Empowerment and Gender: A Study with Women in Federal University Management Positions

Empoderamento e Gênero: Um Estudo com Mulheres que Ocupam Cargos de Gestão em uma Universidade Federal

Camila Borges Fialho[1]
Ágata Figueiró da Rosa[2]
Maria Julia Pegoraro Gai[3]
Andrieli de Fatima Paz Nunes[4]

Abstract

Empowerment consists basically of autonomy, as if it were a machine by which organizations or even people take control of their subjects, destiny, skills and abilities. Given the history of inequalities between women and men, this study aimed to analyze the relationships of empowerment of women who hold management positions in a Federal University. For that, we chose qualitative research with interviews with two Pro-Rectors. The results indicate that these managers feel empowered, although in a framework of nine Pro-Rectors, only four are women, they are free to suggest ideas to their superiors, they are secure in their position, and they believe that having leadership and showing security is necessary for a smooth operation of the team.

Keywords: Empowerment; Power Relations; Gender.

Resumo

O empoderamento consiste basicamente em autonomia, como se fosse uma máquina pela qual as organizações ou até mesmo as pessoas tomam controle dos seus assuntos, destino, competências e habilidades. Tendo em vista o histórico de desigualdades entre mulheres e homens, este estudo objetivou analisar as relações de empoderamento de mulheres que ocupam cargos de gestão em uma universidade federal. Para tanto, optou-se pela pesquisa qualitativa com entrevistas com duas Pró-Reitoras. Os resultados indicam que essas gestoras se sentem empoderadas – embora, em um quadro de nove pró-reitorias, apenas quatro serem mulheres –, elas são livres para sugerir ideias aos superiores, estão seguras no cargo que exercem e acreditam que ter liderança e mostrar segurança é necessário para um bom funcionamento da equipe.

Palavras-chave: *Empoderamento; Relações de Poder; Gênero.*

[1] ca.fialho@yahoo.com.br, Brazil. Professor at Universidade Regional Integrada do Alto Uruguai e das Missões – URI. PhD Candidate in Management from the Universidade Federal de Santa Maria – UFSM. Rua José Bonifácio 3149, Centro, CEP: 97800-000 - São Luiz Gonzaga, RS – Brazil.

[2] agatafr@outlook.com, Brazil. Bachelor's degree in Management from the Faculdade Integrada de Santa Maria – FISMA. Rua José do Patrocínio, 26, Centro, CEP: 97010-260 – Santa Maria, RS – Brazil.

[3] mariajuliagai@hotmail.com, Brazil. Bachelor student in Psychology from the Universidade Federal de Santa Maria – UFSM. Av. Roraima, 1.000, Camobi, CEP: 97105-900, - Santa Maria, RS – Brazil.

[4] andriieli.nunes@gmail.com, Brazil. Master student in Management from the Universidade Federal de Santa Maria – FISMA. Rua José do Patrocínio, 26, Centro, CEP: 97010-260 – Santa Maria, RS – Brazil.

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Introduction

With the growth and development of organizations, it is natural that new structures be designed, directly impacting the bureaucratic relationships of task performance and hierarchical relationships and management positions. In this sense, the study of power in organizations is important for the understanding of organizational mechanisms and their management biases, revealing diverse structures of domination in modernity.

According to Godelier (1996 as quoted in Felipe, Melo, Pinto, & Lopes, 2014, p. 2) "society is sustained by a patriarchal base where the man has a privileged position in the social hierarchy." For Bourdieu (1998), since the autonomous power is socially and historically in the hands of men, this power would be harder for women to attain, and yet this privilege was defined by believing that the woman was destined only for domestic activities and for raising children.

In this sense, Cruz (2010) mentions that, because of their "natural character," men are charged to be stronger, leaders and their success are reserved for them, and women are subjected to submissive and fragile behavior, understood as characteristic of their sex. However, the author mentions that this position has been modified, especially due to the progress of feminism, that has questioned these beliefs, and also claimed for changes in society, currently experienced by women.

There are differentiating landmarks between men and women, such as differences in wages, opportunities for growth and recognition, since, even with higher levels of education, women still do not have levels of occupation, income, and receptivity in the labor market equivalent to those achieved by men (Borges, 2009).

