

## Research Article

**GENDER AND RACIAL EMPOWERMENT: INTERFACE WITH GEOGRAPHIC SPACE AND SUSTAINABILITY****Empoderamento de Gênero e racial: interface com espaço geográfico e sustentabilidade**

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**ABSTRACT:** The objective of this work is to analyze empowerment based on gender and racial equality in Brazilian society. We have performed documental and quantitative research using data extracted from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, Center of Educational, Cultural and Community Action Studies and Research and Union Socioeconomic Statistics and Studies Department databases. The data indicates that girls present greater age-grade distortion than boys, and the black population is at a disadvantage compared to the white population in higher education from ages 18 to 24. Black women are at a disadvantage in relation to black men, as white women are with white men in terms of inclusion in the Brazilian workforce and average salaries. In addition, they are under-represented in managerial positions, and there is a disadvantage in terms of gender in all Brazilian states. Black women suffer the most social inequality in the workforce. This study considers the criterion of race, because black people make up more than half of the Brazilian population. The female and racial geography, it points out that social and racial inequality is a compromising factor for achieving the goal of the 2030 Agenda.

**Palavras-chave:** Women; Racism; Female geography; Education; Workforce.

**RESUMO:** O objetivo deste trabalho é analisar o empoderamento a partir da igualdade de gênero e raça na sociedade brasileira. Foi realizada pesquisa documental e quantitativa, sendo os dados extraídos das bases de dados do Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, do Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas em Educação, Cultura e Ação Comunitária e do Departamento Intersindical de Estatística e Estudos Socioeconômicos. As informações apontam que as meninas apresentam maior distorção idade – série que os meninos; e a população negra em desvantagem à população branca no ensino superior, na idade de 18 a 24 anos. As mulheres negras estão em desvantagem, em relação aos homens negros e às mulheres e aos homens brancos, no que se refere à inclusão no mercado de trabalho brasileiro e ao rendimento financeiro médio; além disso, elas estão subrepresentadas nos

cargos de gestão/diretoria e em desvantagem de gênero em todos os estados do Brasil. A mulher Negra, no mercado de trabalho, está em pior nível de desigualdade social. O estudo traz o critério raça, uma vez que a população do Brasil é composta por mais de 50% de pessoas negras. A geografia feminina e racial, assinala que a desigualdade social e racial é um fator comprometedor para alcançar o objetivo da Agenda 2030.

**Keywords:** Mulheres; Racismo; Geografia feminina; Educação; Mercado de Trabalho.

## INTRODUÇÃO

In geographic space, there is a delimitation of power between men and women, in addition to racial discrimination in the Brazilian context. Where Black women are concentrated in the outskirts, territories and, in more operational jobs and few have upward mobility, points to the issue of social class. Geography has as its object of study society which, however, is objectified via five key concepts – “Traditional Geography, Quantitative Theoretic, Geography Criticism, Humanist and Cultural” – that are similar to each other, since they refer to the human action modeling the surface terrestrial: space, place, landscape, region and territory (LOPES REIS, 2015, p.21). Therefore, gender and race associated with sustainability is a topic still little explored by geography, which needs to involve social relations in everyday life.

Power relationships, observed every day in terms of the gender criterion, become concrete through material and immaterial artifices such as unequal access to education, food, land, wealth and property, and women also have a greater workload in the home. There is a disparity in the control of resources and the division of work and leisure, which makes it difficult for women to access opportunities to improve their lives (COMMISSION ON SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH, 2008a, b).

These aggravating factors have negative effects on the health and well-being of women as well as violence against women by their partners, which is still ignored by policies and services as noted by the Social Commission on Determinants of Health, with improvements in this area being one of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (COMMISSION ON SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH, 2008a; ORGANIZAÇÕES DAS NAÇÕES UNIDAS, 2021). Saffioti (2015, p.146-7) states that “violence is a constituent part of the relations between men and women due to the patriarchal gender structure”. Manandhar et al. (2018) argue that talking about gender evokes social relationships between men and women as a function of their roles, behaviors, activities, attributes and opportunities which are fundamental to their differences in terms of their level of power.

