

# **An Analysis Of The Evolution Of Gender Equity In Labor Relations In Brazil**

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## **Abstract**

*This Study Used The Conceptual Bibliographic Research Method To Analyze The Evolution Of Gender Equality In The Labor Market In Brazil, Considering The Historical Differences Between Men And Women. The Data Show That The Social Role Of Women For A Long Time Was To Serve Their Husbands, Home, And Children Obediently And Without Questioning. A Perfect Marriage And A Beautiful Family Would Be The Reward For Her Submission. However, From The 20th Century And The 1st And 2nd World Wars (A Fact Of Paramount Importance, Since The Woman Perceived Herself As The One Who Would Need To Continue Supporting Her Family, To The Detriment Of The Sequels Left By The War To Her Partner/ Husband) An Opportunity Was Given To Them In The Sense Of Rescuing Their Social Protagonism. In This Context, There Is A Need To Have Equal Rights To Perform The Same Tasks Men Perform In Factories. This Gave Rise To Struggles, Which Led To Achievements That Benefited Them Throughout The 21st Century. It Is Known That Many Were The Consequences Of This Search. However, They Remained Firm In The Ideals They Sought. That Is Why It Is Necessary To Deconstruct Thought And Behavior So That Gender Equality Can Be Achieved And Allow Women To Establish Themselves Economically And Socially With Men. Thus, Justice And The Law Play A Crucial Role In The Equal Insertion Of Women In The Labor Market If They Play Leadership Roles And Receive According To Their Qualifications And Not A Salary Lower Than That Due To Their Sex/Gender. Society Must Also Be Made Aware Of The Situation Of Inequality So That The Process Of Equality Between Men And Women Can Be Accelerated, Not Only In Brazil But Throughout The World.*

**Keywords:** *Social Protagonism; Human Rights; Industrial Revolution; Gender Equity; Work Relationships.*

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Date of Submission: 26-06-2023

Date of Acceptance: 06-07-2023

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Gender equity is the subject of increasingly intense debates (Guzman et al., 2023; Allan et al., 2023; Hideg et al., 2023; Gil-Lacruz et al., 2023; Kenyatta, 2023). The rights and guarantees conquered by women throughout history are of great relevance; however, it is necessary to analyze the degree of equality they achieved in Brazil and reflect from this perspective on their social role about their rights and guarantees and how this can be worked with society today. Historically, women have played a relevant role in building and maintaining the family and continue to do so today, with new challenges, in addition to maintaining their families (Serra et al., 2023; Matera et al., 2023; McClain, 2023). Concomitantly, she seeks to take her place in the labor market in an environment that was previously not occupied by women, such as, for example, military service (Degirmenci & Gülel, 2023; O'Connor & Kearney, 2023). The woman who in the past performed only domestic service and cared for the children and husband began to seek more and more for her intellectual and professional development and even reached levels equivalent to men; however, this individual search is faced with many other interventions and challenges that end up motivating studies like this one, focusing on gender equity (McClain, 2023; Singh et al., 2023).

In this context, public and private services opened their doors to this new era. However, a certain distance is still perceived from what is considered equal rights: Women still receive lower wages than men and occupy fewer leadership positions than men (Vladislavljevic, 2023; Fuller & Kim, 2023). Even though significant progress

has been achieved in public service, it is still clear that some positions have never had a female leader. Equity, therefore, is necessary to strengthen women's achievements for equal rights and improvements regarding social development and social leadership. This bibliographical research used the conceptual bibliographic method developed by Nascimento-e-Silva (2020; 2021a; 2021b; 2021c) to explain gender equity in the labor market, given the historical differences between men and women.

## **II. GENDER, SEX, EQUALITY, AND EQUITY: CONTEXTUALIZATION**

It is beneficial to contextualize some reflections about gender and sex to make the meaning of this work understood. According to Stearns (2007), speaking of gender emphasizes the social and, therefore, historical character of conceptions based on perceptions of sexual differences, deeply rooted in an ancient male domain, whose total dissolution is not yet clearly perceptible. In the short term. For Scott (1995), gender is a constitutive element of social relations based on perceived differences between the sexes and is a primary way of giving meaning to power relations. In the scientific literature, there are other conceptions of gender, such as the psycholinguistic social component (Chutpulatov, 2023), social structure (Silva & Couto, 2023), social institution (López-Medina, 2023), and beliefs, customs, and social practices (Zvingowanisei, 2023), among others, socially constructed.

