

Organizational Innovation and Bureaucracy

An Empirical Analysis of Professional Women's Perceptions in Brazil

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze Brazilian professional women's perceptions on organizational innovations in the context of contemporary employment and labor market structures, as well as in the context of changes in organizations. The theoretical discussion covered the concepts of organizational innovation and a debate on bureaucracy perspectives. The research methodology followed both qualitative and quantitative approaches, based on focus groups that supported the execution of a survey.

The results, among other findings, show that the bureaucratic model assumptions bring positive impact on women's careers, as well as that large companies are perceived as environments which provide them misalignment and work overloads. The articulation between organizational innovation dimensions with the classical view of bureaucracy, as discussed in this paper, although apparently represents a paradox, allows deeper analysis of elements such as structure, hierarchy, norms, rules, positions, payment, among others, that may contribute to the agenda of contemporary organizations and academic research proposals on organizational innovation.

Introduction, Research Problem and Objectives

This paper presents the perceptions of professional Brazilian women about themes related to organizational innovation, notably significantly changes in policies and practices; process and organization of work; and organizational structure and lines of authority. If on one side, the chosen population entails a limit on the perspectives of women's points of view, on the other side this choice extends the research debate in the field of innovation.

Changes in the patterns of employment, flexibility, reduction of working hours, teleworking, issues related to legislation, the presence of a psychological contract, increases in female participation in different industries, unequal pay compared with men and interest in building a career in the public sector - as discussed by Castells [1], Kovács [2], Antunes and Alves [3], Piccinini, Rubenich, and Oliveira [4] - are aspects that permeate the context of professional Brazilian women.

Without going into the discussion about labour and employment, themes dear to the work of the authors mentioned, amongst others, the fact is that one of the striking trends in this context is the increased female participation in labour market, which keeps evolving, as a

result of feminist struggle for equality between the sexes. This increased participation goes hand in hand with the growing need to make a contribution to the in house budget, meanwhile the level of women's education of women raises and the cultural barriers to the entry of women into the labor market reduce [5, 6, 7].

As evidenced by Bruschini [8], women's participation in the Brazilian labour market is also growing, especially since the 1990s. Nevertheless, several studies point to inequalities, especially in terms of pay, comparing situations between women and men. According to a joint research conducted by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA) and the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), men earned in 2007 about 56% more than women in Brazil [9, 10].

Other studies indicate increased participation of women in higher education, including management courses, as well as strong participation in the service sector. Also, women with a higher level of education, which were the focus of the research presented in this paper, have been traditionally working in areas such as in teaching and nursing. However, they have gouged areas such as medicine, law, architecture, or even engineering, which are traditionally fields for men [e.g. 8].

In this context, "capturing" the perceptions of professional women on aspects of organizational innovation can help developing the present discussion, when it is shown how they perceive these aspects in Brazilian companies. To what extent organizations are developing innovative policies and practices seeking to meet the demands of professional women? Do they perceive innovations tied to the evolution of the bureaucratic organization's elements?

Thus, the main objective of this paper is to analyze the perceptions of professional Brazilian women about organizational innovations. To achieve this goal, this work is organized as follows: the next section presents a brief conceptual discussion concerning organizational innovation, in order to show the reader different conceptual perspectives on that topic. The next section also deepens the theoretical elements related to the bureaucratic organization, its dysfunctions and reconfigurations. The third section presents the methodology applied to the research, which was essentially descriptive, based on focus groups and survey. Sections four and five present and discuss, respectively, the main evidences from the research and the conclusions of the article.

Literature Review

There is consensus among scholars in the field of innovation that there is no single theory for explaining organizational innovation, as it can be perceived in the practice of organizations in different ways [11, 12, 13, 14]. This paper does not intend to make a thorough discussion on all the theories of innovation, or even about their epistemological or theoretical basis. But it is necessary to recover some concepts regarding organizational innovation and its relations to the bureaucracy discussion.

From a conceptual point of view, organizational innovation as a general phenomenon is essentially related to the creation or adoption of new management and organizational forms, which is clearly related to the manager's work. Chandler [15] states that the administrator's job is related to "executive action and orders, as well as decision-making related to coordination, evaluation and planning of the company's work and the allocation of its resources" (p. 43).

