Women "Having It all": Family *versus* Work a Case Study in a Norwegian Company in Brazil

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Abstract

We investigate the relationship between parentality and careers in a Norwegian corporation in Brazil, and using Joan Acker's theory Gendered Organizations, we study how parental life could affect work life. Acker's framework, especially Process 4: 'the internal mental work of individuals making sense of their place and opportunities in the gendered organization' is useful on societal, organizational and individual levels. We develop the framework by comparing men's and women's mental work regarding parentality and career opportunities. Results show that women want longer leaves, knowing that maternity is an obstacle. Men do not want longer father leave, and do not see fatherhood as obstacle. However, women agree with men about the company being supportive of their family life. We question the idea of "choices" for women since maternity is central when obstacles to careers are analyzed. Discrimination is blunt; women see it, even if they do not know how exactly it works. "Having it all" is a central theme of lack of satisfaction for women, in Brazil as elsewhere. Exporting gender equality in the context of this multinational company might be more an expectation, perception and/or myth than a reality, despite the current official statements. An analysis based on Acker and Brazilian authors point to the need of approaching organizations/careers x family considering e.g. parentality and care work, rather than maternity

only. This work offers practical contributions to the diversity discussion and we suggest, for further studies, inclusion of e.g. race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and class.

Keywords: gender discrimination; multinational corporation; maternity; paternity; careers.

Introduction

A study in a Norwegian company in Brazil could help understand gender (in)equality in a multicultural organization. This single-case study investigated the Brazilian headquarters, focused on the relationship of Family and Work, developing a three-level analysis: individual, organizational and societal.

Taking into consideration the bicultural environment of our case, it is important to contextualize it. In societal level, these two countries have very different positions in the Gender Inequality Index of the United Nations Development Program. In 2019, Norway was first and Brazil 84th. Brazil's positions in the rankings got worse in the last years. In 2015, in the year of the study, Brazil held the 74th position in the Gender Index.

The Human Development Index also worsened for Brazil from 2015 to 2020, from 74th to 79th, while Norway has kept the same positions. Additionally, the Covid pandemic has caused a setback of over ten years in female occupation in the labor market of Latin America and the Caribbean (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, 2021). In Brazil, research has shown that women had higher chances to lose their jobs than men did during the pandemic. It indicates that gender equality is directly implicated in terms of labor force versus childcare, given that during social distancing schools and nurseries were closed.

Norway was the first country to propose gender representation regulations by means of gender quotas for public limited boards (to fill 40% of its seats with women). The law was ratified by Parliament in 2003 and implemented in 2006, with a two-year grace period. Although there was significant resistance to this policy (384 of the 563 publicly traded companies went private to avoid complying) by 2007 this goal was "reached" (Roth, 2014), leading some to say that the law is effective as boards are now gender balanced. A similar proposal for legislation for the private sector in Norway has been delayed.

Various indicators such as a low gender pay gap and a high ratio of females in managerial positions (not councils or boards) suggest that Norway is ahead in terms of gender diversity and equality when compared to Brazil. In 2019, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) informed a gender pay gap of 7% for Norway[1], while in Brazil men made almost 30% more than women in the same year (Barros, 2020).

In 2010 Brazil, women were not even 20% in the higher hierarchies of either public institutions or private companies, according to the Brazil Gender Equality Observatory (Observatório Brasil de Igualdade de Gênero, 2009/2010). Since 2016, we have been unable to find updated data from the Gender Observatory since its website seems to have been deactivated by the Federal Government. Innovation Norway (2019, p. 23) affirms the number of women occupying seats on boards in Brazil is 8.4%, but we cannot confirm this data. Gender (in)balance in parliament is also an important aspect when gender culture is under analysis. Norway had 40% of women in parliament by Sep/2017, while Brazil had around 15%, by Oct/2018 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019).

Bearing in mind that parental leave is one fundamental aspect for mothers and fathers to grow professionally, or simply for keeping employed, comparison of such policies in both countries can provide further context, especially when stated that hegemonic masculinity and role of fathers have been changing in Scandinavian countries (Johansson & Klinth, 2008).

In Norway, parents can choose between one year of leave (with 100% salary coverage) or approximately fourteen months (with 80% coverage). Both mother and father receive fifteen weeks of non-transferable parental leave. In other words, if the father does not use these weeks, both lose them. This division encourages gender equality, particularly in the sphere of corporate work. Parents are given sixteen or eighteen weeks of unallocated leave to share among themselves as they see fit.

In Brazil, legislation guarantees four months of leave for the mother and five days to the father in private organizations, which is less than half the Norwegian leave. However, in 2008, new legislation offered an option for extending the leave to the total of six months to mothers and fifteen days to fathers. In return for offering longer leaves to their employees, organizations are entitled to a benefit of tax deduction in the total amount spent with the extension.

Childcare is a need even after returning from parental leaves, especially if the leave is short. Almost half of women who participate in the Brazilian formal labor market, thus qualifying for the leave policy, are out of the formal labor market 47 months after the leave (Machado & Pinho Neto, 2016). In countries where childcare is not fully provided by the State, company support seems to be an important choice of benefit. It can be offered, for example, in the form of financial aid for private care, or even available childcare in the company building. It would be the case for Brazil, whereas in Norway parents can count on quality public childcare. However, if such benefit is offered before the end of the leave period – the organization studied offered it since the child's third month – it could also be interpreted as pressure on women to return to work before the end of their leave. Women in Brazil usually try to extend to five months by taking one month of their yearly right to vacation. Non-paid days off are not a legal possibility.

Even if these indexes and comparisons do not show a whole picture of gender and work realities, when we look at a company from the Global North (particularly Scandinavia) with a subsidiary in the Global South (Brazil) we wonder about possible double standards, i.e., different attitude in the decision-making and policies of the organization regarding gender equality in the different countries it operates globally.

In the case of Nordic countries, there has been a rhetoric of exporting gender equality with their subsidiaries and that management is recruited to export and maintain a "Norwegianess." A presumptive export of national values from Global North to Global South via mobility of leadership, sending Norwegians to manage global companies and global company policies. However, if leaders do not believe in the values of equality and only abide by the local values formalized by laws or discrimination acts (also producing diversity projects and standards aiming at social legitimation only), then a possible export of equality is nothing but a scam. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) formulated a masculinity construction of expats, the transnational business masculinity, and reasoned on the lack of loyalty with core values.

"Few can contest Scandinavia's place at the forefront of the corporate responsibility movement. — Ethical Corporation" (McCallin & Webb, 2004). This statement expresses the rhetoric mentioned earlier. However, we do not intend to imply that the logic behind the exportation of

Nordic gender values to the Global South signifies there is only one way of defining gender equality – the indexes – thus setting the interpretive prerogative in the Nordic countries self-image of having solved the problem, which is widely disseminated to other developing countries. There are examples of reinforcement of this rhetoric, like Strand, Freeman, and Hockerts (2015): "we intend for this to serve as a basis to help establish a globally recognized research paradigm dedicated to considering Corporate Social Responsibility and sustainability in a Scandinavian context."