The gender issue was socially constructed to understand the natural relationships between men and women, their assumed societal roles, and the natural power relations existing between them, unlike the biological issue understood until the mid-twentieth century. Therefore, the term is used to analyze the social organization of relationships between men and women, to diversify and emphasize a detailed study on this topic. Furthermore, it is essential to emphasize the differences between gender and sex. The first refers to the unequal social relations of power between men and women, based on sexual differences conceived by society, as can be seen from studies such as those by Zuckerman et al. (2023), Dusabe (2023) and Ajayi et al. (2023). The second refers to biological differences, their reproductive systems, and their differentiated functions resulting from hormones, as can be seen in studies such as those by Obafemi et al. (2023), Colineaus et al. (2022) and Ekasuci and Faridah (2022). To better understand equality and equity, it is essential to point out that, although similar, both terms are not synonymous. Given this, the Aurélio dictionary defines them as such (Ferreira, 1999):

Equality – [From Latin *Aequalitate*] 1. Quality or state of equality; parity. 2. Uniformity, identity. 3. Equity, justice. 4. Mat. Property of being equal. 5. Mat. Expression of a relationship between equal mathematical beings. Moral equality. Relationship between individuals by which all of them are bearers of the same fundamental rights that come from humanity and define the dignity of the human person.

Equity – [From the Latin *aequitate*] 1. Disposition to equally recognize the right of each one. 2. Set of immutable principles of justice that lead the judge to a criterion of moderation and equality, even if to the detriment of objective law. 3. Feeling of justice averse to a rigorous and strictly legal judgment or treatment criterion. 4. Equality, righteousness, equanimity.

The Brazilian constitution deals with equality in its art. five as a fundamental principle and as one of its structural pillars, pointing out that equal treatment must be given to all individuals, without distinction of any kind, guaranteeing the inviolability of this right:

Art. 5th. All are equal before the law, without distinction of any kind, guaranteeing Brazilians and foreigners residing in the country the inviolability of the right to life, liberty, equality, security, and property, in the following terms:

I - men and women are equal in rights and obligations under the terms of this Constitution (Brasil, 2023).

In this way, the principle of isonomy must concern both the legislator and the law enforcer to guarantee that the established specifications are met concretely and not simply literally. Since the declaration does not address individual disparities, the Law must provide adequate conditions to prevent inequalities and injustices, promoting formal and material equality. In this sense, Lenza (2009, p. 679) highlights:

Article 5, caput, enshrines that all are equal before the law, without distinction of any kind. One should, however, seek not only this apparent formal equality (enshrined in classical liberalism) but, above all, material equality insofar as the law must treat equals equally and unequally, to the extent of their inequalities. This is because, in the active social state, which enforces human rights, more real equality is imagined about the goods of life, different from that which is only formalized before the law.

From this thought, the first aspects of equity can be extracted, which is a fairer way of applying the laws and the law in the concrete case (Peñaranda et al., 2023; Ayyildiz et al., 2023; Dallery et al., 2023). Each situation can be analyzed by the context and situation of everyone, avoiding the excessive rigor that would make mistreating some individuals. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, approved in 1948 by the General Assembly of the United Nations, as a universal document to combat inequality in the world inspired numerous constitutions. In its Art. 23, the item I guarantees the right to equal conditions in labor relations, which obliges signatory countries to guarantee their citizens the conditions set out in its text (Pallares-Yabur, 2023; Marisport et al., 2023).

### **III. WOMEN IN THE HOME CONTEXT AND AFTER THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION**

Historically, one can signal the condition of women from the dictates of the Catholic Church, which was an institution that contributed significantly to the strengthening of a patriarchal society (Watson, 2023; Blackmore & Pugh, 2023). In this sense, going back to the times of Christ, in choosing the woman who would bear the son of God, Mary, stereotypes about the perfect woman were observed: obedience, virginity, and submission, among other subjugating aspects. Meanwhile, her husband José, like the patriarch, worked to support the family nucleus and make the most critical decisions in the household. His wife owed him obedience.

Given this, the Church reinforces the construction of the female stereotype in the sense of imposing on women the characteristics of the perfect family, configured by a submissive, passive, weak woman with no political representation. Corroborating this assertion, Del Priore (2000, p. 9) makes some considerations related to the patriarchal regime:

The patriarchal system installed in colonial Brazil, a system that found great reinforcement in the Catholic Church, which saw women as submissive and inferior individuals, ended up leaving them, apparently, little space for explicit action. However, I insist that was just a mere appearance because, both in their family life and in the world of work, women knew how to establish forms of sociability and solidarity that worked, in different situations, as a network of connections capable of reinforcing their power: individual or group, personal or community.