Using the term "management innovation" as a synonym for organizational innovation, Hamel [16] defines it as "anything that substantially alters the way in which the work of management is carried out [principles and practices], or that significantly modifies customary organizational forms [structures and functions]" (p. 19), in order to improve organization

performance. In the same vein, Birkinshaw *et al.* [17] define management innovation as "the invention and implementation of a management practice, process, structure or technique that is new to the state of the art and is intended to further organizational goals" (p. 825). The same concept is adopted by Volberda *et al.* [14], which point that the idea of management innovation is not new.

Chandler [15] argues that these innovations are related to the development of "new methods and means of coordinating, evaluating and planning the effective use of a wide variety of human, financial and material resources" (p. 48). In a similar perspective, Daft [18] defines "administrative innovation" as those related to changes in "recruitment policies, resource allocation, task structuring, authority and rewards" (p. 197).

Organizational innovation can mean many things, as stated by Mikl-Horke [19]: "New principles, practices, organizational designs, theories of leadership, or even *quasi-philosophical* concepts such as the recent six-sigma principle" (p. 106). In his study on the diffusion of such innovation in Central and Eastern Europe, the author states that "a new management philosophy" diffuses quite differently, compared to the diffusion of a new practice or organizational design. Management innovation comprises [20], for example, the reduction of restrictive practices for employees, introduction of a new management technologies, changes in organizational structure towards a more lean one, increased decentralization, new means of managing HR, changes in industrial relations, and the initiation of new practices, such as *Just in Time*.

In the Oslo Manual [21], "the implementation of a new organizational method in business practices of the company [routines and procedures], in the organization of the workplace [distribution of responsibilities and decision-making] or in its external relations [with other firms and institutions]" corresponds to the concept of "organizational innovation" (p. 61). According to the document, such innovation should be considered only when it represents something that has never been used before by the company and when it has been the result of strategic decisions taken by management.

Consolidating different points of views, Lopes and Barbosa [22] maps the main conceptual approaches to this theme, including significantly changes in: management philosophy and principles; policies and practices; process and organization of work; organizational structure and lines of authority; and managerial knowledge, methods and techniques. The authors also discuss the particularities of the process of organizational innovation, retrieving the four stage process proposed by Birkinshaw *et al.* [17].

Although these concepts allow the identification of what is, and the complexity of, organizational innovation, they do not deep its main dimensions, such as management philosophy and principles, policies and practices, structures, among other. Therefore, acknowledging that there is no space for all theories regarding these dimensions, it is important to recover the theories of "classical" authors – namely Max Weber, Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton, Michel Crozier, Philip Selznick and Herbert Simon - on their discussion of structure, policies and management practices.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the German sociologist Max Weber [23] developed the ideal type of bureaucracy, which has its foundations in organization, control and structure through hierarchy and lines of authority, amongst other aspects. In his sociological approach, Weber directs his work towards the structure of the bureaucratic organizations. Some elements of his thought include functions, hierarchical structure, formal positions, norms, and rules. The *weberian* view of rationalization and bureaucracy, together with further development by authors which shared the same thoughts, provides the foundations that will help understanding organizations' configurations and reconfigurations, and also the impact of these reconfigurations in management policies and practices. Weber's

work had been diffused throughout the Twentieth Century and many of his ideas are still valid and intensively used, while others were revisited and / or eliminated.

The *weberian* theory was translated into English by the sociologist Talcott Parsons, who also contributed – in the end of the 1930s and more strongly in the 1950s and 1960s – to increase the emphasis on the rational organization. According to Vasconcelos [24], Parsons argued that the rational organization reflected the general movement of rational action in modern society. According to Parsons [25], action is intrinsically rational and this rational perspective from the *weberian* bureaucracy, which Parsons diffuses specially in the United States, provides the foundations for understanding the organizational models that are highly diffused in today's organizations. Extrapolating the rationality of action that starts in the individual and evolves to be collectively constructed, Parsons [25] discusses the formal bureaucratic organization. In order to achieve its goals, economic organizations: are hierarchically structured and establish rules to be followed; structure positions (roles) following the principle of impersonality; hire people with specific qualifications and reward them according to an established criteria.