That said, this paper does not aim to compare cases/units (i.e., Brazilian and Norwegian), but rather to illustrate one case and possibly provoke reflections and questions for further comparisons, not necessarily generalized to all similar contexts. The objective of the case study is not to represent the world, but to represent the case (Stake, 2000, p. 245 as cited in Mariotto, Zanni, & Moraes, 2014, p. 363).

When we consider the organizational level, a large multinational company contemplating the issue of reproduction could directly affect women's presence in the workforce, and gender equality as a whole, maybe even illustrate somehow this idea of exporting gender equality, one of the aspects of CSR. The context described above place significant degree of decision making in the hands of companies regarding the provision of an environment in which having kids is not a hindrance to advancing careers. These reflections have emerged as research problem, at first, because one of the authors worked for a few years in the case company in Brazil, and has had experience in Scandinavia. The second author is Scandinavian.

> Since I could not see myself being a mother while working there, in an intuitive manner, I decided to become more aware of the reasons for my feelings, also wondering whether other women felt the same, because we did not use to talk about it. (Author)

Therefore, the issue was included in a larger master's thesis case study about gender equality, published in 2015. Thus far, we have found some studies dedicated to discussing Norwegian business in Brazil, its challenges and cultural differences (Granli, 2012; Kvaernes, 2010; Souraki, 2019; Wold, 2007[2]); however, gender equality within Norwegian subsidiaries in Brazil is not discussed, particularly on maternity/paternity for employees of such organizations. The study by Wold (2007) is dedicated to the same organization as ours. We also found a comparison between Sweden and Brazil regarding international human resources management (Kunde, 2020). One study had a similar aim as ours, but with a Swedish subsidiary in Japan (Kemper, Bader, & Froese, 2019); and another analysed the gender equality discourse in cross-border mergers between Denmark, Finland, and Sweden (Tienari, Søderberg, Holgersson, & Vaara, 2005).

Given the problematization and context discussed, this work is dedicated to presenting one part/theme from a larger single-case study on gender (in)equality: Family and Work. Further reasons for researchers' choices are described in the next sections.

We then include the individual level of analysis and include men in the discussion, aiming to understand how employees from this large multinational company perceive the relationship between maternity/paternity and their careers in the organization, which could inform us on possible gender (in)equalities within the organization.

A secondary aim addresses a less individual and more organizational/societal level, seeking to understand how this perception may affect the possible export of gender equality in the context presented. Is it possible that multinational companies in Brazil are, or may become, actors in promoting gender equality by addressing the issue of Family and Work? We then intend to reflect on possible double standards regarding gender issues in headquarters and international subsidiaries of private foreign corporations from the Global North.

Finally, by discussing Joan Ackers' theory on Gendered Organizations with Brazilian current theory on maternity and careers, we intend to make a theoretical contribution by confirming/denying the validity of Ackers' Processes Framework in current times, analyzing the possibility of enhancing and developing her theory of the Processes, especially Process 4, as discussed in the next Section. For this aim, we present older and more recent theoretical approaches, from the (so called) Global North and Global South. We hope to generate new background material to an old and still necessary discussion: maternity/paternity and women's careers.

Theoretical framework

The global north and gender hierarchy

Since the 70s, but mainly from the 80s on, researchers of Women's Studies/ Gender Studies, Organization Studies and Sociology have investigated Organization Theory regarding gender roles. One of the reasons for such interest is because organizational theory has been considered implicitly gendered, as described by Hearn and Parkin (1993, p. 149) "Organizational Theory has generally and traditionally been constructed as non-gendered. Written through a male perspective, culture, and discourse, it has espoused theories of empiricism, rationality, hierarchy, and other masculinized concepts."

Another reason for such questioning is the fact that organizations, private or public, are the central economic and social institutions – for example, workplace, schools, universities, social and help services, etc. – where most people are in daily contact, impacting not only careers, but people's private lives.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter, despite being rarely mentioned in business schools, is a pioneer in this sort of organizational research, and one of the first to address the gender issue in private organizations, back in 1977, when she developed the study of the Tokenism[3]. In Men and Women of the Corporation, she starts to discuss gender in large corporations, in the direction of Critical Management Studies. In the end of the 80s and beginning of the 90s, Cynthia Cockburn identified the attempts organizations were making in Britain to respond to pressures from anti-racist and feminist movements, calling themselves "equal opportunity" employers. Cockburn investigated the Equal Opportunity movement, which claimed to hire and promote "regardless of sex, marital status, race, religion, or sexual orientation and for people with disabilities." Informed by different research in the Global North, the North American sociologist Joan Acker created the concept of Gendered Organizations in 1990, showing that hierarchical organizations are not gender neutral.

Acker (1999, p. 44) explains that feminist social scientists started by theorizing class and women, changing their focus to empirical studies of gender and work at the end of the 70s. In the

80s, she argues that in a response to Third World feminists and women of color, theoretical attention was directed to the intersections of gender, race, and class (and decoloniality, I should add). Finally, she argues that postmodern/poststructuralist feminism turned to issues of representation, culture and identity. Current research and theory on organizations still discusses gender via all these different approaches, depending on the ontology and epistemologies adopted/chosen by each scholar.

Liisa Husu (2005), a Scandinavian researcher, studied work-related and family-related discrimination and support, pointing to the fact that some discriminatory experiences are understood as such only in a later phase of the informants' career, not when they actually happen. She also calls attention to the complexity of perceiving, naming and recognizing gender inequality and discrimination in Scandinavia (p. 167). As Husu points out, women who want to have children and exercise leadership might be seen as "wanting to have it all," while men in the same position already "have it all."

Thus, part of the theoretical framework that problematizes and informs this work derives from conceptualizing multinational large companies, like the company studied, as gendered organizations, based on Acker's structural view. Organizational structure is not gender-neutral but built upon a deeply embedded substructure of gender difference, distinctions between women and men that are integral to many societal processes (Acker, 1992, p. 565). By societal processes, Acker is mainly referring to institutions, where women and men are active agents, doing gender in their everyday activities. Except for the Family, all institutions have been defined with the absence of women, and this perspective recognizes the asymmetric gender order: women's usual subordination either concretely or symbolically.

Acker (1992, p. 568) argues for the need of mapping the gendered history of institutions and charting their gendered patterns; in her work, she mentions that the final aim would be for large-scale organizations to become more democratic and supportive of humane goals (Acker, 1990, p. 140). It is a mistake to think that organizations have gender neutral discourse and processes, since, according to Kanter (1977, p. 46), the masculine ethic is present: "while organizations were being defined as sex-neutral machines, masculine principles were dominating their authority structures."

Research on organizations could help tackle issues such as the cultural images of gender, occupational segregation, income and status inequality, and even aspects of gender identity, mainly of masculinity, which is also product of organizational processes and pressures. For example, in the issue of status inequality, it would help understand why women are always concentrated at the bottom of organizational structures. Fewer large US companies are run by women than by men named John (Wolfer, 2015) and David (Levesque, 2018), an example of glass ceiling.

