

The Challenges for Women to Achieve Executive Leadership Positions in Private Companies in Brazil

Anne A. Kawabe, MA

Mary Tucker, PHD

Jason Stoner, PHD

AARBI Conference 2020

Special thanks to Mariana Dantas, PHD for her help in editing and broadening this research.

The best student-centered learning experience in America



OHIO
UNIVERSITY

Agenda

Introduction

Literature Review

Methodology

Results

Discussion

Contact Information

Introduction

- Latin America has the lowest percentage of women in top management positions (Grant Thornton International, 2019).
- Brazil is in the low performing group of countries with women in senior management positions (Grant Thornton International, 2017).
- Previous research on challenges to corporate women in Brazil interviewed women who already held a prominent position in their firms (Rocha-Coutinho & Coutinho, 2011; de Rezende, Neto, & Tanure, 2014; Henderson, Ferreira, & Dutra, 2016; Hryniewicz & Vianna, 2018).

Literature Review

- Research has not found major differences of leadership effectiveness between male and female leaders.
- Studies on barriers for women in Latin America have focused on work-life balance, the region's culture, and proportion of female representatives in executive positions in the organization.

Research Questions

1. Do women in Brazil report work-life balance to be a major challenge to their career advancement?
2. Do women in Brazil report cultural characteristics to be a major challenge to their career advancement?
3. Do women in Brazil report the lack of female representatives in their companies to be a major challenge to their career advancement?

Methodology

- Data collected through an adapted questionnaire from Cárdenas et al. (2013). Some adaptations were made in a few questions, instrumentation, and participants.
- Participants were gathered through convenience and snowball sampling.
- Mixed methods data analysis:
 - Quantitative data reported as means and percentages, and
 - Qualitative data reported as quotations to compare/support quantitative data.
- Limitations
 - Instrumentation,
 - lack of representation from women outside of São Paulo,
 - no generational analysis, and
 - only women as participants.

Results

Participants

- Total of 40, only 29 responded to all the quantitative questions
- Mostly Millennials, single, without children, and from São Paulo
- Completed a post-graduate specialization (52%)
- About 68% held some leadership position

Companies

- Balance of national and international
- Majority worked in medium-sized firms (62%)
- Balanced proportion of male and female employees
- Service and industrial sectors were the most common

Results

RQ1: Work-life balance was not found to be a major challenge to female career advancement in Brazil.

- Participants shared having to sometimes prioritize work over family/personal commitments $M = 3.44$ ($SD = 0.89$)
- Having work-life conflicts has rarely led them to consider switching jobs, quitting, or retiring sooner $M = 2.48$ ($SD = 1.10$)
- It was the third lowest frequent barrier reported $M = 1.93$ (1.11)
- Lack of references to work-life balance in open-ended responses

Results

RQ2: Cultural characteristics were found to be a major challenge to female career advancement in Brazil.

- 81% of the participants reported facing difficulties or discrimination throughout their careers. All Z-generation respondents marked not facing any difficulties.
- 86% of the participants believed that *machismo* has made it difficult for women to access top leadership positions.
- Instances of stereotypes, harassment, and *machismo* were repeatedly mentioned in the open-ended responses

Results

RQ3: The lack of female representatives in their companies was not found to be a major challenge to female career advancement in Brazil.

- Making contacts and having a superior's support were considered important success factors for the women's promotions.
- There were no explicit references to the gender of their superiors.

Results

- All the factors included in the questionnaire were important to the women's job promotions, except for religion or spirituality $M = 1.76$ ($SD = 1.04$).
- When asked about important characteristics a leader must possess, being strong or leaving emotion aside ($M = 7.68$, $SD = 0.89$) and being empathetic with the hardships of others ($M = 5.54$, $SD = 1.92$) had the highest means.
- All barriers had means below 3.00.

Discussion and Conclusion

- Perceptions on work-life balance issues by women in different generations
- Home support
- References to meritocracy
- Gendered leadership stereotypes and success factors
- Metaphor of the labyrinth to describe women's careers in Brazil

References

- Cárdenas, M. C., Eagly, A., Salgado, E., Goode, W., Heller, L.I., Jaúregui, K., ... Tunqui, R. C. (2013, July 29). Latin American female business executives: An interesting surprise. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 29(1), 2-24. DOI 10.1108/GM-06-2013-0067
- De Rezende, F. V., Neto, A. C., & Tanure, B. (2014). A percepção de executivos e executivas sobre estilos de liderança [Male and female executives perceptions about leadership styles]. *Reuna*, 19(4), 107-130.
- Grant Thornton International. (2017, March). Women in business: New perspectives on risk and reward. [PDF file]. Retrieved from <https://www.grantthornton.co.uk/globalassets/1.-member-firms/united-kingdom/pdf/publication/women-in-business-new-perspectives-on-risk-and-reward.pdf>
- Grant Thornton International. (2019, March). Women in business: Building a blueprint for action [PDF file]. Retrieved from https://www.grantthornton.global/globalassets/global-insights---do-not-edit/2019/women-in-business/gtil-wib-report_grant-thornton-spreads-low-res.pdf
- Henderson, P. A., Ferreira, M. A. de A., & Dutra, J. S. (2016). As barreiras para a ascensão da mulher a posições hierárquicas: Um estudo sob a óptica da gestão da diversidade no Brasil [Barriers to women's rise to hierarchical positions: A study under the optics of diversity management in Brazil]. *Revista de Administração da Universidade Federal de Santa Maria*, 9(3), 489-505.
- Hryniewicz, L. G. C., & Vianna, M. A. (2018). Women and leadership: Obstacles and gender expectations in managerial positions. *Cadernos EBAPE.BR*, 16(3), 331-344. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1679-395174876>
- Rocha-Coutinho, M. L., & Coutinho, R. R. (2011, April). Mulheres brasileiras em posições de liderança: Novas perspectivas para antigos desafios [Brazilian women in leadership positions: New perspectives for old challenges]. *Economia Global e Gestão*, 16(1), 61-80.

Contact Information



Anne A. Kawabe

Email: ak119917@ohio.edu



Mary Tucker

Email: mary.tucker@ohio.edu