The subjectivity behind Parson's concept of action is also rational in his theory. However, in this rational subjectivity, uncertainty is disregarded, as well as unexplained and divergent aspects of human behavior – as it is, in the course of our study, when a woman desires to postpone a possible promotion to reconcile better her role as mother with the professional role.

An alternative to the exceedingly rational bureaucratic model was sought by Merton [26]. This author – whose work aimed at discovering the reasons for the differences between the *weberian* model and the reality found in organizations – questions the bureaucratic organization's technical and absolute rationality. His view meant a disruption from the ideal type bureaucratic model, when Merton analyzed the actual practices of organizations. In this way, he highlights the dysfunctions of bureaucracy. According to Merton [26], a process of dysfunction may develop in many organizations through, for example, the emotional dependence upon bureaucratic symbols and status, affective involvement in spheres of competence and authority, and impersonal relationships. Thus these dysfunctions questioned the bureaucratic model and allowed further development and innovation on its explanations over time.

As well as Merton, Crozier [27] also analyzes the model's dysfunctions, arguing that human activities depend on sentimental involvement – which goes against the impersonal and rational characteristics of bureaucracy. In the case of organizational policies on career and their decisions, feelings shall not be considered in this perspective, for example, when a woman returns from maternity leave and has to reconcile her feelings (and duties) of mother and professional. Other dysfunctions identified by Crozier [27] are the vicious circles of bureaucracy (which is related to impersonal rules inhibit the individual initiative) and the rigid hierarchy (which hinders communication between organization's levels). This dysfunction impacts the organization's policies on career, preventing the rise of good professionals. It also generates parallel power structures, which creates dependency and conflicts.

In search for addressing some of the bureaucracy dysfunctions, Selznick [28] emphasizes the importance of delegation and succession. This author also raises the question of how individuals promote deviations from the bureaucratic organization's formal systems. The author states that unwritten laws and unspoken rules tend to become institutionalized in organizations. Selznick [28] discusses the relevance of the organizations' informal structures, which are constructed through the interactions of individuals and groups and through ties of friendship and other types of commitment. Therefore, the organization can be conceived as cooperative systems and adaptive structures, which operate in parallel with the formal

systems of delegation and coordination. Furthermore, Selznick [28] reveals a new framework for organizational analysis, as he understands organizations as less rational. Some of the relevant factors in his analysis are cohesion, persuasion, commitment, and involvement. In this perspective, individuals can commit and engage more or less with the organization, depending on the degree of autonomy and free will they may have. Therefore, this perspective renews the discussion about organizational innovation, shedding light on the individual and their decision making processes.

The importance of individuals decisions in attaining organizational innovation can be also found in the work of Simon [29]. The author built a model taking into account behavioral and cognitive processes of making rational human choices. Simon [29] discusses the moment of choice, arguing that there is a complex process of reflection, research and analysis that precedes the moment of decision making. Reflecting on the executive's work, be it man or woman, Simon [29] argues that the job does not only consist in making their own decisions, but also in ensuring that the whole organization, or part of it, also make them effectively. Most of the decisions by which an executive is responsible are not exactly from his responsibility, but responsibility of his or her subordinates. This perspective on shared decision-making is in fact an innovation in itself. According to Simon [29], the organizational structure should be designed in order to ease decision-making, especially the unplanned ones.

From this brief discussion, it can be seen that the idea of organizational innovation cannot be dissociated from the classical perspectives on organizational structure, lines of authority, policies, practices, processes and organization of work. It is interesting to point out the interrelations between such approaches to innovation when analyzing the bureaucratic organization. Among other issues, it can be seen that changes in work organization implies changes in the organizational structure.