When Acker formulated a way to identify barriers in creating gender equality in work organizations, she explained how women ended up in the lower-level positions. She argued that it is expected from the employee a separation of his/her domestic/private life from the job, and that certain tasks are understood as requiring more responsibility or complexity, thus not only placed in hierarchical higher positions but also with better points (and payment) than others. Skills more often found in men, like managing money, receive more points than skills more often found in women, like human relations skills.

Therefore, Acker (1990, p. 154) concluded that "the concept of a universal worker excludes and marginalizes women who cannot, almost by definition, achieve the qualities of a real worker because to do so is to become like a man." She also argues that the bodiless worker, who occupies the abstract gender-neutral job has no sexuality, emotions, and does not procreate. The abstract worker is, actually, a man, with minimal responsibility on procreation and conventional control of emotions. Finally, Acker explains that many are the controls used to keep the gendered hierarchy, which are beyond aspects of legislation and organizational choices presented in the Introduction:

> The maintenance of gendered hierarchy is achieved partly through such often-tacit controls based on arguments about women's reproduction, emotionality, and sexuality, helping to legitimate the organizational structures created through abstract, intellectualized techniques. More overt controls, such as sexual harassment, relegating childbearing women to lower-level mobility tracks, and penalizing (or rewarding) their emotion management also conform to and reinforce hierarchy. (Acker, 1990, p. 151)

Acker understands gender organizations in four types of parallel and interrelated processes, a framework that is the basis to problematize, formulate the questionnaire, and analyze results in this work: 1) Production of gender divisions: gender patterning of jobs, wages, hierarchies, power and subordination; 2) Creation of gendered symbols, images and forms of consciousness; 3) Interaction between women and men, women and women, men and men that take multiple forms that ''enact dominance and subordination, and create alliances and exclusions'' and are sites in which divisions are developed and gender images created and affirmed; and 4) The internal mental work of individuals making sense of their place and opportunities in the gendered organization.

This work discusses Process 4, focusing on Family and Work, casting light on this relationship and how respondents perceive it, thus the "internal mental work of individuals of their opportunities in the organization" in relation to Family. Even though our broader study discusses all four processes, the focus of this work is investigating if maternity-related discrimination is one of the forms of control/barriers to opportunities that maintain gender hierarchy. Maternity, paternity, and domestic life might be understood as conflictive with the job, since we are all supposed to consider both life spheres as separated, as Acker argues that "Too many obligations outside the boundaries of the job would make a worker unsuited for the position."

> Jobs are abstract and workers to fit such jobs are supposed to be disembodied, but the closest to a real worker is the male worker whose life centers on his full-time, life-long job, while his wife or another woman takes care of his personal needs and his children (…) The women worker, assumed to have legitimate obligations other than those required by the job, did not fit with the abstract job […] those who are committed to paid employment are 'naturally' more suited to responsibility and authority; those who must divide their commitments are in the lower ranks. (Acker, 1990, p. 149)

Finally, her framework also proves adequate for our problematization and analysis since this case is a gendered hierarchy. At the time of the study, 17% of the studied population was female,

only 16% of coordinators and managers were women, and no women were on the board of directors. Acker (1990) explains that complexity and responsibility are defined in terms of managerial and professional tasks: "[…] the child-care worker's responsibility for other human beings or the complexity facing the secretary who serves six different, temperamental bosses can only be minimally counted if the congruence between position level, responsibility and complexity is to be preserved" (p. 149).

Brazilian studies on women careers x maternity

Given the magnitude of Brazilian literature on the issue of gender and work and the topic of maternity related discrimination, our search focused on organizations similar to our case, private large companies, like the international cases in the Introduction. Therefore, literature on careers was best suited for this search. When looking for more recent studies and the term parentality (involving both father and mother, as our research does) we found studies discussing academic careers and childhood (about legal rights and education). Mothering (*maternagem* in Portuguese, different from *maternidade*/maternity) was not an easy term to find either, which was mostly related to adoption, lactation, academia again, and its role in black feminism, and a term mostly related to mothering by mothers, not including other people in this work of care (Emidio & Castro, 2021; Lanzeta & Bittentcour, 2016). None of these studies were related to large multinational organizations.

Finally, when we looked for the expression care work, mostly of what was found discussed the health area, elderly care and illnesses. Hirata (2012), when studying elderly care in Japan, highlighted that in the Global North (and that includes Norway), it is mostly immigrants who do paid care work, demonstrating a racial/ethnic division of work. In Brazil, paid care work is mostly done by black women. If the support is not paid, then it is mostly provided by other women (Hirata, 2012), and the grandmother is the main care provider (Lopes, Prochnow, & Piccinini, 2010).

However, there are (or should be) various actors of care in the sexual division of labor, including many institutions like the State or the Market, Family, etc., all of them having the work of women as central (Hirata, 2016).

> Care work interdicts future opportunities for all of us women […] So this care economy would be many things: breastfeeding, taking care of children, cleaning the house, taking care of the elderly and sick. (Cida Bento in @think_olga as cited in Coelho, 2022, p. 433)

> The food you buy needs to be prepared to be consumed […]. (Gabriela Chaves at the Think Olga Laboratory of Future Exercises as cited in Coelho, 2022, p. 433)

Thus, the terms highlighted above are quite absent in the literature on careers and the issue of Family and Work, which is usually approached through the term maternity. However, we must also think about the fact that not every woman employee wants to become a mother, not every woman has this innate instinct or personal preference, something that can also be motivated by the insertion in the job market (Colares & Martins, 2016), our problematization in this study. Also, the

fact that this status is still discriminated against (Barbosa & Rocha-Coutinho, 2012). No way out. "Let them give birth until they die… they were created for that." (Luther as cited in Federici, 2018, p. 67).

Federici (2018) argues that capitalism was created based on patriarchy, when women were relegated (and forced) to the domestic sphere, unpaid work and reproduction of labor force (Sousa & Guedes, 2016). However, as women entered the job market, they kept the entire load from their "previously" imposed role (Probst, 2015). It is important to highlight that the most impoverished Brazilian women, who are not the population of our case study, have always worked to support their families (Losada & Rocha-Coutinho, 2007)[4].

Thus, women have been imposed "either or": either women do not have kids and dedicate solely to their careers, or they abandon their careers and dedicate solely to maternity (Emidio & Castro, 2021), creating the idea of "Having it All," as criticism to women who want both. This lead women into perceiving maternity as sacrifice (Chechi Fiorin, Garcia Dias, & Tochetto de Oliveira, 2014).

> In the current context, sexual division of labor can take four forms: that of a traditional model, in which women are caregivers and men are providers; the conciliation model, in which women seek to reconcile work and family life; the partnership model, in which men and women share household chores and family care; and the delegation model, in which household tasks are delegated to other professionals who are responsible for taking care of the house and children. According to the author, Brazilian society brings together the four models, with the prevalence of the second – in which women seek to reconcile professional and family life. (Hirata, 2015 as cited in Emidio & Castro, 2021)

"Children suffer more if the mother works outside the home" was the answer of 80% of women interviewed by Araújo and Scalon (2006 as cited in Emidio & Castro, 2021). Women who want to return to work after giving birth get extremely worried about the difficulties of reconciling both functions. Most women still believe that Family and Work are personal choices, as if they were free to sustain their choices, rather than inserted in structures (Rocha-Coutinho, 2011; Albertuni & Stengel, 2016 as cited in Emidio & Castro, 2021). Brazilian female executives from large companies in Brazil pointed to biological clock pressure and overload with childcare versus extensive work hours as two out of five obstacles to their careers, and the three others were: extremely high demands, different rooted forms of prejudice and difficulties with their partner (Carvalho Neto, Tanure, & Andrade, 2010). It is possible to relate the last two obstacles to Family and Work.

