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**Female management in the automotive sector: perspectives of managers and employees of  
a company in Minas Gerais**

*A gestão feminina no setor automotivo: perspectivas de gestoras e funcionários de uma  
empresa de Minas Gerais*

*Gestión femenina en el sector del automóvil: perspectivas de directivos y empleados de una  
empresa de Minas Gerais*

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**KEYWORDS**

Female Management.  
Gender. Human  
Resources.

**Abstract:** This study was carried based on the reflection about the behavior of women managers. Therefore, this research has the general objective analyzing the perception of managers and employees about female management in a company in the automotive sector in the city of Montes Claros - Minas Gerais. The specific objectives are map managers profile in the research unit; specify the professional trajectory of women for management positions; point out the perception of women about the positions and its responsibilities; and identify with the other employees the perception of female management. The research has a qualitative-quantitative character and was carried out through the application of semi-structured interviews to four managers and questionnaires to their fifty-seven employees; forty-eight valid questionnaires were obtained. In the data collection, it was clear that even though they faced different sort of discrimination, these women feel recognized and happy for the hierarchical level they could conquer. This way, the managers inserted in this organizational scope can consider themselves privileged about the employees' perception of their management in relation to the divergent contexts that are experienced by other women. It is noticeable that, in general, women who occupy management positions face different challenges in their organizational routine that are not limited to leading male workers. Specifically in this context, they showed that there are challenges that go beyond gender issues, including the motivation and satisfaction of their staff allied to the attempt to achieve a participatory and humanitarian management. It was possible to identify barriers being

broken down in this company, combined with a new culture of female inclusion in management positions, which has been disseminated by top management and is currently in the process of transformation process among its productive employees.

#### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Gestão Feminina.  
Gênero. Recursos  
Humanos.

**Resumo:** A reflexão acerca da participação das mulheres gestoras no setor automobilístico leva às discussões das pressões sociais em ambientes de trabalho tratados culturalmente como masculinos. O objetivo deste estudo foi analisar a percepção das gestoras e seus funcionários acerca da gestão feminina em uma empresa do setor automobilístico no município de Montes Claros – Minas Gerais. A pesquisa é exploratório-descritivo com abordagem quali-quantitativo, por meio do uso de entrevistas semiestruturadas aplicadas a quatro gestoras e de questionários para cinquenta e sete colaboradores. Como resultados, as mulheres gestoras demonstraram que se sentem reconhecidas e felizes pelo nível hierárquico e pelas atribuições de gestão que conquistaram. Em suma, as gestoras inseridas nesse âmbito organizacional podem se considerar privilegiadas no que tange à percepção dos colaboradores a suas gestões em relação aos contextos divergentes que são vivenciados por outras mulheres. Percebe-se que as mulheres que ocupam cargos de gestão enfrentam desafios diversos na rotina organizacional que não se limitam somente a liderar trabalhadores do sexo masculino. Especificamente nesse contexto, elas mostraram que existem desafios que vão além das questões de gênero, englobando a motivação e satisfação da equipe aliados à tentativa de alcançar uma gestão participativa e humanitária. Foi possível identificar barreiras sendo derrubadas nessa empresa aliada a uma nova cultura de inclusão do gênero feminino nos cargos de gestão, que vem sendo disseminada pela alta direção e, no momento, encontra-se em processo de transformação entre seus funcionários produtivos.