Method

This study followed both qualitative and quantitative approaches, using complementary information in order to avoid, neutralize or even cancel the biases of the methods used separately. Descriptively, following the definitions of Churchill [30], this research sought to understand and interpret the perception of professional women regarding the organizational context and the elements of bureaucracy, counting on categories of analysis and variables linked to the dimensions of organizational innovation, including: Hierarchy; norms and rules; positions; fixed payment; emotional dependence; conflicts; disregard professional feelings; delegation; succession; friendship ties; cooperation; commitment and involvement; flexible work; working hours; teleworking; policy of flexibility; policies that respect the workday.

Firstly, a qualitative research was carried out with five focus groups, and secondly a survey was administered, involving 694 professional women with questions based on the results of those groups. The focus groups followed Oliveira and Freitas [31] orientations and happened from March to June 2011, with an average of three participants per group. The small amounts of people, which had not affected the quality of the focus groups, were due to external contingencies and difficulties in finding voluntaries within professional women, which have time as a highly scarce resource. The meetings lasted an average of two and a half hours. Participants were selected by accessibility, respecting the criteria of age (20-59 years), occupation (management, public management, professional person, consultant and entrepreneur), marital status, and motherhood. All participants were post-graduate and had monthly incomes at least 5 times the Brazilian minimum wage (around U\$ 300). The method used to analyze data from the five focus groups discussions was content analysis [32]. In this

study, the previously mentioned categories of analysis were refined into variables to support the second stage.

The second stage of the study presented here consisted of a survey [33], which was conducted between August and October 2011. Questionnaire design was parameterized, with closed ended questions as multiple choice, five points Likert scale questions, and scale of importance. Two pre-tests were carried out over two months in 2011. The web link to the final questionnaire was sent by email and Facebook to potential respondents, such as teachers, course coordinators, executives, and consultants. It is important to mention that a management education institution located in Minas Gerais provided 5,555 contacts from different regions of Brazil, to whom the questionnaire was also sent. With the exclusions of inconsistent responses and inadequate profiles, the final sample comprised 694 respondents.

Preliminarily, data normality was assessed through the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, as described by Motta Filho and Oliveira [34]. These results are presented in Table I, showing that sample does not exhibit a normal distribution (p -value < 0.05).

Table I: Sample normality test

Question	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	DF	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
What is your age?	,083	694	,000	,965	694	,000
What is your average monthly wage?	,258	694	,000	,401	694	,000

Legend: Table I shows Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests results.

Note. a. LillieforsSignificanceCorrection. Source: survey data, 2012.

Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal-Wallis H test, and chi-square test were used to support statistical analysis. Mann-Whitney U test is a substitute for *t test* when comparing two independent samples when there is a rupture of parametric assumptions, specially normality and homoscedasticity (similar variances between samples). As the sample for this study demonstrated to be non-parametric, this test was used to compare continuous data from the two groups, such as, for example, respondent's age and whether he or she works remotely using anykind of technology [35, 34].

Kruskal-Wallis H test (a method for analysis of variance equivalent to the parametric method ANOVA) was used as a nonparametric alternative to compare medians of several independent samples [35, 34]. This test allowed the comparison of continuous data between two or more groups. For instance, it was possible to compare women's age with their agreement or disagreement with the need for social support to meet the workday duties.

Chi-square test, in turn, was used to analyze most of the crosses in this study, as is, to evaluate the statistical significance between categorical variables, where at least one of them was not ordinal. For example, it was possible to analyze company's size and women agreement or disagreement with the overload experienced by their roles. In this case, the test compared the empirical values in each category and the expected or estimated values [35, 34].

From these tests results, statistically significant associations between variables were identified where p -value was less than the cutoff point of 0.05. Figure II provides a summary of the methodological procedures that support the study presented in this paper.

Figure II. Summary of the methodological procedures

Methodological procedures	Description
Research type; method	Descriptive; Focus group and survey
Data collecting methods	Semistructured interviews and on line questionnaire
Participants and respondents	16 (stage 1) and 694 (stage 2)
Data analysis	Content analysis (stage 1) and statistical analysis (stage 2, SPSS, Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Shapiro-Wilk, Mann-Whitney U, Kruskal-Wallis H (ANOVA), and Chi-square.

Legend: Figure II presents a summary of the methodological procedures.