Almeida and Santos (2018) argue that the balance between personal life and professional career is in the root of lack of satisfaction reported by many women. In this sense, dilemmas and difficulties generate, among other things, postponing maternity (Beltrame & Donelli, 2012; Rodrigues, 2008) or postponing the "decision," which motivates new medical fertility processes, also silenced in life and organization literature, due to the stigma surrounding it.

It then seems that any work that is dedicated to studying female executives and careers will eventually arrive at maternity, a central discussion regarding gender inequalities at work, showing it more bluntly. Family is central, when even the marriage itself is mentioned:

The gender issue only arose when discussing the family roles, more specifically, motherhood and marriage. Interviewees reported that the career is important as a source of personal fulfillment, but not letting go of motherhood and/or marriage. They make it clear they face obstacles in assuming different roles, but do not see impossibilities. They see difficulties in their choice and seek to manage and consider the different roles assumed. (Loureiro, Costa, & Freitas, 2012)

Within this discussion, we will hear expressions like glass ceiling or crystal labyrinths as ways to express the sum of obstacles for female careers in corporations. Some studies seek to understand and address the roles and responsibilities of companies in setting strategies to eliminate or, at least, reduce obstacles, encouraging organizations to become active actors.

Research contemporary to this case study also tried access to large Brazilian companies, and the refusals were understood as absence of a more transparent corporative culture and conservatism (Teixeira & Góis, 2015). Thus, their research focused on looking at documents on websites regarding maternity-related initiatives. They found in companies agendas: increased time of parental leave (mother from 4 to 6 months and father from 5 days to 3 months in the cases of Petrobrás, Walmart, TIM, Basf and Unilever); lactation rooms; nursery spaces in the office for kids from 0-2 of age; benefit/reimbursements for childcare for 2 years, and some others. Still, these amounted to just few companies and very recent changes.

Methodology

A single-case study based on mixed quantitative and qualitative methods

Researchers in management in Brazil have proven to be intensive users of the single-case study (Mariotto et al., 2014), especially when dealing with a case as this: in an organization very hard to access, asking sensitive questions that might provoke criticism to the organization itself. Access to one group/unit (instead of a multiple-case study) and authorization from the organization to keep all questions suggested is understood as privilege that enriches the literature, especially when considering it might raise awareness employees did not have before. "There is an acceptable role for a single case in theory building, when the case is unusually revelatory, or when it is extremely exemplar, or when it offers opportunities for unusual research access" (Mariotto et al., 2014, p. 361).

Qualitative case study research is a flexible method (Mayer, 2001; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995 as cited in Alberdeen, 2013) and definitions of what a case study is also vary considerably (Mariotto et al., 2014). Alberdeen (2013) argues that, although Yin (2009) tells the reader throughout the book that they must consider propositions at every stage of the case study, he does not give a definition of this term. For our purposes, we define a case study as a description of a management situation/reality in a period of time, which in this study is January to June 2015, and then follow up a year later.

The holistic single case (single unit of analysis) design is one of the four options described by Yin (2009 in Alberdeen, 2013), who argues it is better to make a single case study when the researcher wants to study, for example, a person or a group of people. It makes sense to this study

when we contemplate the unit of analysis, which is the population of the headquarters of the organization in South Brazil (201 people). Single case studies can richly describe the existence of phenomenon (Siggelkow, 2007). The researcher can question old theoretical relationships and explore new ones when a single case study is used (Gustafsson, 2017).

In this paper, we combine qualitative (non-numeric) and quantitative (numeric) data, mostly gathered via a questionnaire. Above all, we take into account that case studies emphasize the context within which the phenomenon is embedded (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Gibbert, Ruigrok, & Wicki, 2008; Numagami, 1998; Pettigrew, 1973; Platt, 2007; Yin, 1994 as cited in Mariotto et al., 2014). Such aspect was deeply explored in this work.

A single case study can generate theory, as well as refute or refine an existing one (Mariotto et al., 2014, p. 360). The conclusion that is aimed by a case study can be either illustrative or confirmatory, which can make the design of the case study confusing, and will further do so because they are inherent in the company (Gustafsson, 2017). According to Solberg Søilen and Huber (2006 as cited in Gustafsson, 2017), case studies serve to generate background material to a discussion about a concrete problem. Articles in which theory is built from cases often are reflected as the most interesting research (Bartunek, Rynes, & Irland 2006 as cited in Gustafsson, 2017).

Detailing procedures

This subsection intends to "increase the construct validity of a case study by establishing a clear chain of evidence to allow the readers of the case to reconstruct how the researcher departed from the initial research questions and reached the final conclusions" (Gibbert, Ruigrok, & Wicki, 2008; Yin, 2005 as cited in Mariotto et al., 2014).

Firstly, the methodological design was informed by the researcher previous work experience in the organization. Choosing this organization as case was the first decision, followed by the Theoretical Framework and context problematizing. These allowed researchers to decide on themes and processes based on Acker's structural approach, considering the case unit/population studied.

The second step was defining data collection techniques, which also depended on authorizations we would get from the company after presenting the CEO with themes and initial project steps. The first step provided us with lenses to start approaching the company, which was physically distant from researchers, learning via the Human Resources Department (HR) that respondents did not have much time available. Therefore, our choice was an online questionnaire to collect numeric data – interviews, observations or other techniques were not options. The option of an open answer Other was included to collect qualitative data. Sending online questionnaires to production units was not possible, and the questions would not be answered by the population in the headquarters if we requested qualitative data as central, given the time it would demand from participants.

Next, before formulating questions, we requested information to HR: salary averages, parental leave rules, and others, such as ethics manual and training programs with hypothetical work situations. The company website was analyzed, which included organizational images and messages. Informed by all the above and reflections provided by Ackers' processes, themes/categories emerged and formed each question. Due to some obstacles in other information

gathering techniques, we believed that this previous data analysis would provide the study with the necessary triangulation (Stake, 2000; Yin, 2009 as cited in Aberdeen, 2013; Mariotto et al., 2014). Added to that, the mix of qualitative and quantitative material.

The fourth step consisted in formulating the questionnaire and getting approval from HR director. The method for data analysis was pre-determined: we aimed at quantitative (numeric) analysis from questions, relating it to the qualitative answers. Given that room for qualitative data from the questionnaire was limited, no new themes emerged in answers, which could be different in interviews or observation. Therefore, no qualitative data from Process 4 was selected for analysis in this paper, and everything we collected (for this Process Family and Work) is discussed here, under each pre-defined category/question.

