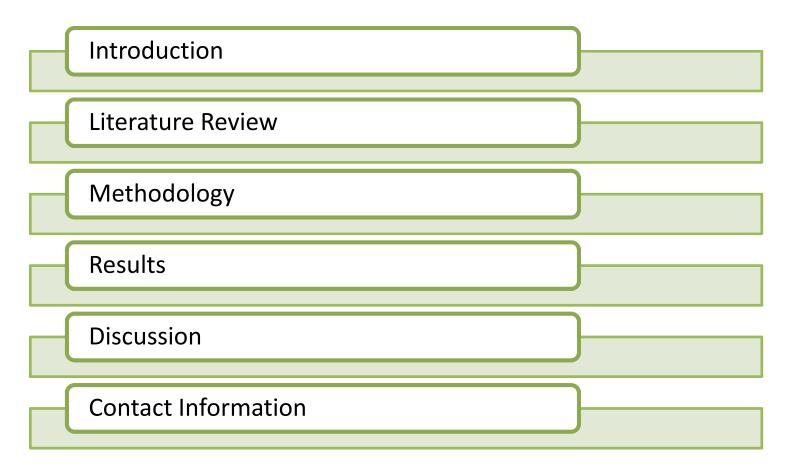
The Challenges for Women to Achieve Executive Leadership Positions in Private Companies in Brazil

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## Agenda





## 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.



#### **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



## 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



# 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



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.



- All the factors included in the questionnaire were important to the women's job promotions, except for religion or spirituality M =1.76 (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



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