Results and discussion

In order to give an overview of the professional women profile in this research, a brief description of the respondents is made here. In terms of age, the survey sample was more concentrated between 30 and 49 years, which represented 75% of the participating public. Considering the pay range, there was a higher concentration of women earning from R\$ 2,000.00 to R\$ 10,000.00 per month, which was approximately 62% of the sample. The median of earnings was R\$ 9,849.10. Assistants, advisors, supervisors participation was slightly higher (27.2%) in relation to other positions, such as partners or entrepreneurs, public workers, managers, directors, vice presidents or presidents of firms. We could see the predominance of married women (59.4%), and a few with stable union (4.8%). Regarding children, the sample was balanced: 52.4% of the respondents were mothers, while 47.6% were not. Considering company's size, 59.8% of the surveyed professionals were working for large companies.

With respect to organizational innovation's conceptual elements, the focus groups identified most issues regarding organizational structure, as well as management policies and practices. There was a clear interrelationship between these two dimensions. Several elements of the bureaucracy were identified and could be synthesized into two groups: The first, "bureaucratic premises", included findings aligned to the ideas of Weber and Parsons; The second group was defined as "informal relationships in bureaucracy", covering findings on the various dysfunctions of bureaucracy in line with the works of Merton, Crozier, Selznick, and Simon. These two groups synthesized important issues of what is meant by organizational innovation, departing from bureaucratic configurations towards more dynamic and unstable models, and considers the importance of individuals and their decisions.

The focus groups discussions aimed at identifying whether professional women acknowledged or not the bureaucracy's elements in their work, whether these elements were valued or not by them, and, if so, to what extent. As noted before, the focus groups results allowed the construction of the survey, which allowed quantitative descriptions regarding those elements. Due to space limitation, this paper presents only the elements (categories) that stood out in both stages of the research. As it is seen below, each element was analyzed according to both focus groups and survey results.

Regarding **hierarchy**, the focus groups discussions indicated both its positive and negative sides. When analyzing the positive side of hierarchy in their organizations, professional women were unanimous in considering the existence of hierarchy as something positive, as it organizes and defines responsibilities in the organization, and as it clarify issues concerning tasks execution and delegation, as well as problem solving. According to focus groups discussions, professional women working for organizations with no clear hierarchy realized how negative was its absence. The results showed the importance of recognition in regard for the work of those professional women surveyed – recognition was almost unanimously between respondents (97.9%). The majority or 69.9% agreed (33.7% somewhat

agreed and 36.2% agreed) on obeying hierarchy since using personal relationships to mitigate the impact of decisions with which they do not conform. Many professionals observe hierarchy when making decisions that may be incongruent with their hierarchical superior (35.2% agreed and 31.1% partially agreed). Concerning the possibility of using hierarchy to ward off professionals who could compete on their superior's visibility, 31.9% of respondents disagree (18.9% disagree and 12.8% partially disagree), while 17.1% considered themselves indifferent and 51.1% agreed (28.2% partially agree and 22.9% agree) that could happen.

Furthermore, two focus groups indicated positive views on the existence of rules, responsibilities and clear distinctions between strategic, tactical, and operational levels in organizations. None of the groups indicated **norms and rules** as elements that lock up or undermine organizational dynamics required to compete. However, some discussions were towards negative effects of hierarchy: Professionals were uncomfortable with power misuses based on hierarchy, or with the use of Brazilian "*jeitinho*" (knack) to overcoming rules, or with the sudden emergence of hierarchy as a reason for making decisions that were incongruent with supervisions' opinions, or with the use of power from higher levels of hierarchy to ward off professionals who could compete with bosses on the visibility of deliveries.

When discussing about **positions**, one of the groups where there were young women highlighted the importance of the existence of roles and positions. Relating to **fixed payment**, there were extensive discussions in the focus groups, that emphasized issues on the coverage of the professionals' basic needs, on the greater predictability of personal finance, as well as on the sense of security when their children are born. The focus groups also highlighted mismatches between fixed salary and flexibility. Using Kruskal-Wallis test, survey data suggested statistical significance between respondents' wages and works to be performed ($p < 0.001$). The test results showed correlation between wage and the matter that working hours be determined by hierarchic superior or client ($p < 0.001$). Also, statistical significance between wage and need for social support to accomplishing workday was found ($p < 0.001$). Women with bigger earnings tended to link their workday with deliveries to be performed ($p < 0.001$), while those with lower earnings linked payment with their workday as being determined by their superiors. Furthermore, those women with bigger earnings need for more social support in order to meet their workday.