According to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), among the positions that women occupy in industry, domestic services, and other services, the work portfolio is lower than that registered among men. It has also been found that women, regardless of years of study and even having equal pay guaranteed by law, receive less on average than men.

Taking into account the IBGE data, it is verified that women continue to face discrimination and exclusion, although equality between men and women is a fundamental human right. However, women have sought their rights, and their

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citizenship has increasingly become effective as they gain social power, which they have sought through education and empowerment, which enable them to enjoy their rights.

In this sense, Borges (2009) mentions that Brazilian women are included in the progressive global trend, reaching areas that they did not previously have access to because they were destined for men, such as the labor market, studies, and politics.

In this twenty-first century scenario, women are not only engaged in domestic activities and childcare, but they also have a profession and consequently work outside the home. In labor relations, recognizing that leadership positions are not equally occupied between the sexes, Metz (2014) shows a greater role for women; but a small number of managers indicate that there are difficulties to overcome, even if they are diminished over time, since before, women were perceived as subordinate to their husbands and today many women are the family providers.

In the light of the above, the question is: does current society recognize women's presence and the performance of women as they traditionally perceive these aspects in the male gender? And, is it possible that subjects, regardless of gender, present similar performances? What is the perception of men in relation to women's work in the labor market? Are men prepared to be led by women?

And, finally, are women really feeling empowered when they hold leadership positions? Taking into account that empowerment does not provide equal experiences for all women, it does not have a well-defined beginning, being adjusted by the individual according to their life experiences and the context in which they are inserted (Felipe et al., 2014).

In this sense, this study, with a problematic focus on the empowerment of women who occupy management posts (pro-rectory) in a federal university. It has as a general objective to analyze the relationships of empowerment of these women occupying management positions. In order to guide the research objective, the specific objectives are to present the profile of the researched managers, to investigate their perception regarding the hierarchical position they exert and to understand the challenges/difficulties they have faced in their work environment with their peers and subordinates.

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It is worth noting that studies on power relations in organizations cover themes that involve, among other elements, subjectivity, conflict, domination, and movements of adhesion and resistance (Capelle, 2006). Thus, this work is justifiable because it seeks a better understanding of gender relations and women's empowerment. This issue is also discussed by the United Nations (UN).

According to the website of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UN Women has been fully operational since January 1, 2011, and is governed by seven women's empowerment principles aimed at gender equity. It is worth mentioning that this research has its aim to understand women's empowerment and their relationships in the work environment, not bothering to consider skills or competencies in the exercise of the management positions involved, regarding the performance of functions and the relationship between the genders.

Literature Review

Power Theory

The part of the grammar that deals with the origin of the word "power" treat it as an expression of action, control, or persuasion. The word power originates from the vulgar Latin potere, substituted in classical Latin for possession, which comes to be the contraction of potis, which means, "to be able", "to have authority" (Ferreirinha, & Raitz, 2010, 2).

Throughout human history, the term "power" raises some interpretations. It may be associated with negative events, such as the history of slavery. Only after many centuries have people been able to consider the true meaning of power and the various forms of its use in social life, in relationships between people, organizations, and nations. "In any society, all relationships are subject to a minimum of norms based on traditions, values, beliefs, and patterns of behavior that constitute the group's culture and regulate it" (Krausz, 1991, p.17).

Several authors have written about power, and all have two points in common: relationship and influence. Bourdieu (1989, p.7) defines power as being "a state of authority where there is invariably the dynamics of power between dominator and dominated." According to this author, any human relationship has ties to the symbolic

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nature (symbolic power) which, without realizing it, inevitably ends up influencing the individual's conduct and relations - whether religious or linguistic spheres - or even relationships and symbols established in organizational culture (Bourdieu, 1989).

Organizational power is present in all parts of institutions, "it is not a global unit, amenable to observation and analysis, but a social practice that takes on heterogeneous forms, sometimes disparate among them, because it is historically constituted and results from local articulations circumscribed to certain areas of action "(Fleury, & Fischer, 2010, p.29).

