasising the feasibility of the proposed measures.

2. Originality and Contribution

The manuscript makes a relevant and timely contribution to ongoing discussions about gender equity in academic settings. While it does not present new empirical findings, it synthesises existing evidence and translates it into practical recommendations. This applied orientation responds to a clear need expressed by practitioners ("we know equality is important – what we need is practical help doing it"). The contribution is appropriate for a commentary and aligns well with Qeios' mission to disseminate accessible and actionable scholarly insights.

Assessment:

Strength: Clear, practice-oriented contribution; relevance across disciplines.

Limitation: Lack of novel empirical data or theoretical development.

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3. Scholarly Quality and Use of Evidence

The manuscript is grounded in a well-selected body of literature documenting gender disparities in academic talks, panels, and Q&A participation. Citations are current and appropriate. The authors effectively integrate empirical findings with experiential knowledge.

However, the piece would benefit from a brief reflection on the limitations of the evidence base or potential contextual variations (e.g., disciplinary differences, regional practices). While not essential for a commentary, such nuance could strengthen the scholarly framing.

Assessment:

Strength: Solid use of existing evidence; relevant references.

Limitation: Limited critical engagement with the cited literature.

4. Clarity, Structure, and Style

The manuscript is clearly written, well organised, and accessible. The structure—recommendations for organisers, recommendations for chairs, and a concluding reflection—is logical and facilitates practical uptake. The tone is constructive and professional.

The writing is concise and effective, though some recommendations could be further illustrated with concrete examples or brief case descriptions to enhance applicability.

Assessment:

Strength: Excellent clarity and readability; coherent structure.

Limitation: Could benefit from illustrative examples or a short operational checklist.

5. Relevance and Impact

The topic is highly relevant for academic communities across behavioural science, social science, medicine, and related fields. The recommendations have clear potential to improve conference inclusivity and participant experience. The manuscript's emphasis on structural factors rather than individual behaviour is a valuable corrective to common narratives.

Assessment:

Strength: High practical relevance; strong potential for impact.

Limitation: Impact depends on adoption; could include guidance for implementation monitoring.

6. Ethical and Declaration Statements

Funding and competing interest statements are complete and appropriate. No ethical concerns arise from the content.

7. Recommendation

Recommendation: Accept with minor revisions

The manuscript is well suited for publication as a commentary in Qeios. Minor revisions would enhance clarity and practical usefulness but are not essential for publication.

8. Suggested Minor Revisions

Add a short paragraph acknowledging limitations or contextual variability in the evidence cited.

Provide one or two concrete examples of successful gender-equitable conference practices.

Consider including a brief checklist summarising the recommendations for organisers and chairs.

Clarify the distinction between visibility and genuine inclusion, perhaps expanding on the sentence "exposure to senior women has been found not to translate automatically into greater ambition."

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.