Regarding "informal relationships in bureaucracy", this study showed women's **emotional dependence** to their positions' status, a fact that is linked to recognition, according to participants of a group with women aged over 35 years. However, this group pointed out that position is not always the result of recognition solely. For one of the participants, this issue was illustrated in her explanation about "commissioned positions" in the public sector: In order to occupy those positions, according to her, there must be personal and technical relationships of trust between who offers and those who occupy them.

Regarding **conflicts** experienced by professionals when following norms, participants from three focus groups reported they could bypass rules by joining the "political game". Acting this way, they somehow avoided confrontations due to the rigidity of bureaucracy. They used to put in place favour exchanges to avoid confronting those who have power, and they used to be cordial in dealing with superiors, peers and subordinates.

The fact that bureaucracies **disregard professional feelings** was discussed when participants found that not taking their feelings into account contributes to thwart career perspectives in their organization. Concerning **delegation** and **succession**, according to professional women in two groups, these factors are related, respectively, to professionals' profiles and to company's culture. There are professionals who are more likely to delegate, while others are more centralizers, and the differences are related to professional profile in the view of one group. With regard to succession, participants of other group suggested that it

is necessary to invest in building a solid knowledge, to study and to be assessed, in pursuing career advancement. This group concluded that movements of worry and struggle in the “race for succession” tends to generate competition among peers and to lose the teamworking atmosphere.

Regarding **friendship ties**, there were different views inside and between groups. Some participants found it interesting to build relations and to make friends in workplace, but sometimes, they argued, it is difficult to separate personal life from professional life. Others argued that friendship ties can not be more important than competence: “Competence must come *a priori*”. Some participants considered that creating friendship ties depends on the person’s profile. More receptive (or “opened”) people, those who like to share their personal matters, are able to establish friendships and to strengthen their relationships network. Some professional women believe that friendships leverage results in organizations, but some of them disagree.

Women’s perceptions on the importance of personal friendship ties to improving work environment were found in strong consensus: 88.8% of respondents agreed on this. It is noteworthy that the Chi-square test showed statistical significance ($p = 0.014$) between occupation and perceptions on the importance of personal ties to favor work environment. For professionals, businesswomen or entrepreneurs, and public workers, the level of agreement on this reached 90%. One of the focus groups revealed the impact of company’s management style on building friendships in organizational environment: “*If the organization promotes competition between people, it makes it difficult to create friendship ties. On the other hand, if the organization promotes cooperation, it gets easier*”. Under the eyes of the professional women inquired, companies with a more cooperative management style tend to enhance and strengthen relationships, in turn contributing positively to the development of professional women in the organization. Two groups also debated on the establishment of friendly ties in relations with the leadership: It can be a catalyst or an impediment to the rise of the career woman. Regarding friendship ties with superiors, some participants discussed whether it could be a catalyst or an impediment for career advancement. Reinforcing perceptions from three groups, survey data showed agreement for 60% of respondents on the fact that as much hours spent at work, as better the creation of informal relationships between colleagues. When this finding was analyzed together with occupation, there was statistical significance ($p < 0.001$) for public workers, professionals and entrepreneurs of 127 organizations. Regarding benefits brought by the creation of friendship to work environment, 80.5% of respondents agreed with this issue. Chi-square test relating this issue with occupation was statistically significant ($p = 0.020$), with high levels of agreements for professionals, public workers, assistants, advisors, supervisors, partners or entrepreneurs, managers, and directors.

Returning to the focus groups’ results, participants revealed that the outcomes of **cooperation** are still unknown for organizations. This issue may be a benefit or not, depending on the nature of cooperation. If cooperation is built towards the organization’s interests, it may be beneficial. However, if cooperation is focusing on divergent interests, it can be seen as harmful for organization. Survey results showed the existence of cooperation and mutual help inside professional women’s organizations: 86.3% of respondents agreed with this (47.8% partially agreed and 38.5% agreed). The Chi-square test identified statistical significance between this issue and company size ($p = 0.031$).