#### **PALABRAS CLAVE**

Gestión femenina;  
Género; Recursos  
Humanos

**Resumen:** La reflexión sobre la participación de las mujeres directivas en el sector de la automoción lleva a debatir sobre las presiones sociales en entornos laborales tratados culturalmente como masculinos. El objetivo de este estudio fue analizar la percepción de las gestoras y de sus colaboradores sobre la gestión femenina en una empresa del sector automovilístico del municipio de Montes Claros - Minas Gerais. La investigación es exploratoria-descriptiva con un enfoque cualitativo-cuantitativo, mediante el uso de entrevistas semi-estructuradas aplicadas a cuatro mujeres directivas y cuestionarios a cincuenta y siete empleados. Como resultados, las mujeres directivas demostraron que se sienten reconocidas y felices por el nivel jerárquico y las atribuciones directivas que han alcanzado. En definitiva, las mujeres directivas insertas en este contexto organizacional pueden considerarse privilegiadas en cuanto a la percepción de los colaboradores a sus gestiones en relación a los contextos divergentes vividos por otras mujeres. Se percibe que, en general, las mujeres que ocupan puestos directivos se enfrentan a varios retos en su rutina organizativa que no se limitan únicamente a dirigir con trabajadores masculinos. Concretamente en este contexto, mostraron que existen retos que van más allá de las cuestiones de género, abarcando la motivación y la satisfacción de su equipo aliadas al intento de lograr una gestión participativa y humanitaria. Fue posible identificar barreras que están siendo derribadas en esta empresa aliada a una nueva cultura de inclusión del género femenino en los puestos de dirección, que ha sido difundida por la alta dirección y que actualmente está en proceso de transformación entre sus empleados.

## Introduction

Management is commonly associated with the process of working with and through people who collaborate to effectively achieve the organizational objectives while efficiently utilizing scarce resources inserted in a constantly changing context (Santos, 2008). Historically, in the professional sphere, women were relegated to playing submissive roles relative to male figures, excluded from wage labor, and tasked with the responsibility of maintaining the household and family. In response to this reality, women have fought for many years for equal rights, seeking to eliminate gender distinctions, achieve equivalent positions, gain societal respect, and ensure salary equity with men (Rodrigues & Silva, 2015).

In this context, although many works have been published in the last years on gender issues within the organizations and some studies on female management profile, the phenomenon has not been addressed from the perspective of peers or subordinates (Prado Gonçalves, Espejo, Altoé, & Voese, 2016). Nevertheless, above all, discussing the barriers and team's perception of women's performance in the management presents itself as an organizational necessity.

Therefore, the research problem is to identify how it occurs and it's perceived the female management in an automobile company located in the city of Montes Claros – Minas Gerais. To address this, the main objective focuses on analyzing the perceptions of feminine gestors and their employees toward the female management in an automobile company from Montes Claros – Minas Gerais. The specific objectives are: map the female profiles in the unit research; specify the women professional trajectories leading to management roles; point out the women's perceptions of management positions and their inherent responsibilities; and identify, along with other employees, their perceptions of female management.

## Theoretical elements of the research

Management is defined as a coordinated set of activities designed to direct and control employees and facilities, ensuring responsibility, authority and

established relationships (Barbará, 2008). According to Ferreira (2011), management is defined as a process oriented toward achieving goals through a combination of decision-making, leadership, motivation, evaluation and analysis.

From this perspective, managing requires, as suggested by Miles, Snow, Meyer, and Coleman (1978), identifying strategic behavior with the aim of characterizing organizational decision amidst environmental pressures. In light of this, the authors developed four strategic typologies to assist managers in addressing adaptive challenges. These typologies are: analytic, defensive, prospective and reactive.

Table 1  
**Strategic Typologies**

Types	Definitions
<b>Analytic</b>	Operates in two types of markets: one stable and the other unstable, requiring intensive and detailed planning. It represents the balance between prospective and defensive strategies, while the defensive aims for dominance among product-market, the prospective seeks to explore.
<b>Defensive</b>	Maintains a stable line of products or services and rarely introduces innovations. The focus is on improving the efficiency of existing strategies rather than creating new products/services.
<b>Prospective</b>	Constantly seeks opportunities for new products and markets. Operates with changes and creativity, emphasizing innovate through extensive plannings. It prioritizes innovation over efficiency and employs decentralized control.
<b>Reactive</b>	Comprehend the market changes but modifies its actions only when pressured by the market. The performance is lower compared to other typologies, due to a lack of coherent alignment between strategy and organizational structure.