Therefore, the character of power depends very much on the locality, the regionally and the position of the one who employs it. According to Krausz (1991), the effectiveness of the use of power in its various forms will depend on the capacity, sensitivity and ethical posture of those who employ it in order to obtain acceptance of the influential acts.

For centuries, people have been under pressure to get used in their culture and, as a result, have developed options to deal with the power of people and institutions around them - this social pressure is what influences people. Krausz (1991) gives an example in his book Sharing Power in his Organizations that refers to the individual who occupies an intermediate managerial position in a company.

As head of his subordinates, he will play the role of influencer; as the subordinate of his boss, will have the role of influence. In this part also the concept of "empowerment" is inserted, which refers to the word "power", which stands out in relation to social relations (Krausz, 1991). According to Kleba (2005), in order to formulate the concept of empowerment be of English origin. Some authors prefer to use the English term empowerment to maintain the character of the translation.

Empowerment has several meanings and can express control, emancipation, and even the search for social or political power. Empowerment "is a set of procedures that seek the interaction and involvement of people with work and that encourage them to take initiatives and to interfere with actions in the productive process" (Herrenkohl, Judsos, & Heffner, 1999, p.375).

Power can provide authoritarianism, but it can also generate valorization and professional growth. According to Lisbon (2008, p.7) empowerment is the mechanism

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by which people, organizations, and communities take control of their particular affairs, their own life, their destiny, become aware of their ability and competence to produce, create and manage. "

According to Bordieu (2007), empowerment consists of the autonomy and the position of a simultaneous dominator in the same individual. For example, in a company, there is a managerial position, and the occupier has the formal power. From this position, he can empower himself by embracing roles and autonomy in decision-making for himself. In this sense, it can be said that there is a process of empowerment, that is, the occupant of the position is actually empowered (Bordieu, 2007).

Mosadale (2005) stresses that empowerment can merely be achieved by the individual who wants to empower himself. Even if a third individual can create a favorable situation or condition for this to materialize, just the interested party can take action. Therefore, all the synonyms and meanings of the word empowerment present the individual's ability to have autonomy and control in his actions and initiatives, assuming his own destiny.

In the question of empowerment and gender, Prá (2006, p. 40) explains empowerment of women and includes in power relations that "women's empowerment refers to power and relationships within society that intersect with gender, social class, race, culture, and history. "Concepts about gender and power relations, particularly with regard to women's empowerment, the challenges they face and how they feel about their peers, will be discussed below.

Relationship between Power and Gender

The study of the relationship between power and gender is important to understand the difficulties and challenges faced by men and women. Furthermore, note the difference between sex and gender. According to Strey (1997, p. 98), sex is a multivariate and sequential system, including the chromosomal, hormonal, fetal and morphological side, which distinguishes physiologically and biologically the woman from the man." The gender distinction for sex arises through the difference between the sexes.

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Thus, sex differs physically, and gender is socially constructed (Strey, 1997). Muraro and Boff (2002) point out that the way in which men are from a young age induces autonomous, public life, punctuated by objectivity and aggressiveness. Already education for women tends to live for adoption, intuitive, with more sensitive personality, and therefore, the behavior of men and women is defined by sociocultural means (Muraro, & Boff, 2002).

Another way of reaffirming male domination in society is what Bourdieu (2007) calls symbolic violence, which occurs in a subjective way and is often imperceptible since a dominated group does not see itself as a victim, but as part of it of a natural process.

> [...] achieving gender equality is a slow and challenging process because it is rooted in a society's values, beliefs, and practices, which requires much more than changes in laws or public policies. It is necessary to have changes in family's practices, in schools, in communities, as well as in decision-making processes, both in the public, political and organizational spheres, and especially with regard to the subject itself (Melo, 2011, p. 1).

For Scott " (1995: 86), "gender is a primary form of giving meaning to power relations." The author argues that gender is the initial part in which power relations will be moved because it is believed that these relations are the meaning of masculine and feminine in societies and organizations. Del Priore (2010) defines women as the standard of morality and conducts to be followed by the rest of the society of which it was a part. The woman had to behave and be the standard of perfection, which the author called "the making of the holy mother" (Del Priore 1993: 105).