Regarding **commitment and involvement**, two focus groups reflected on the role of leadership. In one group, participants discussed whether staff commitment and involvement depends or not on leader profiles. The leader profile will guide the work of teams, as illustrated by the following transcript: “*An uncontrolled leadership has the power of making people sick and of undermining group’s motivation. [This kind of leadership] Exacerbates*

authoritarianism and harassments. A good leader promotes integration, involves and develops people, contributing to their evolution”.

With respect to policies for **flexible work**, the focus groups revealed that flexible models are good for those women who have to manage the roles of professional and mother, especially. A practitioner (doctor) who took part in the focus groups said she likes working at night *“because her absence at home is not that felt by her children, as it is during the day”*. Several participants considered interesting working part time until their children reach the age of two years old. Some participants who are not mothers argued that flexible policies increase productivity: They would yield much more on certain tasks if they were in a quiet place, and without interruption, ie, outside the organization. With reference to the same theme, the survey results demonstrated that flexibility was more evident between professionals and partners or entrepreneurs. It was lower for public workers and non public workers. Between directors, 41.8% considered their organizations lack flexibility and 48.8% considered their organizations have flexible policies ($p < 0.001$). When asked whether they would like to have flexibility, 98% of respondents said yes. Considering company size, there was statistical significance with flexible workday ($p < 0.001$). In smaller companies, there is greater flexibility in working hours.

Concerning **working hours**, despite being perceived as long and extensive, survey results showed that clients and hierarchic superior are who determine the levels of flexibility. Taking work home is a constant reality for professional women, in trying to reduce the great demand for labor. Some professionals said that long working hours, in medium and long terms, takes to unhappiness and loss of motivation to their work and even to their profession. In this aspect, traveling also has great impact on workload increases, generating dissatisfaction and high turnover in organizations. One of the focus groups discussed the fact that women use to work much more when their working hours are flexible. The following statement illustrated this debate: *“When I became a formal employee with work contract, I began to think in terms of workday and I drove my attention to resist in overcoming the contracted hours”*. About working hours rigidity, two quotations synthesized the perceptions of professional women: *“The need for being physically present suffocates”*; And *“Not being able to adjust the working hours in order to have the possibility to do something during the period that is fixed is fatiguing”*. The survey answers on working hours’s questions showed that 60.3% of respondents considered that this reality depends on their work deliveries, while 56.10% pointed out their working hours as being much beyond 40 hours per week. These findings reinforce with respect to working hours that women are not bound to what is recommended by law and that this is related to their ability to deliver, and not to the period they are effectively engaged. Through Kruskal-Wallis test, it was possible to identify in two issues related to working hours significant differences with respect to the age of respondents: The need for social support to meet the workday ($p = 0.005$), as well as the need for personal and professional planning to get flexibility in working hours ($p = 0.005$). Data showed lower need for social support to meet the workday in the cases of younger professionals. Additionally, younger professional women who do not have flexibility in terms of working hours, have planned to get it.

With regard to **teleworking**, every women from all groups highlighted difficulties, in greater or lesser degree, in establishing limits and selfcontrol in executing tasks at home, or according to one of them, in making *“the home office more office than more home”*. Given this context, three of the five groups discussed the common perception that more professionals, both men and women, are adopting more comprehensive strategies for having flexibility and this provides great personal satisfaction. This finding can be summarized in the following sentence: *“Being able to choose when to work and when to go to the gym makes any professional feel much happier and complete”*. The data demonstrated that 72.6% of

respondents used to employ technology that allows working remotely (email, phone calls, video conferencing), whilst 59% of surveyed women were effectively working remotely, spending up to four extra hours beyond their usual workday. Based on the Mann-Whitney test, there was statistically significance between wage and working remotely ($p = 0.004$). Professional women with higher wages (over \$ 8000) were the ones who worked more with remote technology in comparison to those earning less (below R \$ 6,750.00).