**Source:** adapted from Miles et al. (1978).

Regarding this pattern, Miles et al. (1978) affirm that typologies could axialite more effective decision-making toward organizational success, as they are grounded in the enterprise's actions in response to changes in the external environment. Consequently, organizations do not confine themselves to a single exposed typology, as

interactions with external environments continually reshape their organizational structures (Zanin; Machado & Sehnem, 2011).

In this regard, understanding the role of leadership and management can help managers comprehend strategic behavior of the market and determine the most suitable typology (or typologies) for the organization. That capacity to understand and navigate both internal and external contexts is critical to managers role (Ferreira, 2011; Oliveira, Perez Jr & Silva, 2010; Miles et al., 1978; Yukl, 1989).

### **Labor Market: the sexual division**

In society, it is commonly understood that women are primarily responsible for the family's well-being, while men are seen as the financial providers (Rocha-Coutinho, 2013). From that perspective, women are expected to be docile and subordinate, facing restrictions such as: limited access to education or social participation in the community (Silva, 2010).

However, in the labor market, women's advancement has occurred for multiple economic and cultural reasons (Silva, Santos & Teixeira, 2005), such as industrialization, which transformed the productive structure, urbanization process and the decline in fertility rates, which increased the probability of women entering the workforce. As a result, women have moved beyond traditional household roles and expanded their involvement to include positions as mothers, wives, and workers in a wide variety of professions, occupying spaces that were previously male-dominated (D'Alonso, 2008) while striving to end discrimination and secure the right to dignified work.

However, after five decades of significant achievements, women still contend with the deep-rooted male dominance and female subordination ingrained in the populational subconscious. Therefore, the female image remains closely associated with household care and maintaining family well-being, roles that are often perceived as low-risk and more emotional than rational tasks (Vieira, Monteiro, Carrieri, Guerra & Brant, 2019;

Rosenthal & Rezende, 2017).

In the last years, some positive changes have been observed in society such as periods spent on household care, changes in family structure, increased awareness of inequality among young people, and the emergence of the "new paternities" (Araújo, Picanço, Cano, Veiga, Gama, Picanço & Cano, 2018). Nevertheless, these changes are yet fragmented and inconstant (Sorj and Hirata, 2019), particularly when it comes to female participation in the labor market.

This phenomenon can be described as the sexual division of labor, referring to the differences and hierarchies between genders, which impact their careers, qualifications and salaries (Cisne, 2014). In his framework, it is a term used to define social relations between genders that, historically, have assigned production tasks to men and reproduction to women, resulting in contexts of inequality (Hirata & Kergoat, 2021).

Additionally, the division of labor between genders is structured around two guiding principles: (i) separation: in which there are certain jobs designated for men and others for women; and (ii) the hierarchic principle, which emphasizes the greater social and economic value associated to men (Hirata & Kergoat, 2007 & Kergoat, 2009). In this regard, Biroli (2010) argues that these attributes contribute to a category of "female references", in which the women's roles are restricted to family life, specifically as mothers and homemakers. This perspective perpetuates prejudice among many entrepreneurs, who view women as less productive and less profitable for companies (Marrugo-Salas, 2016).

In the same vein, Baquero, Guataquín and Sarmiento (2000) identify four types of discrimination faced by women within companies: salary, employment, occupational, and acquisition of intellectual capital. In this context, salary discrimination refers to the fact that, even when women possess the same qualifications as men, perform the same tasks or hold equivalent positions, and demonstrate equal productivity (Baquero et al., 2000), they continue to be paid less than men (Seggiaro, 2017).

As for employment discrimination, Mendonça, de Lima Nascimento and da Silva (2014) explains that the companies tend to avoid recruiting women for certain activities, primarily because they are perceived as the “fair sex”. This practice impacts specific profession groups, resulting in higher unemployment rates among women compared to men (Baquero et al., 2000).