Figueiredo (2001, p.144) points out that "when women entered the labor market, even in mechanical tasks, occupations were designated and occupied in a discriminatory manner by specific races and behaviors of women." For example, in the ore were the black and in the white trade. However, things started to take an unusual turn with advances in medicine, birth control, and the development of birth control pills, as women came to decide whether to have children or not and so did the feminist revolution.

However, according to Kanan (2010), things started to take a distinct turn with Brazilian women, who could enter other spaces, especially due to the growth of their level of education, a decrease of the fertility rate and greater number of families with a

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female head. Moreover, the same author mentions that women's disagreement with male domination has given rise to a feminine proposal: a change toward the concept of power, which is understood as shared and democratic, rather than as a deterrent to authoritarian and oppressive power.

According to Castells (2008), the feminist revolution did not imply female domination but a possible social equality with men, and in addition; such a revolution also opened the door for women in the labor market and in politics. However, the performance of women, especially in the market, much it has been discussed at some time, still generates disagreement in gender relations, such as remuneration and promotion possibilities. IBGE launched a survey on the representativeness of women at the labor market on March 8, 2012 (International Women's Day), and this study revealed that women with the same amount of experience as men receive less.

For Bordieu (1998), owning power is more difficult for women, because historically men own the power of autonomy. Therefore, equality is harder to achieve, and empowerment is dependent upon the regulation of male peers, who break autonomy and impede empowerment achievements. Menezes (2012) designates the barrier against the rise of women with firewall terminology, because of the operating antivirus that acts when they see their system being attacked by a foreign body. For this author, male domination is constantly present in organizations, but it is not manifested in all of them, and the social transposition of women is a still subtle phenomenon in gender relations (Menezes, 2012).

Melo (2011) finds that, over time, women are changing their behavior to compete upon equal terms with men. They have been conquering this through education, qualifying themselves for the labor market; and, in fact, there is in society a generation of women who struggle for recognition and appreciation. According to Prá (2006, p. 40), "women's empowerment refers to power and relationships within society that intertwine with gender, social class, race, culture and history," and power is identified with the equity and equality of women and men as regards access to resources and advantages.

The woman who was financially dependent of her husband, in time, besides constituting a family, has been trying to construct her particular identity, seeking

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independence to trace her personal way, showing her capacity and strength of will (Machado, 2002). According to Georges (2008), there is a divergence between what women want to achieve and what they really achieve as a professional goal, but the fault is not only male domination. This is also due to the influence of what Bordieu (1989) calls power symbolic, which is the power that occurs in a subjective way and often passes imperceptibly.

The following is the methodological aspects for conducting this study involving women who hold positions of power in a federal university.

Research Method

For the accomplishment of the present study, several sets of procedures were used to succeed in the proposed objectives. The approach of the study is qualitative in nature, according to which, for Triviños (1987, p.175), "there is no concern with numbers, measures or quantitative expressions, expressing a more subjective view of the actors involved."

As this research aimed to analyze the relationships of women´s empowerment who hold management positions in a federal university, it is characterized as descriptive. For Gil " (2002, p. 42), descriptive research has as its primary objective the description of the characteristics of a given population or phenomenon or, thus, the establishment of relations between variables."

It is a case study, because, according to Chizzotti (2006, p.10), the case studies "aim to explore ... a singular case, situated in contemporary life, well delimited and contextualized in time and place for a detailed search of information on a specific case." Therefore, the research is a case study at a federal university, in which an interview was conducted, adapted from Oliveira (2012), composed of twenty questions, with two university rectors.

The respondents were chosen because Respondent 1 was the first woman to occupy the pro-rectory of the People Management area and Respondent 2, in five years of work, could be a substitute pro-rector also in the area of people management. According to a survey carried out by Cadastro Catho - a database with information of more than 7 million professionals - it was found that the number of women in

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management positions, such as vice-presidency, for example, increased from 12, From 89% in 2002 to 27.06% in 2015.

As for the technique of data collection, the interview was used. For Minayo (1999, p. 57), this technique usage "is characterized by a verbal communication that stresses the importance of language and the meaning of speech. Already, on another level, it serves as a means of collecting information." The study seeks to systematize the variables found in the subjects' responses according to the questions stated, having as a technique the Content Analysis (Bardin, 2006).