Finally, selecting only Ackers's Process 4 from a larger study and giving focus only to Family and Work, would require examining further theory on care work x careers, specifically Brazilian studies, as discussed. Such literature did not inform the elaboration of the categories/questions but helped describe the existence of the phenomenon and examine theoretical relationships, exploring possibilities between empirical data and theory, and contributions from them.

Material gathering – questionnaire and later follow-up

Out of the 201 people who received the link to the questionnaire from HR, 87 responded. An adhesion of 43%, which is considered a great response rate given the type of organization, population and theme. We carried out a pilot study, testing the questionnaire with five people, requesting feedback and making necessary adjustments.

The whole questionnaire was composed of 38 close-ended multiple-choice questions in Portuguese, native language of most of the population, except a few Norwegian executives who were not our main target of interest. The questionnaire began with introductory questions, moving to more sensitive ones, and then finishing with a 39th open-ended question for general comments. For this study, only the introduction and the four questions of section Family and Work were selected for analysis.

The Introduction was required to gain data on gender, age, family status (marital and parental), and position of leadership (formal, informal, not a leader) of respondents. When designing the questions and answer options, attention was given to devising options that were appropriate to all respondents, and sometimes it was only possible by inserting the option 'It Does not Apply to Me' or 'Other – Specify' with an open space for writing. We were aware that it might not be enough to avoid the issue.

HR Director read the questions and demonstrated concern, two or three words were changed, but authorization from the CEO was crucial in this negotiation. It was a privilege, which usually forms another layer of obstacle when researchers approach the institutional/organizational level. Regarding reliability, Babbie (2010) argues that by presenting all subjects with a standardized stimulus, survey research goes a long way toward eliminating unreliability in observations made by the researcher.

Finally, concerning Return and Follow Up with the company, a year after the research was concluded and sent to the CEO, one of the researchers had a meeting with two female company

representatives (HR and Legal areas), to give return and receive information on developments. Our attempt was to fulfill our ethical commitment to the company and collect some information, thus reinforcing another strength of case studies to describe a phenomenon over time, by the sequence of events (Ozcan, Han, & Graebner, 2017).

Concluding this session, processes of material gathering, analysis, and writing were permeated by ethical considerations. The survey informed participants of its aim and time required, making it clear it was a voluntary participation. The option of skipping questions also gave them freedom in the format of their participation. Since it was a web-survey, respondents' choice to answer the questionnaire was understood as consent to participate, which was clearly stated at the beginning. The answers were completely anonymous: with no IP identification, rendering the identification of respondents by their employer impossible. Only researchers had access to the answers, and no information that could indirectly reveal an individual's identity would be eligible for publishing. The cryptography of answers was provided by Survey Monkey, the only platform accepted by the organization. Finally, this project is intellectually independent and morally free, since is it is a self-subsidized project, with integrity of the project intact. When asked, the company CEO did not require company anonymity in publications, but we still chose to do so for this paper.

Results and discussion

The beginning of the questionnaire affirmed that it was related to gender equality. At first, we got few answers, but then two female young employees (HR and Communication areas) decided on their own to walk around the office asking people to engage. Many more women responded than men, which already indicates who has privileged in Acker's gendered hierarchy (1990).

From the 201 individuals who received the questionnaire, 87 (43%) answered, of which 51 were women and 36 were men. Interestingly, of the 86 formal leaders, 13 of which are women, only 23 responded. Meaning that 7 women leaders and 56 men leaders did not respond.

As Acker argues, if there is status inequality, men have nothing to gain in helping "understand why women are always concentrated at the bottom of organizational structures." It hinders the mapping of barriers to inequality, those controls used to keep the gendered hierarchy, which are beyond aspects of legislation and company choices, all of which could tackle the sexual division of labor imposed in capitalism (Hirata, 2015). This is strongly expressed by the lack of participation of many male formal leaders, the top of the pyramid.

Question/Category 1: I would like to have longer parental leave

This question, expressed in Table 1 below, addresses the issue of parental leave, a theme that emerged in the theoretical problematization when Acker (1990) mentions that procreation/reproduction is not part of the disembodied abstract fitting worker: "the ideal worker cannot have too many obligations outside the boundaries of the job, which would make a worker unsuited for the position […] whose life centers on his full-time, life-long job, while his wife or another woman takes care of his personal needs and his children" (1990, p. 149). When contextualizing the company, the difference in parental leaves between Norwegian headquarters

and Brazilian subsidiary was striking (State as actor), as was the option of not extending the leave from four to six months, informed by HR (Company as actor). Thus, the importance of this category.

Table 1
Longer parental leave

Gender	I would like to have longer parental leave	I have never thought about it
Women	70%	20%
Men	39%	53%

Sources: elaborated by the authors.

The questionnaire did not ask what were or would be employees' possibilities of support in the care for their children, being it paid female work (Hirata, 2012), grandmothers (Lopes et al., 2010), or other actors (Hirata, 2016). However, in the Brazilian context women seek to reconcile professional and family life (Hirata, 2015) and, in this reality, parental leaves are central. Recently, research investigated actions to tackle gender equality issues within large corporations in Brazil, focusing on paternity leaves (Bendia, 2020; Miguel, Reis, & Santos, 2022).

The results above, which were similar for all married and single women without kids, express that women in general tend to reflect on their maternity leave, having experienced it or not. In opposition, 82% of single men without kids Have Never Thought about It, and only 20% Would Like to Have Longer Parental Leave. Male leaders' responses are similar to those for all men, as are those of female leaders. Results reinforce the argument that for both women with or without kids, maternity leave is a concern to all women much more than it is to men, who do not see the need to stay home for longer than five days after their child is born or who are not concerned about it for the future.

A woman leader stated that "the company should consider extending the maternity leave to 180 days, to fathers in the first weeks too, since the mother really needs help in the first month." She is aware about legislation possibilities and the fact that some companies were adhering to the idea, as demonstrated by Teixeira & Góis (2015).

If our results show that concern regarding leave policy is mostly female, then we understand why female executive leader's top obstacles are their biological clock pressure and overload with childcare versus extensive work hours (Carvalho Neto et al., 2010). A father providing "help" is an expression under discussion nowadays, since it does not express shared responsibility. Even so, men's concern about providing such "help" to women by means of a longer leave would already mean a step forward in terms of gender equality culture and career possibilities for women. Improvement does not depend solely on national legislation (mostly made by male politicians), but also on the will of organizations (gendered organizations), especially an organization from a Scandinavian context "in which hegemonic masculinities have been changing" (Johansson & Klinth, 2008). The approach of men to longer leaves and fatherhood is central.

Question/Category 2: My current or future maternity/paternity is an obstacle for my growth in the company

This category was an attempt to understand if they perceive "Having it all" (Husu, 2005) as a real issue, connected to their careers and to the company. As discussed, "Having it all" is related to the glass ceiling, one of the barriers and controls that keep women at the bottom of the pyramid in the company hierarchy. This question, expressed in Table 2, responds directly to our research question, this time approaching more directly Family to Work than question one.