About occupational discrimination, it arises from barriers women face in attaining positions at a higher hierarchic level (Chávez, Ríos, 2014; Samuelson, Levine, Barth, Wessel & Grand, 2019). In this case, even when women are professionally qualified, they are often unable to occupy leadership roles. Moreover, when they do achieve such positions, they continue to experience significant discrimination and wage inequality between genders (Silva, Carvalho & Silva, 2017).

Furthermore, it should be noted that, in their private lives, women often face an additional burden due to the male omission of household responsibilities (Ferreira, Sadoyama, Correia & Gomes, 2015). This stems from stereotypes associated with women, leading many husbands, often unconsciously, to associate domestic chores with the female domain (Hryniewicz & Vianna, 2018). Moreover, Marrugo-Salas (2016) highlights that, even when women are highly qualified professionals, they frequently shoulder these responsibilities alone (family and homecare), overwhelming them and, consequently, making them less available to take on management positions.

## **Women in management positions**

Numerous challenges hinder women from reaching management positions within organizations. Nevertheless, women have been steadily gaining ground in the labor market, particularly in managerial roles (Hryniewicz & Vianna, 2018; Roebuck, Thomas & Biermeier-Hanson, 2019). In this regard, the report published by Grant Thornton, which has been tracking the global progress of women in leadership positions for 17 years, highlights that women occupy 32% of

senior leadership roles (Thornton, 2022).

Notably, the inclusion of women in the corporate world has prompted significant changes within organizations. However, the careers of women in executive roles still exhibit inequalities when compared to those of men (Lima, 2011; Cuadra Palma & Restrepo Quintero, 2020). Regarding this issue, Silva et al. (2017) indicate that the labor market is still dominated by traditional gender preferences in management positions, as these roles are seen as inherently male, leading to the devaluation of women.

From this perspective, it is important to note that when women assume managerial roles, they face various obstacles in leading their teams, such as persistent scrutiny, trials, and prejudice, especially when managing older male subordinates (Hryniewicz & Vianna, 2018; Samuelson et al., 2019). Therefore, there is a pressing need to dismantle the prevailing negative perceptions within organizational environments that associate leadership exclusively with men (Silva et al., 2017). In this direction, Santos and Antunes (2012) emphasize that, to overcome existing biases, organizations should adopt an androgynous perspective in the workplace, which recognizes that every individual embodies both masculine and feminine traits.

## **Methodological elements of the research**

### **Characterization**

Regarding the approach, the research employs a qualitative-quantitative method (Knechtel, 2014, p. 106). By combining these methods, it is possible to achieve greater accuracy and understanding of the analyzed situations (Creswell, 2010).

For this purpose, exploratory and descriptive research types were employed. As for the means, bibliographic research and field study were applied, considering that the primary focus of the research is to comprehend the natural environment of the individuals in the sample.

In this sense, the sampling method was intentional and non-probabilistic, based on the



following criteria: (a) women in managerial positions; (b) companies in the automotive sector; and (c) employees reporting to the interviewed managers. Regarding non-probabilistic sampling, Gil (2019) explains that the selection of sample elements is carried out non-randomly, whether justified or not by the researcher.

The sample consisted of four managers who agreed to participate in the study. These managers work in the areas of Stock, After-Sales, Quality, and New Vehicles within a medium-sized automotive company in Montes Claros/MG. For data collection with the managers, semi-structured interviews were conducted. For the employees, a questionnaire comprising 17 closed-ended questions was administered, utilizing the Likert scale. To ensure ethical principles, the identities of the participants will not be disclosed. The following abbreviations will be used to refer to the managers:

Table 2  
**Nomination of Managers for Discussion**

Positions	Abbreviations
Stock Manager	SM
After-Sales Manager	ASM
Quality Manager	QM
New Vehicles Manager	NVM

Source: developed by the authors (2022)

## Presentation and discussion results

### Characterization of the Female Manager's Profiles and Professional Trajectories within the Company

To achieve the first specific objective, the managers' profiles were mapped (Table 3).