Analysis and Discussion of Results

In this part, analyzes of the results, made after the interview with two deans of a federal university, will be presented, the position is occupied by appointment of the rector. However, initially, some notes are presented regarding the studied university. It is a higher-education federal institution constituted as a special agency linked to the Ministry of Education and was founded in 1960.

The present structure, determined by the statute of the university, establishes the constitution of 12 university units, and, in addition, the Institution has three units of basic, technical and technological education. It has, in full development, courses, programs and projects in the most diverse areas of human knowledge, bringing together 113 undergraduate courses, 94 postgraduate courses and a postdoctoral course.

This university is located in the interior of the state of Rio Grande do Sul and presents a fundamental role for the region, impacting significantly on people's lives and the local economy. According to Saldanha (2006: 12), the management aspects of university management, as a public institution, "in the first analysis, management would have the same characteristics of administration, but valid for a given period of time."

Public management, according to Matias-Pereira (2012), is a complex system, composed of institutions and organs of the State, norms, people, infrastructure, among others, with the objective of adequately exercising political authority and other constitutional functions aiming at the common good. Thus, management can be

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considered a tool that aims to guide managers and execute their objectives through a set of rules and principles.

Public administration involves economical, organizational, and political aspects. As for the economical aspect, the companies do not aim at the profit and are directed towards the collective well-being. Already, in the organizational aspect, are the external forces that can affect the valid performance of the public administration, either by social or economic objectives.

And, as far as the political aspect is concerned, public companies are influenced by the political impact, generating good or bad results (Marques, 2008). It is worth mentioning that the economic, organizational and political aspects are interdependent and have several functions. One aspect common to all can be the lack of employees and the managerial turnover due to the exchange of governments.

Thus, in the university context, there are several management positions that involve power relations and subordination; however, with some exceptions, such as positions are occupied by appointment of the rectory, in the case of the subjects from this study, who were empowered in this way. In this sense, the choice to perform the research with the two deans is also justified because, at the time of the study; they occupy, hierarchically, the highest positions ever invested by women.

Firstly, questions were asked about the profile of the managers. Through them, the respondents′ age was identified, as well as the marital status, schooling, time at the institution and the position they occupied (Table 1).

Table 1- The interviewed′s profile

Identification	Age	marital Status	Education	Time at Institution	Office
Respondent 1	61 years	Single	Master	35 years	Pro-Rector of People Management
Respondent 2	32 years	Single	Master	5 years	Substituto Pro-Rector of People Management and Coordinator of Contests

Source: Research data.

In addition to the profile questions, a further nine issues related to empowerment and nine questions on power and gender relations were made, which mainly involve choosing them for the current position, how they feel about being active,

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and how they are viewed before their peers or subordinates. Santos, Brandão, and Maia (2015) report that the decision to opt for a public career has been followed by millions of Brazilians, who begin to prepare for competitions every year. Moreover, the authors mention that the remuneration factor is important in this decision. In fact, Respondent 2 stated that the need to help parents financially was a key aspect of their decision to choose a public career.

When questioned about the reasons for choosing to be a public employee, Respondent 1 said she had not scheduled; which was something that happened according to the circumstances of life, even though she had the perspective of working in the public area.

Respondent 2 reports that the choice was for personal reasons, as she needed to help her family and was afraid to enter the private area and risk being fired at any time. As the oldest daughter in the family, she felt it was her responsibility to help her financially and realized the need to look for something that would give her a career plan and stability.

In this sense, it is possible to observe that the woman conciliates the personal life with the professional one. According to Fischer and Marques (2001), this factor is crucial for her to develop management skills, both with family management experiences and with the work team.

Respondent 2 feels secure in what she does, the main reason she accepted to occupy the position she currently holds - as she was already working as an administrator, she felt safe to act as head of the nucleus in a coordinator and be the substitute pro-rector of the People Management area. The reason for Respondent 1 to accept the position she holds is because she likes People Management area. Although it is a very responsible position, the manager gives up the comfort zone to have this satisfaction.