Table 2
Maternity/paternity as obstacle

Gender/position	Yes	No	I have never thought about it/I don't know
Women	19%	27%	40%
Men	3%	72%	25%
Women leaders	20%	20%	-
Men leaders	0%	84%	-

Sources: elaborated by the authors. *Empty columns mean many answer options had very little representation, or at least little information that counts for analysis.

Interestingly, this question provoked more qualitative answers from women, some of them leaders. One chose Other and justified with "I don't intend to have kids". This answer was expected, even as a limitation to interpreting the questionnaire, when it fails to represent the reality of all the population. The answer above might even be the cause for the 27% of women who said "No, It is Not Going to Be an Obstacle."

The lack of the option "I don't intend to have kids" might also represent the bias of researchers, probably justified by social stigma and the continuous discrimination to this status (Barbosa & Rocha-Coutinho, 2012), which reinforces Luther's belief that women were born to procreate. As discussed, it might also be an option motivated by their awareness on the difficulties in conciliating both roles, in "Having it All". Thus, it is not surprising, it might even be represented by the answer "I Don't Know" expressed by most women. This answer is also intriguing and might justify why the researchers did not include "I Don't Want to Be a Mother" as an option. As women, we understand how difficult it is to know for sure what we want in this regard ("It depends on…"). Adding such answer option would mean provoking more directly a very sensitive point to some respondents.

Another respondent expressed "I don't know exactly how it will affect the career, but sure it will affect the path and speed of it," clearly aware of the obstacles, even though they still seem subtle and hidden to her. The selectin of "I don't know" might be due to other reasons and researching and writing about it (more literature and broader discussion) might help several women to be more aware about their intuition-certainty, providing more information for their decision-making about having kids or not, and their strategies to having it all. Talking to women who have already had kids would also be a strategy, like the mother who said that "it has already been an obstacle." It does not mean that talking or reading about it will solve the "choice" or strategies, since it is not an individual power only, but structural issue, as Acker affirms, and not every woman lives

the same reality. Postponing maternity (Rodrigues, 2008; Beltrame & Donelli, 2012), might be a result of not knowing exactly how obstacles take place and what difficulties will be. These aspects are also expressed by a leader that "has not decided yet whether to have kids, taking into account her career growth and impacts."

Finally, "It can be an obstacle due to my leadership style." She justifies expected hindrances as her sole responsibility, her own attitude as obstacle, ignoring the structures in which she is inserted. One wonders how much masculinity she is required to perform to lead in the organization, a style that creates obstacles. Why? How? Is her performance too masculine for a mother? Kanter (1977, p. 46), argues the masculine ethic is present: "while organizations were being defined as sex-neutral machines, masculine principles were dominating their authority structures." Is it that her style in her view is responsible for extended work hours? An aspect that we have seen is part of women's complaints in general. Or is it because she is less paid than man in the company, less recognized, in a phenomenon pointed by Acker: "Skills more often found in men, like managing money, receive more points than skills more often found in women, like human relations skills." Maybe she believes becoming like a man – which does not fit a mother – is being the real worker: "The concept of a universal worker excludes and marginalizes women who cannot, almost by definition, achieve the qualities of a real worker because to do so is to become like a man" (Ibid).

We cannot affirm for sure what she means, but in a company where gendered hierarchies are so blunt, women know obstacles exist but demonstrate some level of lack of awareness regarding how these obstacles take place (in qualitative and quantitative forms), what the effects are and the real reasons/causes for them. They also express how dubious they become about motherhood due to work. When a woman leader sees so many men leaders who are fathers little involved in family issues, having time to put extra work and even socialize with colleagues, she understands what it would take to be a leader, which is probably having a spouse more devoted to the family. Let us not forget women think that "children suffer more if the mother works outside the home" (Araújo & Scalon, 2006 as cited in Emidio & Castro, 2021).

In summary, among all this "confusion" (shown by theory and answers), one perception is certain: it is not an obstacle for men.

Question/Category 3: I feel supported by the company in relation to my family life and my paternity/maternity

Observe in Table 3 that in all answer choices women feel only slightly less supported by the company than men, but no women leaders "Have Never Thought about It," differently from men. This category/question, among other aspects, gets closer to the relationship of their Family and Work (company). In the previous category, two mentions *career*, which can take place in other companies/contexts. This one addresses their company, specifically. A different and more direct way to name the organization. "The market and other institutions" (Hirata, 2016) are actors in terms of a role in care work, i.e., the company is also in charge of providing support to parents.

Table 3
Company's support to family life

Gender/position	Always	Often/ Sometimes	Rarely/ Never	I have never thought about it/ I don't know
Women	54%	-	0%	
Men	50%	-	0%	-
Women leaders	-	40%	-	0%
Men leaders	42%	-	-	21%

Sources: elaborated by the authors. *Empty columns mean many answer options had very little representation, or at least little information that counts for analysis.

As discussed, here we could have asked about *care work*, more inclusive of care with elderly and ill people, still so absent in the literature on organizations. We tried to be inclusive by using the term *family life* when we address the theme of Family and Work, rather than Maternity/Paternity. In 2015 (and maybe still now) it might not have been clear about what we were talking about by care work, so again we focused on maternity/paternity. Terms such as care work, mothering, and parentality are very recent and rarely used in organizational theory approaches. Considering that not even maternity has been addressed by large organizations, and paternal leaves not fully granted, even less attention or rights would be given to employees who perform other forms of care work. Remembering that care work encompasses various activities, as described by Cida Bento.

The category Company Support also highlights the role of leaders and teams as a whole, who might be responsible in this situation to provide support, flexibility, home office, days off and other actions that are not necessarily legal or HR policies, but rather human individual and leadership relationship.

What could it be that, after the two results above, the company is supportive in their perspective? Is it fear management would have access to answers? Even though we had affirmed it would not. Is it a perception that the company is not a social actor responsible for gender equality related to families? Is it business as usual naturalized as normal? Next question insisted on the issue, but gives an example of support that is less abstract. When kids are sick, they usually do not go to schools/childcare, which requires different kind of support.

Question/Category 4: When my children are sick, I feel that the company understands of my problem.

Table 4 shows that the vast majority answered "It Does Not Apply to Me." Considering 65% of respondents do not have kids, when specifically answering about sick children, it makes sense most would select this option. It could also represent many other aspects together with results from previous questions, like dissociation between the job and family matters. If they have a network of support, then it does not apply to their situation, because their kids getting sick would not affect much their routines. We are lead to these reflections by a leader who is a mother and answered "It Does Not Apply to Me" when her kids get sick. That said, there still are gender differences in responses, when women perceive the organization less understanding than men, who have already shown in different ways they have not been much affected by such responsibility.

Table 4
The company is understanding

Gender/position	Always	Often	Rarely	I don't know	It doesn't apply to me
Women	20%				
Men	33%				
Women leaders	20%	26%	7%	7%	40%
Men leaders	52%				48%

Sources: elaborated by the authors. *Empty columns mean many answer options had very little representation, or at least little information that counts for analysis.