The managers are aged between 22 and 27 years, classified as young adults. Only one is married, and none have children. Regarding these data, Lima (2010) points out that, currently, many women postpone motherhood until they reach satisfactory socioeconomic and psychological conditions for themselves and their families.

However, Guedes (2008) contrasts that, by prioritizing professional qualification and career growth, as is the case for the interviewed managers,

women often avoid embracing motherhood due to being professionally overburdened. Regarding educational attainment, three managers have completed higher education (in the fields of Production and Electrical Engineering and Business Administration), while one is currently pursuing a degree (in Business Administration).

Table 3  
**Characterization of the Female Manager's Profiles**

Manager	Age	Marital Status	Children	Education	Self-Perception as a Manager
SM	25	Single	No	B.C	Analytical
ASM	25	Single	No	B.C	Analytical
NVM	27	Single	No	B.C	Analytical
QM	22	Married	No	B.I	Analytical

Source: developed by the authors (2022)

Note: \*bachelor's degree complete and \*\* bachelor's degree incomplete

The graduates in engineering, NVM and ASM, are not occupying positions aligned with their academic background, which they attribute to the limited availability of job opportunities in the city. Concerning their strategic stance, they identified themselves as analytical managers. According to Miles et al. (1978), the analytical management strategy operates by conducting intensive and detailed planning, aiming to dominate the product-market domain while continually seeking to explore new positioning strategies. Along similar lines, Loden (1988) observed that most women are professionals who pay close attention to situational details, which contributes to a broad view of the organization's internal and external environment, thereby reinforcing their analytical positioning.

With respect to professional growth within the organization and their feelings about this progress, the manager (SM) detailed that she began as a young apprentice and was promoted to a managerial position after three years with the company. QM, the youngest of the managers, has also been with the company for three years and started her career as an intern in the CRM area, which is linked to the company's post-sales

department. She previously worked as a subordinate to ASM and NVM before assuming her managerial position and working at the same hierarchical level as her colleagues. Lastly, ASM has been with the company for eight years, making her the most experienced manager in terms of time within the organization.

Consequently, three of the managers were promoted to leadership roles after a medium-term period of employment, in contrast to ASM, who has had a longer career within the organization. Furthermore, it is worth emphasizing that these promotions align with the perspective of Silva et al. (2017), who highlighted the necessity for organizations to associate leadership roles with individuals possessing the competence and professional qualifications required for such positions, without prioritizing male candidates.

### **Perception of Women Regarding Positions and Responsibilities**

Regarding the workload and remuneration, SM states that she occasionally feels overburdened, as she often completes tasks at home. NVM (2021) mentions that she occasionally takes work home but, when necessary, prefers to stay longer at the office after hours rather than completing tasks at home. On the other hand, the interviewees QM (2021) and ASM (2021) expressed that there is no need to take work home.

Under these circumstances, occupational health can be compromised due to the high probability of fatigue and exhaustion caused by the aforementioned factors, especially when employees work beyond regular hours to meet all demands (Muchinsky, 2004).

Concerning job and salary satisfaction, as well as professional fulfillment, only the Quality Manager reported dissatisfaction. SM (2021) expressed being professionally fulfilled, affirming that she is in a position aligned with her field of study, as is the case for NVM (2021) and ASM (2021). In contrast, SM (2021) reported difficulty responding, as she does not yet feel fulfilled; the responsibilities and remuneration associated with

her position have not yet been formalized and presented by the company, leaving her routine uncertain.

### **Challenges and Prejudice in the Organizational Environment**

When questioned about the challenges they face, the managers discussed issues ranging from operational processes to the age of their employees. In this context, the most significant factor was team motivation, followed by maintaining a friendly and respectful environment between managers and employees.