Finally, one of the groups, in which some entrepreneurs participated, discussed the lack of need for control in some cases, especially for those where what matters is the result. Therefore, the implementation of a **policy of flexibility** would be an appropriate strategy. For another group, in which women from operational levels also participated, the needs for control were higher and they should be physically at work during specified periods, otherwise the work is not done.

Furthermore, the focus groups revealed that some companies adopt **policies that respect the workday** and limit the quantity of meetings, which positively impacts the professionals' quality of life and satisfaction with their career. Participants also argued that organizations in which two participants were working (public sector) complied with the period of maternity leave. This was seen as a great benefit, because participants from private sector and professionals said that, somehow, they had to work during the period of maternity leave.

Final remarks

The articulation between organizational innovation dimensions with the classical view of bureaucracy, as discussed in this paper, although apparently represents a paradox, allows deeper analysis of elements – such as structure, hierarchy, norms, rules, positions, payment, among others – that may contribute to the agenda of contemporary organizations and academic research proposals on organizational innovation. Weber and Parsons analyzed the traditional elements of bureaucracy, and received critics and contributions from Merton, Crozier, Selznick and Simon that led to innovations in organizations.

One of the main findings of this research, drawn from focus groups and survey's results, concern the perceptions that the classic bureaucratic model, despite its dysfunctions, has met the demands of professional women in their working contexts. The results show, among other factors, that the bureaucracy assumptions bring positive impact on the careers of professional women. Mirroring bureaucracy in traditional organizational structures clarifies perceptions on women's career advancements, establishes limits to roles and responsibilities and feeling of stability or safety that is reflected, for example, in the form of fixed remuneration. The position occupied, especially the issue of the post, is perceived as important for young professionals and this is a point of attraction that can be worked on by the organizations and its human resources management. Positions' status, concerning particularly to job roles, are perceived as important for young professionals and this is reason for attraction that must be analyzed by organizations, specially in human resources management.

Nevertheless, there are clear signs that the bureaucratic model in large organizations, translated into more rigid structures, is more present as ever. In this sense, large organizations are perceived by professional women as environments that offer them misalignments and work overloads. Taking large organizations as examples, it is acknowledged that there is already a *heavy structure* that may continue to exist. The existence of clear rules and norms is also essential to bring consistency for women's activities. Elements such as informal relationships, friendship ties, involvement, among others, which by the way are indicated by literature as bureaucracy dysfunctions, are the organizations' characteristics most valued by

women. To address these and other dysfunctions and to innovate in terms of structure as an alternative to the classic bureaucratic model, projectized organizations and other configurations can be considered as alternatives, at least temporarily, that allow the coexistence of the classic elements with contemporary organizations' demands.

Fostering friendship ties may be an innovative policy that helps improving the work environment, according to the professional women's perceptions. Organizations and its human resources management should support and encourage building these relationships as novel institutional policies. Promoting the growth of professional's networks, which is facilitated by virtual mechanisms, is a practice that can be undertaken for the benefit of the work environment.

In order to deal with bureaucracy's conflicts, *the female kindness* is something that should be disseminated by organizations and its human resources management: giving personality and openness, acting properly and saying words of gratitude and respect, being sensitive and caring about peers, superiors and subordinates, and using small gestures that make them feel special. The role of leadership is critical to bringing *the female kindness* into action, and this also reveals a huge field to be explored by organizations and its human resources management.

From this study it is possible to assert that the bureaucracy's elements provide support for organizations to put in place more contemporary management policies and practices, promoting adjustments that take into account the tendency to perceive women as being more and more prevalent in organizational environments.

Finally, the findings presented here show that the remarkable aspects of bureaucracy, although liable to criticisms, are vital to the consolidation of women's trajectory in organizations, and this demonstrates certain contradictions between the need to innovate to better supporting professional women and the benefits brought by the bureaucracy elements that are traditional. Thus, many characteristics of bureaucracy seem to favor women's career, as they may suggest greater equity and transparency to handle the fuzzy nuances related to gender that are still remaining in organizations. This and other aspects can be better analyzed in future studies concerning organizational innovation, bureaucracy and professional women.

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