> People Management is an area that I identify very much, which I like and this is the reason why I accepted the challenge, although all the implications that come when occupying this function. (Respondent 1).

People Management is an area that requires keeping up to date always. According to Dutra (2002), in the global pattern of organizations and competition, competitiveness requires managers who are well articulated and are in an ongoing process of improvement.

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> In addition to the daily routine, we have to keep up to date, internal and external controls are bigger, more and more demanding in the public service, and we have to keep up to date. (Respondent 1).

Nevertheless, one can observe the increase of women in the labor market, sometimes with the objective of complementing the family income, but, in short, with the pretension of having their personal and financial independence. Faced with the increase in the female presence in the labor universe, the managers interviewed reported that they can balance their private life with the professional, even though it is not a comfortable task. Another factor that hinders the balance between personal and professional life, for Respondent 2, is to have two jobs and work three shifts. With the routine from home to work, from one job to another, even if it is financially rewarding, it is not slight to achieve this balance, because it is necessary to give up even the contact with friends and family.

> I policie like this, I work all week until Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon until night is my day off, because Sunday morning I start to prepare for the week. (Respondent 2).

In the case of this study, the respondents are single, but it is important to mention that many women, besides their professional duties, still have the responsibility to take care of the house and the children. Piovesan (2011) points out that, throughout history, the care of the children and the husband has been attributed to women, besides domestic tasks; and, to men, the public sphere was destined. This division of responsibilities within the household is still prevalent, causing women to overload activities after hours.

The combination of work and family life can make it difficult for women to be more productive, impacting, for example, lower pay, fewer opportunities for employment and stability in the labor market, and difficulties in obtaining in Brazil, the mean number of hours that women use to perform household tasks is more than double the average number of hours than men use to do this (Agostinho, & Saboia, 2011) .

This stage of growth of the woman's career is considered by Steil (1997) as the phenomenon "glass ceiling." This would be the delicate process of women's impediment to professional advancement according to gender. The term refers to the subtle but insurmountable process, such as glass.

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Regarding their reward for work at the university, both managers feel rewarded, and recognition and financial reward motivate them, although Respondent 1 does not have a parameter to know whether, in the same institution, it would be more or less financially rewarded than in a private institution. She feels rewarded because, economically, she can live independently.

Respondent 2 mentions recognition as a form of reward, since most of the time the choice is made by older professionals with more career time to assume some managerial role, and she never imagined that in such a short time would be chosen to assume managerial positions.

Regarding the norms and rules of the University, Respondent 1 comment that the area of People Management in the public service has a great legal framework; thus presenting a demanding normalization, mainly for the admission of people to the university, since it has to follow the job plan without adding more attributes in the recruitment and selection process.

> It does have a certain rigidity, often in the private sector, in some systems in the area of People Management, it has more flexibility than in the public service. (Respondent 1).

Respondent 2 says that in their sector, the rules are quite rigid with regard to more flexible legislation and deadlines, in the sense that it is free to propose changes in resolutions and propose their ideas. For her, it would be a bad job in which decisions came, hierarchically, immutable.

Regarding the decisions that need to be made at the institution, Respondent 1 feels safe, since it has a long history in the area of People Management; , if she did not feel secure, she would not assume this position as pro-rector, since it is a great responsibility to decide on the lives of a large number of people.

> Whoever assumes the role of pro-rector has to exercise leadership, if I am in the position and I can not have knowledge and I can not transmit this security, my team would negatively impact. (Respondent 1).

Respondent 2 also cites experience in the area in which she acts and always takes decisions within the legality, having the support of a team, the Legal Department (Projur), which also helps her to feel secure in the decisions she has to make.

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The respondents were also asked if there were any differences in the treatment of men and women by superiors. Respondent 1 was very quick and clear in replying that she did not perceive this within the university, and Respondent 2 also said she did not perceive any difference in the treatment of men and women in university.

> I believe it is because it is a public sector, if it were perhaps in the private sector, we read a lot of reports that there are wage inequalities, not here, we can occupy the same positions here. (Respondent 2).

