



#### Article Info



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## Learn from the Nobel Prize Committee: Remove the nominee from the process

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There has been an unprecedented increase in the number of available scientific awards in the past decade. However, many award organizations are being challenged for ignoring the contributions of women in science; even, when getting the awards, women scientists receive less money and prestige.<sup>1</sup> One of the fundamental issues of the award organizations, that causes the current gender gap in awardees, is the fact that the nomination process of most awards, if not all, requires significant involvement of nominees rather than nominators. This is mainly due to the required files by the award organizations that need to be submitted by the nominator including additional letters of recommendation and nominees' CV. Involvement of nominee in the nomination process can significantly affect the genuineness of the process and causes serious problems including the current imbalances in diversity and gender. This is, at least in part, due to the gender gap between sexes for self-promotion<sup>2</sup> and advocacy for self-interests<sup>3</sup> (which cause a significant gender gap in many areas including incomes) which can be reflected in the nomination letters when the nominees get involved in the nomination process.

The history of the Nobel Prize has revealed that the nomination process is fully independent of the nominees' involvement. Our 2019 sex-specific analysis of the scientific Nobel Prize recipients (between 1901–2019) and nominees (for the Nobel Prizes in Physics and Chemistry between 1901–1966 and in Physiology or Medicine between 1901–1953) revealed that women nominated for the Nobel Prize were equally or more likely to win than men nominated in the same category.<sup>4</sup> In other words, one of the main issues in the gender discrepancy in winning scientific Nobel prize is the significantly lower number of nominations for women scientists compared to men.<sup>4</sup> The outcomes of the 2020 scientific Nobel Prizes, however, were unprecedented in its history in terms of the

reduction in the gender gap of recipients (i.e., 3 women and 5 men). This is, at least in part, due to the fact that nominees have no roles in the nomination process. As the gender gap in the scientific research environment is being declined, it is not surprising to witness the movement toward gender balance in Nobel Prize laureates. Other award organizations should use the lessons learned from the Nobel Prize committee and minimize the involvement of nominees in the nomination process, to facilitate the current efforts in robustly addressing the imbalances in diversity and gender issues in award recipients. Last but not least, and according to our recent findings<sup>4</sup> on the critical role of the nomination process in the gender gap, asking nominators for the dual nomination of a male- and a female-scientist could also facilitate minimizing the current award-winning gender gap.

#### Ethical statement

Not applicable.

#### Competing interests

Morteza Mahmoudi discloses that i) he is a co-founder and director of the Academic Parity Movement, a non-profit organization dedicated to addressing academic discrimination, violence and incivility; and ii) he receives royalties/honoraria for his published books, plenary lectures, and licensed patents. Pooya Sareh discloses that he is an advisor at the Academic Parity Movement.

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