In the same vein, it is observed that the role of women in society is built from childhood. It was perceived in front of children's games as always related to household chores and childcare, while boys were presented with games that made it possible to gain independence and freedom. On the other hand, the women maintained these patriarchal positions for a long time since they reproduced these thoughts within their own homes toward their children (Giron, 2008).

With the First and Second World Wars, when men went to the battlefield, the need arose for women to take over the family business and their husbands' positions in the labor market. However, at the war's end, some men did not survive or returned mutilated, unable to return to work, leaving these women with the "obligation" to leave domestic services to assume duties previously reserved for the head of the family. In this sense, Prehn (1999) understands that women were biologically predetermined for pregnancy since primitive times, responsible for domestication, small cultivation, and care of offspring, unlike men, who were responsible for hunting. This understanding of the woman's responsibility for caring for the offspring extended until the middle of the 20th century. Until this time, woman was socially recognized and valued as belonging to a particular class for having the condition to procreate. It so happens that such responsibility began to be fought by the feminist movements of the 1960s. These groups "preached" women's liberation from the sole and exclusive obligation of motherhood imposed by society until then.

Given this, Badinter (1985) states that maternal love results from social and cultural construction, which has nothing to do with instinct, blood factor, or nature's determinism. However, numerous scientific studies show precisely the opposite, that love is a constituent element of animals, as shown by studies such as that of Pughe (2020). The personification of the mother figure emerges as a way of repressing the woman's power and autonomy, based on constructing a discourse that will blame and threaten if she does not fulfill her maternal duty, imposed as natural and spontaneous.

The choice for motherhood acquired after the feminist movements in the 1960s resulted in a breakdown of the patriarchal model of the family nucleus. From then on, women began to have greater social freedom (although still very unequal to men), acquiring some rights and occupying a significant portion of the labor market, which was impossible before. The current woman, mainly from the middle class, has chosen to stipulate an equal division of domestic functions. There is a transition in which fathers share with mothers the tasks related to families, especially regarding children (Wagner et al., 2005; Byrne et al., 2023; Leight et al., 2022).

Increasingly, the roles of men and women have ceased to consider only sexual identity, starting to analyze human conditions and their circumstances. Some women began to perceive the coexistence of new roles, that is, that of mother and that of a working woman, in an ambiguous way, due to what they consider to be maternal duties, namely: more extraordinary dedication to family and children to the detriment of activities away from home, even temporarily.

Due to the success of the industrial revolution and the need for more employees to handle the new work technology, the female presence was inserted more intensely in the labor market. However, great were the challenges faced by women. At the beginning of the Revolution, they also worked 14 to 18 hours a day and received significantly lower wages than men. Over time, this excessive workload has significantly decreased, which has not prevented movements to fight for more humane working conditions from emerging.

If, in the industrial era, working conditions were already precarious for men, this achievement was harder for women, as female work suffered many forms of prejudice, either because of biological characteristics or the physical differences between the sexes, especially regarding regards motherhood. In this way, women's work was

seen as inferior to men's and, therefore, of lesser value because they had to divide their production time and take care of their offspring. Soihet (2005, p. 587) makes the following consideration about female work:

These women, despite their meager earnings, as female activities, in general, are the most devalued and least remunerated, played a relevant role in the family economy, and many of them lived alone, guaranteeing their subsistence and that of their children.

On the other hand, there are data that the literature points out as being relevant about female performance in the labor market and how much it intensified during the Second World War (1939-1945), from a significant change on the part of women in his way of acting and dressing, denoting a desire for freedom and independence of the male figure, which brought a feeling of disorder to society. As presented by Maluf and Mott (1998, p. 390), it was a passage in which progress is blamed for the erosion of good morals:

The slightest sign of flexibility in the sexual division of functions within the family was passed on by conservatives and reformists as a threatening modernizing wave. Against the "great surges of progress" that made "the world oscillate," they warned, "let us be like a mighty tree rooted to the ground, immutable, identical to itself," let us look for the stable being in the home that no event can shake.