The interviewees occupy positions that have historically been held by men and work in an automotive company where 80% of the employees (including upper management) are male. Regarding prejudice, they shared the following experiences:

[...] Here, yes. In fact, I heard today that I don't have the profile for my role. [...] It hasn't sunk in yet that I heard that, but I'll try to let it go [...]. I asked: 'Why don't I have the profile for management? Is it because I'm a woman and I'm twenty-two years old? Because I'm young?' [...] There may be some types of comments, but nothing as apparent as this... At least, not so far. (QM, 2021).

I sometimes feel it, but I believe much of it is even imperceptible to others. I've clearly heard from several clients that they prefer to be assisted by men because they think women don't understand cars (their own words). [...] There are also those cases where people don't realize it: 'But you're the manager?' 'You're so young.' 'Call a superior, I want to speak with someone in charge.' [...] Regarding colleagues, I've experienced some situations a long time ago, but they were with very senior employees who didn't know me [...] more resistant to change and with long-held beliefs, I don't blame them. (ASM, 2021).

In contrast to the accounts above, SM (2021) pointed out that she has not experienced any discriminatory attitudes, while NVM (2021) stated that she has not perceived prejudice due to being a

woman. On the contrary, she emphasized that she was positively accepted by those around her. From these accounts, it is evident that two of the interviewees experienced prejudice from colleagues and even clients due to being young women in managerial positions within a business niche that, for some, should be occupied by men. Regarding this observation, Ceribeli, Rocha, and Pereira (2017) emphasize that women often become targets of various forms of prejudice, rooted in the devaluation and underestimation of their competencies. Women, therefore, face significant challenges and prejudices in the corporate environment (Baquero et al., 2000; Hryniewicz & Vianna, 2018; Samuelson et al., 2019), and this reality must be addressed.

Moreover, it is worth noting that "Brazil is a signatory to all international agreements that directly or indirectly guarantee the Human Rights of Women, as well as the elimination of all forms of discrimination and gender-based violence" (Freire, 2007, p. 9). Thus, the country has the potential to propose interventions that ensure women's rights in both their personal and professional lives through the implementation of public policies.

## Female Management

Regarding female leadership, SM (2021) mentions that she possesses greater empathy and, at the same time, strength, which she considers inherent characteristics of women. QM (2021) highlights feeling a sense of empowerment and appreciation for women in organizations when inclusive practices are implemented. Meanwhile, the other interviewees pointed out that:

[...] We, as women, have been fighting for years to [...] achieve higher positions and goals. [...] Because it has always been a struggle, these roles were exclusively held by men [...]. We are [...] working hard, proving that we are just as capable as men and that there is no difference between a man and a woman in leadership. [...] We are gradually gaining our space in the job market." (NVM, 2021).

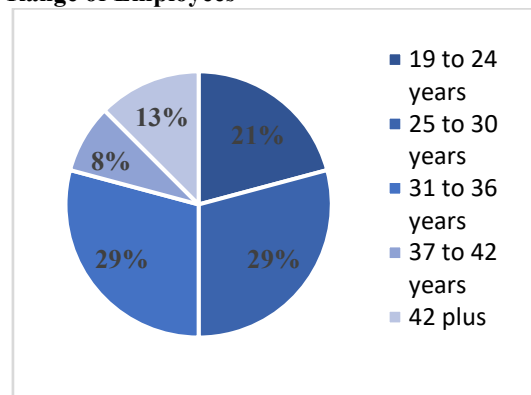
A definition is more complex... in the environment I'm part of, I see it as a trend. A new way of working. A new way for society itself to view women [...]" (ASM, 2021).

Concerning these statements, according to Garcia and Conforto (2012), the constant evolution of women in the job market represents a continuous and persistent social phenomenon on a global scale. As cited by Gipson, Pfaff, Mendelsohn, Catenacci, and Burke (2017), the path toward the recognition of women in the corporate environment remains long and challenging.