Observe that for all questions we are asking almost the same: parental leave, obstacle, support, level/type of support in a specific situation. These are attempts to make obstacles to careers more tangible and less abstract to respondents so that they and we can better understand perceptions. The repetitions were on purpose, since blunt or subtle contradictions among results for each category are significant.

For instance, 84% of men leaders (and 72% of the total of men) perceive that paternity is not an obstacle to them in the organization. Thus, men do not perceive to have issues between their careers and fatherhood. In addition, no employee expresses to feel Rarely or Never supported by the company regarding having kids. However, most women (70%), and some men want longer leave, and there are responses indicating obstacles to having kids and a career. As we discussed, they might not have it clear what this support from the company would/could entail, or even if it is the role of the company to do that.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the age average of employees in the whole company is relatively young for men (35) and even younger for women (31), which might also be related to family responsibility, since most respondents (65%) does not have kids. It is a strategy of the company: not hiring many people – or women – with family responsibilities. Thus, investigating age discrimination related to work would be important. It exemplifies Acker's theory on the job requiring separation between domestic/private, and accepting only certain bodies, thus relegating younger childless women to the bottom of the pyramid, and avoiding hiring older women, who are probably mothers already.

Respondents' answers to questions regarding Family and Work show barriers to gender equality. Firstly, the concerns related to being a mother and successful employee are quite different as being a father and successful employee. Most men do not perceive a need for them to be available/at home when their child is born or adopted, so having a child is not an obstacle to the careers of men. Gender discrimination related to having kids is also shown when most men are sure about the inexistence of obstacles to their career, while most women either see obstacles or do not know.

Secondly, it seems that for the employee maternity/paternity is separated from their professional life, and the company should not be involved or made responsible for it. There is no objective answer directly evidencing it, but there are some clues: women are concerned about having longer leave and they know that the company could but does not offer this possibility; and

yet, they avoid affirming that they do not feel supported by the company, even though they do feel supported less frequently than men when kids are sick.

The reasons behind many of the answers is not fully understood, but results for Ackers' Process 4 (Family and Work) in general (quantitatively and qualitatively) do demonstrate gender difference in perceptions regarding maternity/paternity as obstacle. Thus, when analyzing categories together, we have the confirmation of at least one reason why this company's structure is still an unequal and gendered organization: "Relegating childbearing women to lower-level mobility tracks […] conforming to and reinforcing hierarchy" as affirmed by Acker (1990, p. 151) and other studies discussed.

This last part of Results and Discussion is based on the Return and Follow up given to the company. During our meeting, it was reported that the subsidiary had implemented a project to extend the research to their production units, finding out, for example, absence of female toilets, and uniforms for pregnant employees. In their new office, they made sure to include lactation rooms. Three years after the company received the return from this study, it publicly informed to have adhered to UN's Women Empowerment Principles, providing the extension of the parental leave in Brazil. A year later, in 2019, the Norwegian Investments in Brazil Report, by Innovation Norway, included a completely new section called Gender Equality on the last pages of its report. Similar to results presented in our broader case study, Norwegian diplomacy compare gender data between the two countries, mention gender quotas, in a deliberate attempt to show that for Norway and their companies:

> Gender equality is a key performance indicator […] Norwegian companies brought to Brazil elements of Norwegian values and a focus on adding women to the workforce and as leaders of their Brazilian operations". (Innovation Norway Report, 2019, p. 23)

It mentions examples of actions from three different Norwegian companies in Brazil, which are mostly publicly owned. This case-study is of one of the protagonists of Norwegian business. This process might be representative of what is currently happening in other large multinational companies in Brazil. However, women executives from diverse multinationals in Brazil see maternity as still one of the main obstacles for women's career progression (Bendia, 2020; Miguel et al., 2022). Moreover, there are approaches that place responsibility for finding strategies solely on women, such as Verni (2018). A study from 2017 affirms that in most of The Best Places to Work in Brazil, maternity and paternity leaves are still the minimum demanded by legislation (Bianconi, 2017).

This single-case study discussion analyzing data gathered and international and national literature on the theme demonstrates that any work that is dedicated to studying female employees in large companies and their careers will eventually lead to maternity as the focus of discussion on barriers. This is where the gender issue arises more bluntly to show gender inequalities at work. Moreover, even if more research is carried out on the issue, studies capable of accessing the population of one single large multinational company in Brazil are almost absent, if not totally. Particularly those that raises the issue of double standards regarding gender issues in headquarters and international subsidiaries of private foreign corporations from the Global North.

Husu (2005) argues that after implementation of equality legislation in Finland, gender discrimination against women became more subtle, including maternity discrimination. Our study showed that this was not true in Brazilian reality, not even in a subsidiary from the Scandinavian region, known for their "gender equality model indexes." The inequality is more visible here – "overt controls" (Acker, 1990, p. 151) – we have less numeric and hierarchical equality; a wider salary difference; much shorter parental leaves, which also represents the lack of involvement of other important actors like the State; and the consequence of care work, paid or unpaid, falling mostly as a woman's responsibilities, placing care givers in vulnerability.

Results show that employees from the studied organization perceive maternity discrimination as subtle, in the sense that many still do not understand or name it, even if most women know it exists, while most men do not, or deny it. Balance between personal life and professional career is in the root of lack of satisfaction manifested by many women, even if they do not express it clearly or objectively. It confirms the idea that women should either not have kids and dedicate solely to their careers, or they should abandon their careers and dedicate solely to maternity (Emidio & Castro, 2021). It is expressed by the negative idea of "Having it All" toward women who want both (Husu, 2005). Resulting in women perceiving maternity as sacrifice (Chechi Fiorin et al., 2014), especially if they postpone maternity to a point of suffering in fertilization processes, a contemporary consequence of the obstacles and the relationship between biological clock and a career, a discussion that is absent in literature.

Conclusions

This single case study in a Norwegian large company in Brazil has informed us about employees' perceptions on the relationship between their parentality and their careers. The results showed that men – many of them leaders – were not interested in participating in a survey that addressed gender equality, so women were most respondents. After all, what do men have to gain by changing a masculine organizational structure? "If the mass of female clerical workers (office workers) were able to compete with men in such work, promotion probabilities for men would be drastically reduced" (Acker, 1990, p. 154). This study proposes that research on organizations should avoid interviewing only women and start including and listening to men to better understand hegemonic masculinities. In our study, the inclusion of men enriched gender and masculinity theory and, in practical terms, engaged them in the discussion on gender equality. Ultimately, they hold the power as actors within the State, the Market, and many other institutions. Maybe even in their relationship to the mothers of their children.

Quantitative and qualitative results demonstrate that women perceive parentality as an obstacle to their careers more than men do, and more women would like to have longer parental leave, when compared with men. A representative amount of women feels that the company does not always understand when their kids are sick. Conversely, a more representative amount of men do not see paternity as obstacle, do not want longer paternity leave and feel the company is often understanding when their kids are sick. Even though many women perceive their reality as described above, they are closer to agreeing with men that the organization is supportive when it comes to employees' families.

