

Gender and Authorship of ASHA Research Journal Articles: 2014-2020



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Abstract

The numbers of women authors were examined in articles in ASHA journals: *AJA*, *AJSLP*, *JSLHR*, and *LSHSS* over the past seven years. The results are discussed in relation to the proportion of women in our field (i.e., ASHA members), as well as an estimated proportion of women in tenure-stream academic positions with research doctoral degrees.

Introduction

Past studies have suggested that women are underrepresented in research journals in the fields of science and medicine (e.g., Amering, Schrank, & Sibitz, 2011; Filardo, Da Graca, Sass, Pollack, Smith, & Martinez, 2016). Additionally, when women are authors they are less likely to be listed as first author (Filardo et al., 2016). These findings have raised concerns about the peer review process and other factors that may limit women's participation and publication of research, which can have important career implications (e.g., Rogus-Pulia, Humbert, Kolehmainen, & Carnes, 2018).

It is not clear whether the same patterns exist in the field of communication sciences and disorders (CSD). One way to assess this possibility is to compare the authorship gender difference to the employment/certification gender difference in the field. In terms of employment and certification, women far outnumber men in CSD. In 2020, 96.3% of SLPs and 86.3% of audiologists were women (ASHA, 2021). With both professional combined, 95.5% were women. Those statistics fit a gradual trend in which an increasing proportion of SLP and audiology positions were held by women (ASHA, 2019b). However, certification alone may not provide a good basis for what to expect for authorship because many clinicians are not required to publish research as part of their employment. A slightly different perspective is shown through ASHA members who have research doctorates (e.g., PhD, EdD). In 2020, 77.3% of ASHA members holding research doctorate degrees were women (ASHA, 2021). We acknowledge that some authors do not hold research doctorates and some authors are not ASHA members, so our measures are intended only to provide an *estimate* of the gender demographics of potential research contributors.

Purpose of the Study. We compared gender differences in the authorship in ASHA journals to gender differences in (1) ASHA members, and (2) ASHA members with research doctoral degrees.

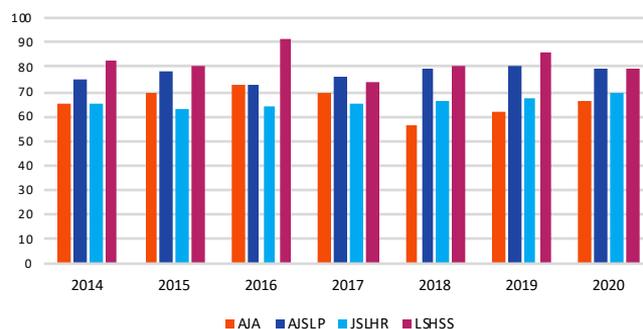
Method

The four ASHA research journals, *American Journal of Audiology (AJA)*, *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology (AJSLP)*, *Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research (JSLHR)* and *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools (LSHSS)* were examined in this study. For each article, the gender of each author, and the order in which they were listed, were recorded based on the first (given) name listed. In some cases, it was unclear whether the name was masculine or feminine, and the author was not included in the analysis.

Results and Discussion

A total of 3011 articles with 10,090 author listings were reviewed for analysis. For each journal and each year, the percentages of women authors are shown below.

Percentage of Women Authors by Publication Year and Journal Title



Mean values indicated differences among the four journals. While none reached the level of women certified clinicians (95.5%), *AJSLP* and *LSHSS* did surpass the level of women with research doctorates (77.3%), although not consistently. This result may be partly explained by fewer articles in *AJSLP* and *LSHSS* by audiologists, who are more likely to be men.

To test whether the overall proportion observed in the journals differed significantly from the demographics the ASHA member counts, we pooled the data from all four journals, weighting for differences in numbers of authors (e.g., *JSLHR* had the most articles and authors). The proportion of women authors was the dependent variable, and each article was treated as an independent observation. For this analysis, we focused on the articles published in 2020 in order to compare them to the 2020 ASHA count of member with doctorates. Using a one-sample t-test, we treated the ASHA member counts as the population and tested whether the sample (journal data) differed from the population. The mean percentage of women authors (73.9%) was significantly below the 77.3% of female members holding doctorates ($t = 2.69, p < .01$).

Overall the gender difference in authorship was disproportionate to the gender difference in ASHA membership and in most cases, to the gender difference among ASHA members with research doctorates. This disproportion is especially apparent when the number of articles and authors in each journal is considered. *JSLHR* has by far the most articles each year, but consistently has an authorship rate for women that is below the percentage of ASHA-certified women with research doctorate degrees. The reasons underlying gender differences in research publication remain unclear and warrant further examination.

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