These changes in behavior, added to the need for family support on the part of women with less favored financial situations, were essential for the insertion of women in the labor market. However, the conquests for the occupation of the labor market occurred painfully, marked by revolutions and the search for the right to wages and workload equitable with men, causing dramatic deaths. A striking fact of these struggles was the date that gave rise to International Women's Day when 125 weavers were killed by suffocation and carbonization in an accident at the Cotton factory.

#### **IV. PROTECTION OF WOMEN'S WORK: FIRST LAWS**

The first legal manifestation of safeguarding women's rights in the labor market occurred in England on August 19, 1842, when women were prohibited from working underground. In 1844, the working day was reduced to 10 hours. In 1848, laws were created in France to protect women's work, and in Germany, the Industrial Code emerged. In this context, it is interesting to highlight the Treaty of Versailles, which established equal pay between men and women by ordering equal pay for equal pay, regardless of the sex of the work; in addition, it demanded that an inspection service be organized in each State, including women, to ensure the application of the workers' protection law (Kristjánssdóttir & Neunsinger, 2023; Fraccaro, 2023).

According to a report produced by the International Labor Organization (ILO), the participation rate of women in the labor market in Brazil is 55%, a figure considerably higher than the Latin American average (45%) but still lower than the levels of many countries (Novais, 2005). Conventions number 3 and 4 of the ILO, from 1919, brought issues that covered women's rights and guarantees. Convention No. 3 intended to guarantee paid leave for pregnant women:

Article 3. In all industrial or commercial establishments, public or private, or on their premises, except establishments where only members of the same family are employed, a woman a) shall not be authorized to work for six weeks after childbirth; b) she will have the right to leave her job, on the production of a medical certificate stating that childbirth is expected, probably within six weeks; c) she will receive, during the entire period she remains absent, under paragraphs (a) and (b), sufficient compensation to keep herself and her child in good hygienic conditions; said compensation, the exact amount of which will be fixed by the competent authority in each country, shall be provided by public funds or paid for using an insurance system. She will also be entitled to free care from a doctor or midwife. No error on the part of the doctor or midwife in calculating the date of delivery can prevent a woman from receiving the compensation to which she is entitled from the date of the medical certificate until the date of delivery; d) she will be entitled in all cases if she breastfeeds the child, two half-hour breaks to allow her to breastfeed (ILO, 2023).

In this sense, a new vision is perceived about the woman, understanding biological limitations, identifying, and reaching the woman in a delicate moment, and the minor needing care, food, and affection. Convention No. 4 guarantees the protection of the worker's night rest. The Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1932, through Decree nº 21.417, established the prohibition of distinction of sex in the work market, the salary equality between men and women, the reduction of the workload attributed to the woman, equating her to one of the men, prohibited the work of pregnant women during the last four weeks of pregnancy and the subsequent weeks after giving birth, as well as prohibiting the dismissal of pregnant women, night work and providing for half-hour breaks for breastfeeding women during the first six months of the child's life. Baby.

The CLT, in turn, presents a chapter entirely intended to add and formalize the rights presented in the Constitution, among them the limitations of overtime, prohibition of night work, protection of pregnant women, breastfeeding, and health conditions in the work environment. These rights were intended to bring women a better quality of life, providing greater productivity at work. These guarantees denote the indoctrinator's sensitivity in perceiving the biological differences of each sex and the victory, albeit in slow growth, of the feminine yearnings of the past.

## **V. THE FEMALE PRESENCE IN WORK RELATIONS**

The percentage of women belonging to the employed group rose from 40.5% in 2003 (IBGE (2012) to 52.7% in 2022 (Feijó, 2023). However, it is still at lower levels for men since these left 60.8% in 2003 IBGE (2012), reaching 72.1% in 2023 (Feijós, 2023). Although at lower percentages, what can be seen is a female evolution in terms of occupation. On the other hand, the growth of women in the economically active population rose by 1.8% in statistics, reaching 46.1% in 2011. Once again, it did not reach the male percentage of 53.9% (IBGE, 2012).

When analyzing the occupation of women in public positions and commerce, it was noticed that during the eight years of the survey, women maintained their rates stable in these occupations. More than that, the indices in domestic services were reduced by 2.2 percentage points. When comparing male activity since 2011, high participation in the industry can be seen, while women represent the majority in the public and domestic service. Relevant data presented by the IBGE is the growth of female schooling in the economic environment. Women with 11 years or more of study who worked in commerce in 2003 represented 51.5%, higher than the male index, which reached 38.4%. In civil construction, these rates were even more distant, with women representing 15.8%, while 55.4% were composed of men. In 2011, women started to occupy higher percentages in almost all sectors, being inferred only in the industry.