## Perception of the Surveyed Employees

The profile of the 57 respondents comprises 73% men and 27% women, with an age range between 25 and 36 years, indicating that a portion of them is older than their manager (Figure 1).

Figure 1  
Age Range of Employees



Source: developed by the authors (2022)

As for educational attainment, 36% have completed high school, 29% hold a university degree, and 25% have some college education but have not graduated, while the remainder are distributed among those with incomplete or complete primary education or postgraduate degrees. Furthermore, employees with lower educational levels compared to their managers predominate.



## Female and Participatory Management: employees' and managers' perceptions

The employees agree that the female managers possess the technical knowledge and skills required for their roles, while 8% expressed indifference. Regarding this, Hryniewicz and Vianna (2018) highlighted that women face numerous challenges in delegating tasks to their teams, owing to relentless questioning, tests of their authority, and biases, especially from older male employees.

On this matter, the managers were asked about the team's acceptance and respect when decisions are imposed without the possibility of discussion to determine the best solution. Surprisingly, contrary to the theoretical positioning, they stated that, while resistance was evident in the past, the present shows full collaboration, understanding, and respect for their decisions. Additionally, they emphasized being open to listening to their team's opinions when decisions can be made collectively.

This reveals a strong emphasis on inclusive management, as they demonstrate a willingness to engage in participatory decision-making, granting employees the freedom to offer suggestions or even constructive criticism. To explore this further, the perception of employees from the four sectors regarding this approach was assessed: 88% agreed or strongly agreed that they feel free to provide suggestions to their managers in the organizational environment, while 12% disagreed or were indifferent.

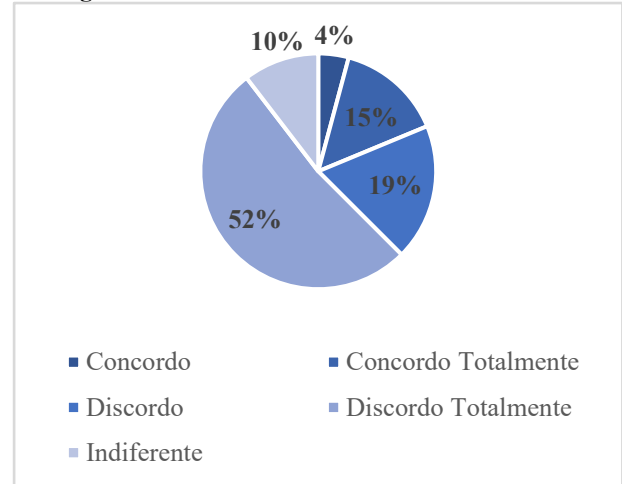
When considering the effectiveness of male versus female management, a minority (19%) agreed or strongly agreed that male management is more effective than female management. Women, therefore, receive support from 71% of the workforce—a significant advancement in a company whose culture was historically dominated by male leadership. However, Lima (2011) notes that society still struggles to recognize women as effective managers or leaders.

Thus, it is evident that the automotive sector, historically male-dominated, comprised only 19.7% female labor in 2019, with women in leadership positions earning up to 34% less than

their male counterparts and 23% less on average in the sector as a whole (Automotive Business, 2019). In light of a patriarchally sexist society, the majority of employees' perception of gender equality in skills represents progress compared to the divergent realities faced by other women (Oliveira & Olinto, 2004; Diehl & Senna, 2016).

Figure 2

### Effectiveness of Male Management Compared to Female Management



Source: developed by the authors (2022).

Note: Concordo: agree; discordo: disagree; indiferente: indifferent; concordo totalmente: totally agree; discordo totalmente: totally disagree

## Motivation in the Workplace

The managers reported that motivating the team is their main challenge. During the research, it was observed that 79% of employees feel motivated to perform their roles in their respective sectors. On this subject, Lira (2015) states that motivation involves different factors for each individual, as personal, social, and cultural aspects vary from person to person.