Respondent 2′s perception that there are still many cases of wage inequality is in agreement with Bruschini and Lombardi (1996), who perceive that women go through various forms of discrimination when looking for work, such as, for example, , inequalities in salary in relation to men, but also fewer opportunities and impediments to achieving positions of command and control. However, the authors still understand that, even with these difficulties, women are inserted and are increasingly engaged in productive activities.

When asked if it was easy or difficult to live with women/men in the institution, Respondent 2 says that they do not see differentiation and believe that it is because the entry is made by competition, which guarantees all the same rights; mentions, moreover, that it is more noticeable that more women than men enter.

Respondent 1, commenting on her career in choosing the course and her profession, says that when she graduated in Business Administration, there were only four women and that, in her time, more men were trained in Administration than women, and, so she has already been challenging this space. He also comments that the people around him are pre-judging, saying, ″Oh, this is a more masculine or more feminine profession.″ According to her, this thought never prevented her from achieving her goals.

> When I have to impose my decisions I never think about being a woman or not, I think so, this is my job and I have to make the decisions, but I never think about the gender issue. (Respondent 1).

The belief that there are activities that are most suitable for men or women begins to be generated even in childhood.

> In school routines, boys and girls are exposed to messages about how they should behave, what is expected of them and what is allowed or forbidden, and even what is ″normal″ for each to enjoy. (Teixeira, 2010, p.41).

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This influence, which happens so early, continues over the years, generating segregation in relation to gender in the choice of professions. Respondent 1, when asked what position's women have occupied most at university, comments that in the Pro-Rector's Office of People Management, she was the first woman to hold the position and that currently, only four women work in total existing pro-rectory.

Respondent 2 cited teachers assuming leadership positions. The entry of women on the labor market is influenced by the advancement of the schooling of Brazilians, who are increasingly having access to education, which means that, in relation to men, the education of women worker is superior (Bruschini, 2007).

When asked about ethnic and racial issues, Respondent 1 points out that there were at no time any problems with racism, although she said it a situation which is consolidating, because in the contest happened in July 2015 at the university, was the first time in which the legislation was contemplated, reserving quotas for blacks and browns.

He also mentioned that he had several dark colleagues, and that he has never witnessed problems with discrimination. Respondent 2 as well commented on this new university law that needs to contemplate racial's quotas for incumbent professors, substitute professors, and administrative technicians, but she sees it not as a differentiation, but as a legal requirement.

Cunha (2012) reports that, due to the awareness of racial issues, the commitment of the spheres of society, governments and the media to protect and value ethnic-racial diversity and equality, as well as the fight against discrimination, in both significant changes have taken place over the last few decades that have led to some concrete achievements. This is the case of law n. 12,900, dated June 9, 2014, cited by the respondents, which reserves 20% of vacancies in public tenders for blacks.

They were asked if there was an incentive for progression of charges. Respondent 1 explained that in university, there are three careers: the teacher's higher teaching profession, the teacher's basic teaching, technical and technological, and the administrative-technical.

Respondent 1, as administrator, falls into the career of the administrative technician and, through legislation, can reach the dean, not being a dean or deputy,

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because they are private functions for those who hold a teaching career. She, however, feels very accomplished professionally.

> I got to the top in terms of promotion, what I could be I arrived, which is to be pro-recruiter. (Respondent 1).

Respondent 2 explained that this incentive to progress was one of the ways she wanted to pursue a career in the public service and also explained that there is an incentive for merit progression, which is done by performance evaluation and progression through training, through courses with a certain load every 18 to 18 months up to three levels. In addition, Respondent 2 commented that the career within the university predicts that if the professional specializes, the latter has a 30% salary increase; if you do masters, 52%; and doctorate, 75%, in addition to free courses that one of the nuclei promotes.

> This creates a culture. You live with people who are always studying, so even if you do not have the profile to study hard enough, you will end up becoming more and more professional because you know you will be rewarded for it, you know you will progress. I compare with the companies private companies that many do not have that incentive, so people do not go ahead. (Respondent 2).

With these analyzes, from the perspective of the managers, it can be verified that, in the institution where they work, there is no gender differentiation, both in relationship and in salary issues, but they mention that they have already heard reports from other private sector companies in which there are inequalities in relation to positions and salaries. Bruschini (2007) mentions that the lowest wages received by women, compared to men, are reaffirmed when taking into account the economic sectors, the position in the occupation, the hours of work and the formation of them.