In 2015, the IBGE presented a survey carried out from 2003 to 2015 in metropolitan regions of Brazil. In this survey, it is possible to identify the disparity among economically active women, among other information regarding the insertion of women in the labor market.

In 2015, the male population continued to represent most of the economically active population (53.3%), maintaining the behavior of previous years, both for the group of six metropolitan areas and for each separately. The highest proportion of economically active women was registered in the Metropolitan Region of Rio de Janeiro Salvador (49.5%), and the lowest proportion was in Rio de Janeiro (45.9%). In 2015, on average, women earned around 75.4% of the income men received, representing an expansion of 1.2 percentage points compared to 2014 (74.2%). The lowest proportion was recorded in 2007, 70.5% (IBGE, 2015, p. 23).

In the political scenario of Brazil, female representation in the National Congress is inexpressive numbers, infinitely more minor than the representation of men, with only 17.7% of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies (Siqueira, 2022). It is no different in the Federal Senate: only 15 women among the 81 seats available. It can be noticed that although the female presence is increasingly expressive in the labor market, there is still a lot to grow for the guarantees established in Article 5 of the federal constitution to be put into practice. The female evolution in the labor market every year is notorious. Its representativeness, the intellectual preparation that has been proven through IBGE statistics, demonstrates that women are increasingly reaching levels of equality with men; however, even if there is a perception of this preparation, the statistics show that there is still a wage difference in the remuneration of women compared to men. This situation tends to take some time to equalize.

## **VI. CHALLENGES TO GENDER EQUITY IN THE LABOR MARKET**

Today, women represent a significant number in the Brazilian labor market. She rose to senior positions and became the head of her family. However, she suffers difficulties and prejudices in some areas. Given this, the World Economic Forum presented a report in 2016 that demonstrates a distancing from gender equality. According to the survey carried out by the agency, it will take a woman an average of 81 years to find herself on an equal footing with men in terms of salary, among other aspects.

In Brazil, this time is even longer, reaching 95 years to reach the desired equity levels. The report states that women reach higher levels in some areas of activity; however, the difference is highly significant in terms of politics and economic sense.

To prepare the survey and establish the ranking, an analysis was made of the conditions faced by women in the areas of health, education, economic parity, and political participation in 144 countries (WEF, 2016). The overall results did not represent very encouraging results. Brazil was in the 79th position, ranking worse than the continent's major economies. If it remains in this situation, it will only achieve gender equality in 95 years. For progress in pursuing this equality, programs are needed to promote and monitor the insertion of women in the labor market, in addition to wage appreciation, since there is still a significant wage gap between men and women in the country. As a motivation for the work aimed at gender equality, Brazil carries out a joint initiative program, with the participation of the federal government, together with public and private companies and the support of United Nations Women, of voluntary adhesion, where companies undertake to contribute to the elimination of inequalities experienced by women in their work environment.

Voluntary companies carry out the diagnosis and draw up an action plan outlining how the actions in favor of gender equity will be developed, applying, within 18 months, what was drawn up. After satisfactorily executing the plan, said company earns the Gender and Race Pro-Equity seal. Even though there is still a lot to evolve in finding gender equality, debating on the subject has also contributed to the knowledge of inequalities

and society's awareness of the solution to this social problem. In this way, the more it is debated, the faster Brazilian society will tend to be more just and egalitarian.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This study presented fundamental aspects of the trajectory of gender equality in Brazil. It was possible to see that there has already been a significant advance in labor relations, including women. An analysis of the historical context made it possible to understand the reason for so much gender inequality and how the changes and achievements achieved by women were. Even though surveys and research demonstrate that women are increasingly qualified and highlighted in virtually all areas of activity, they are still disadvantaged in salary issues. There are still records that even find themselves in a situation of discrimination, given their biological limitations arising from sex.

All these limitations must be worked on to include and not exclude those who have already demonstrated their complete competence and professionalism. The concern of this theme is precisely to inform, to alert to this problem of a social nature, which is the discrimination of female service in the labor market. Thus, there is still much to be achieved to establish a guarantee in the federal constitution in the sense of eradicating discrimination and inequality. Moreover, it is precisely through research and studies that this phenomenon needs to be put on the agenda to assert those rights that were won with a lot of struggle, sweat, and, in some cases, the very blood of innocent women.

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