However, there remains work to be done by the managers to address dissatisfaction or indifference among the remaining employees. To this end, Bonome (2009) highlights that the aforementioned theory provides a solid foundation and clarity, making it a valuable tool for managers in designing and planning motivational strategies aimed at identifying and meeting the needs of their teams.

## Prejudice against female managers in their respective sectors

The accounts of SM (2021) and ASM (2021) reveal that prejudiced attitudes have been experienced in their sectors. In this context, 30% of employees reported the presence of prejudice against female managers in their sectors, while 64% stated they do not witness or perceive prejudice. Regarding this issue, Barros (2010) emphasizes the need for organizations to develop strategic plans aimed at achieving effective gender equality, thereby eliminating existing inequalities that often limit women and negatively impact their careers.

## Final Considerations

The main objective of this research was to analyze the perception of female managers and their employees regarding female leadership within a company in the automotive sector located in Montes Claros – Minas Gerais, Brazil. The study highlighted the profiles of the female managers in the research unit, who are between 22 and 27 years old. Three of them have completed higher education, while one is currently pursuing it, and none have children. According to some theorists, modern women prioritize professional advancement over maternal or domestic activities, finding satisfaction and fulfillment in managerial positions. On the other hand, the only source of dissatisfaction expressed by the participants was related to the lack of information provided by the HR department concerning working conditions and compensation.

Regarding their management style, the managers identified themselves as analytical, meaning they are observant and detail-oriented in both the internal and external environments of the organization. As for their advancement into management positions, three of them ascended relatively quickly, benefiting from opportunities within the company. In this regard, the company's initiative to promote four women into its management team, previously composed exclusively of men, represents a step toward breaking paradigms and introducing a new

organizational culture focused on diversity.

In terms of employee perceptions of female management, most employees expressed positive sentiments, supporting the managers' claim that their decisions are accepted and respected. However, a minority of employees still believe that male management is more effective than female management, reflecting the prejudice noted by the women managers. This minority highlights the persistence of an organizational culture influenced by patriarchal norms, which traditionally assigned leadership and power roles to men while underestimating women's managerial capabilities.

Nevertheless, the majority perception of employees contrasts with society's broader patriarchal mindset. This result legitimizes the ongoing struggle faced by women to prove their equal competence without resorting to the "masculinization" of management, a concept referenced by theorists describing women who adopt traditionally male behaviors to gain acceptance from subordinates and colleagues.

In addition, the challenges faced by female managers extend beyond leading male employees. These challenges include motivating and satisfying their teams while striving to achieve participatory and human-centered management. This study aims to contribute to future discussions on the inequalities faced by women in traditionally "male-dominated" environments and, more broadly, in the labor market.

Organizational strategies are needed to eradicate discrimination rooted in societal norms, which have implications for the labor market and hinder women's access to leadership positions and male-dominated fields. A methodological contribution of this study was its reconciliation of the perceptions of both female managers and employees in the automotive sector regarding female leadership. The practical contribution was the presentation of self-reported evidence from both managers and employees demonstrating that women perform effectively in the automotive sector. Additionally, the positive experience of this organization in embracing diversity within its organizational hierarchy is worth highlighting.

The study's limitations include challenges related to gaining acceptance of the questionnaire and interview scope from the company's HR

department and senior management, as well as resistance from some managers to provide more precise details. Furthermore, the absence of participation from the HR department in presenting the company's diversity policies prevents a definitive conclusion about whether the inclusion of women in management positions is part of a formal diversity policy or occurred randomly. Another limitation concerns potential bias in employee responses, as participants might have given "socially acceptable" answers rather than expressing their true thoughts.

For future research, it is recommended to conduct a more detailed analysis of the current challenges faced by women in leadership roles on a global scale, examine the perceptions of male colleagues, and study successful strategies implemented by organizations. Ultimately, identifying a well-designed model that has effectively reduced—or even eliminated—prejudices faced by women in the corporate sphere could serve as a catalyst for promoting a new organizational culture.

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