According to the respondents' comments, it is possible to see that they feel empowered, seek participation from their subordinates, delegate power to the decisions they need to make, have autonomy, are confident and think they need to ensure security for their staff as well. Therefore, from these analyzes, the perceptions of the managers interviewed on matters of power and gender relations and empowerment were verified. With their contribution, telling their experiences and motives, it became easier to understand, discuss and conclude this study.

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Final Considerations

This work is justifiable because it seeks a better understanding of gender relations and women′s empowerment. The 2011 IBGE data draw attention, revealing that women, regardless of years of study and even with legally supported pay equity, receive less on average than men.

In this perspective, Cruz (2010) reports that the distinction between men and women is an obvious phenomenon in relation to both biological and cultural issues. In this way, the author realizes that identification mechanisms are used to ″produce″ the man and the woman, making them conform to the behaviors that are accepted so that they can be considered ″normal″ in relation to their sexual condition.

Silva (2010) understands that the myth of woman′s dependence on man was originated by patriarchal-based societies. According to him, such discourse was rooted in the anthropological heritage, and; over the years, the composition of the collective imagination has not been re-dimensioned with respect to gender issues. In patriarchal cultures, such as the Brazilian one, women are associated with the private and subordination, imposing on them this condition (Monteiro, 2015). Thus, sexual segregation does not just happen by believing in ″masculine″ or ″feminine″ nature, in fact; this segregation generates powers, benefiting only a few in their interests (Teixeira, 2010).

It was possible to verify in interviews with managers, women are currently engaged not only in domestic activities but also have one profession or even two. Therefore, the importance of investigating whether these facts of inequality as well occurred with these managers.

For the process of change in this already established culture, according to which some behaviors are considered acceptable for one sex while others do not, Albuquerque (2010: 31) mentions that ″it would be important for a new stage of feminism to include men as subject and as an object of their practices and discourses. ″ Thus, the process of changing these beliefs would include not only women but both sexes.

This study had a problematic focus on the question of how the empowering relationships of women occupying management positions (pro-rectory) in a federal

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university are given. It was observed that relations were well defined, and managers never think about the gender issue when they have to explain their decisions.

As for the first specific objective of the study, which was to present the profile of respondents, Respondent 1 was identified to be twice the age of Respondent 2 and works thirty years longer than Respondent 2 at the federal university. Respondent 1 is the Pro-Rector of Personnel Management, and Respondent 2 is her substitute Pro-Rector, also assuming a competition coordination.

Respondent 2 teaches also outside the university. The two are single, and Respondent 2 explains that because of work, often the social life is in the background. The two managers have an undergraduate and a graduation in Business Administration and intend to continue their studies for a 75% increase in salary (doctorate).

The second objective was to investigate the manager´s perception of their hierarchical position. Respondent 2 intends to grow even more as an administrator, and Respondent 1 explains that it has already reached the top of promotion, which is to be Pro-Rector. Both are happy with their positions, which they have obtained through their merits, and feel integrated with the institution and confident to lead and provide security to their subordinates.

Thus, it is noted that the formation of feminine identity has been altered and is increasingly focused on productive work, since major transformations occurred in patterns of behavior and values regarding the social role of women, which were intensified by feminist movements of the 1970s and by the more present performance of women into public spaces (Bruschini, & Lombardi, 1996). In this way, women are gaining more and more prominent roles, both in private and public institutions, as in the case of the managers participating in this study.

The third objective was to understand the challenges/difficulties that the managers faced in their work environment with their peers and subordinates. According to the Respondents, perhaps because it is in a public area, where the form of entry is the same for all, they do not encounter difficulties with their peers and subordinates, explaining also that their ideas are heard by the superiors and have good teams to help them.

Regarding the limitations in the study, there was a certain difficulty to appoint the interviews with the counselors, since their positions require many responsibilities and commitments. For future work, we suggest studies involving the perception of men in relation to women in management positions, as well as in women working in private institutions, since in some IBGE surveys, inequalities have been evidenced in some sectors.

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