Among other aspects, results show a culture of non-responsible and/or non-participant fathers, and consequent women's lack of satisfaction regarding the issue of maternity and work. Thus, it confirms and reinforces theoretical propositions of gendered organizations elaborated by Joan Acker, in 1990. Unfortunately, if three decades later this is still true, then this kind of denouncing is still needed. Additionally, we observed that women in 2015 did not see the company as an actor regarding the obstacles they face in terms of Family x Work (men did not worry about it). Further study is needed to be conclusive on this topic. The sexual division of labor denounced by Hirata might have been internalized in women as something they should deal with themselves, at an individual level as "choices." We highlight the need to go a step further by looking at its consequences and contemporary developments for women, organizations, and society as a whole (postponing reproduction; fertilization processes; opting out of work; deciding not to be a mother, etc.).

Even though maternity should be studied as social construction that goes beyond biological meaning, the three-level analysis confirms the centrality of maternity discrimination in Brazil in women's careers. We suggest further studies to be conducted on organizations and work that approaches the issue in terms of parentality (including fathers), mothering (including other people in the process of raising a child, paid or unpaid), care work (including care of other vulnerable people besides children, such as the elderly and the ill), and family, not only making a more inclusive discussion but also more illustrative of a complex contemporaneity.

Employees' perceptions, "their internal mental work making sense of their place and opportunities in the gendered organization" (Acker's Process 4) and other information provided about the company, has shown gender inequality in the organization studied. More recent Brazilian research with employees of large multinational companies have started to address the issue of maternity within a larger gender equality and diversity discussion, showing that companies are making new efforts by means of policy on benefits and more flexibility to retain female talent. Such progress is not consensus in Brazilian literature.

More research of similar cases is required, as well as better access of researchers to multinational organizations, to report on structures, progresses, obstacles, practical solutions at place, etc. More studies could contribute to changing the current reality of organizations, in which only the legal obligation are adopted in terms of motherhood (Santos & Hilal, 2018), thus addressing policies and structures to support motherhood as part of social and corporate responsibility, , toward a sustainable development (Starik & Kanashiro, 2013).

Therefore, this work aims at contributing to literature by providing an analysis on all three levels: individual, organizational, and societal – an aspect that cannot be addressed solely by interviews with individuals from several different companies (organizational cultures). Additionally, these aspects cannot be addressed by studies that only analyzes documents, lacking other levels that can tackle organizational difficulty of implementation, those that might miss the "how" to implement (Engert & Baumgartner, 2016). Moreover, it offers a bicultural contextualization that can be used when investigating other multinational companies and their strategies worldwide.

There is growing discourse about exporting gender equality in the context presented. However, we have seen that the talk has not been walked. There is rhetoric that Norway is more gender equal than Brazil, and so should be their businesses abroad. Thus, employees in this

organization attributed 2.5 to the level of gender equality in Brazil (in a scale 1 less equal and 5 more equal) and 4.0 to Norway. However, in 2015 responses from male leaders demonstrated that gender equality was not their concern. More recently, a top leader public profile on LinkedIn talked about his role as a father, with images, and Nordic countries promoted a debate on gender equality in Brasilia.

We cannot affirm that multinational companies in Brazil are or can become actors in promoting gender equality by addressing the issue of Family and Work, since it is shown that the labor division within companies follows the gender regime from the society where it operates (Teasdale, 2013). Can organizations play a role in changing current hegemonic masculinities in Brazil? It would mean disrupting gender regimes that regulate rules and arrangements that define social roles of women or men in all spheres, public and private (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2009; Walby, 2003). Recent research argues that companies and organizations in general should become new actors in dealing in complex social matters, like gender (Durbin, Page, & Walby, 2017). We need more investigation on similar organizations, their relationship with other actors regarding the theme, more qualitative data, and better knowledge of masculinities in their headquarters, etc. Notably, this is work for all actors involved, including the State.

Therefore, our secondary conclusion is that a company that operates in different countries worldwide, in different legislation, reinforces gender difference of each society. In our case, the company comes from a (considered) more gender equal culture, which is not enacted in the less equal Brazilian subsidiary.

This research contributes to the body of theory in Organization Studies, Gender and Organization, Masculinities, Careers, and Critical Management Studies, to both Global North and South literature. It adds male voices to theory that discusses maternity and careers (parentality), demonstrating local traditional ideas of gender roles regarding family and work. It illustrates a dialogue between theory and empirical data on a theme and context that is under investigated with privileged access, enhancing the literature of gender equality in business by looking at this relationship between Global North and Global South.

Single-case studies have the potential to work as a method that can go beyond empirical contributions, being able to provide theoretical contributions through a three-level analysis on gender equality and work: individual, organizational and societal. This aspect is one of our work main contributions, related to Acker's theoretical propositions. Her structural approach has proven contemporary and applicable as lenses. We developed and enhanced her propositions by engaging them with current Brazilian literature on large corporations and women's careers, also adding a multicultural approach (North and South) to her Processes Framework, especially Process 4. We suggest that parentality is at the center of Process 4, improving her framework for studying gendered organizations.

Direct contributions to the organization studied and its employees took place, an example that surveys as this one might be safer and more useful to the company than leaders can imagine, as well as material for the recent trend on Diversity and Inclusion Management, and Courses/Programs. Our study was not limited to diagnosing but also proposing and advancing in practical and theoretical ways.

One of the limitations of this work is not having included other identity markers in our questionnaire. We have suggested different and further investigations and approaches throughout this text. We highlight the need for more independent studies that ask participants about their ethnicity/race, sexual orientation, class origin, possible disabilities, and others. Comparing realities of maternity/paternity and careers in the company studied with different markers could have given more insights on obstacles. Moreover, we see the need for studies to, in the same model and similar case as this work, discuss LGBTQIA+ rights, inclusion and discrimination within one same company in more than one country. The same approach could be applied to ethnical/racial issues in the different organization national contexts, and other social markers as well. New and important ways to understand company global policy, legislation and employees perceptions in different cultures, thus informing society and organization theory about cross-borders (re)production of gender (in)equalities.

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Notes

1. The 2019 Barometer of the Norwegian Work Research Institute informs a gender pay gap among full-time employees in Norway remaining at 20%. "After adjusting for age, education, sector and several other factors, there is still a 13% gender difference." In 2017, Norway was ranked 2nd by the World Economic Forum.

2. Wold (2007) case study is in the same organization and contemporary to when one of the authors started working there. All the studies cited in that paragraph are from a Norwegian standpoint, none of them in an article format. None of them addresses gender issues when studying management and cultural differences.

3. Tokenism (Token position) is the practice of making only a superficial or symbolic effort to be inclusive of members of minorities, especially by recruiting small numbers of people from underrepresented groups to give the appearance of racial or sexual equality within an organization.

4. According to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2012), between 2000 and 2010, the role of women responsible for the family rose from 22% to 37%. Data from the National Households Sample Survey (PNAD) by IBGE shows that the ones in the family responsible for taking care of the house and household chores were 92% of women and 51% of men in 2004; and 93% of women and 58.36% of men in 2014, which shows the unequal division in relation to public and private spaces between women and men, so that the tasks related to the home still remain significantly in the hands of women (Emidio & Castro, 2021, p.3).

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