Therefore, gender interacts with the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development (SDG). Each goal has a number like: SDG1 (the eradication of poverty), SDG3 (health and well-being), SDG4 (quality education) SDG5 (gender equality), and SDG10 (reduction of inequality). Education influences the health of women and children, and decent work affects employment rates, which are related to sickness and death for both genders. The interconnections of SDGs facilitate gender equality and female empowerment (ONU, 2021). To Saffioti (2015, p.121) “empowering oneself is equivalent to combat,

always having alternatives in terms of social category conditions.” Thus, an empowered woman motivates the empowerment of other women.

In the more than 25 years since the conception of the Beijing Platform for Action, various opportunities have opened to promote gender equality based on the reconnection and reformulation of the commitment established in that conference of actions demanding public policies and mobilization which are necessary given that all have a role to play to act towards the common good (ORGANIZAÇÕES DAS NAÇÕES UNIDAS MULHERES BRASIL, 2015).

Thus, the research agenda suggests relating women and poverty; women’s education and training; women and health; violence against women; women and armed conflict; women and the economy; women in power and leadership; institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; the human rights of women; women and the media; women and the environment; and girls’ rights (ONUBR, 2015).

Melo and Lopes (2012) argue that, to achieve gender equality, there must be changes in laws or public policies in macrosystems (executive, legislative and judicial power), mesosystems (communities and schools) and microsystems (families) to overtake private space in the direction of public space, to make it possible for women to have the power to speak and act in political spheres and organizations in decision-making processes.

Gender inequality in organizations, even for women with higher education, is due to macrosystems which are based on cultural values such as institutional sexism and economic disparities, which lead to discrimination against women, outside of microsystems that refer to interactions, which can increase opportunities and vice-versa, if macrosystems exercise power in microsystems (MALLINGER; STARKS; TARTER, 2017).

In Latin America, the female rate of poverty is higher, which indicates the need for governmental policies to empower women so that they can escape situations of social vulnerability. This index, presented by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean is an estimate based on data from 2018 which compares the percentage of poor women from 20 to 59 years of age with men in the same age group. When the value is above 100 it indicates that poverty (extreme poverty) affects women more than men, while below 100 indicates the opposite situation (COMISIÓN ECONÓMICA PARA AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE, 2019).

In 2019, for every 100 men living in poverty, there were 112.7 women in the same condition, and one of the reasons for this is the lack of income from other members of the family, mainly when they have homes with many children, which can lead to a situation of poverty. This year, Brazil occupied sixth place (112.6) in terms of women living in poverty, according to the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL, 2019).

Black women are not valued as much as men, mainly in the steel and metallurgy industries due to racial and gender discrimination (FERREIRA et al., 2020). Gender and racial equality is far from materializing in the Brazilian corporate world. This leads us to infer that, even though diversity has been preached since the beginning of this

21st century, is still in immateriality, in the speeches of managers and directors, and not in practice (COELHO JÚNIOR; HEIN, 2021).

Gender empowerment in Brazil raises the following issue: what is the level of gender and racial equality in the labor market in terms of management, income, and education? The basic objective of this study is to analyze empowerment in terms of gender and racial equality in Brazilian society. This study is justified and aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the 2030 Agenda, and its fifth goal is gender equality in our society. As a contribution to this study, it may be observed that gender equality is equidistant from this goal due to sexism and racism in Brazilian society, because gender equality permeates racial issues in this country where there is a myth of racial democracy.

The objective of the 2030 Agenda in terms of gender equality is one challenge for women in many countries in the public and private spheres (ONU, 2021). Moreira et al. (2019) carried out a survey with experts and showed that the chances of Brazil meeting the 17 SDGs are low, therefore, it is necessary to prioritize some SDGs such as 4 (Quality Education), 1 (Eradication of poverty), 3 (Health and Well-being) as they constitute the basis for making the other SDGs viable with public policies to reduce poverty, universal basic care and population education.

The future of our nations intersects with the aspirations contained within the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, which consist of three main dimensions which are interlinked and indivisible: economic, social, and environmental, as well as political dimensions in terms of inequality and injustice. The SDGs propose encouraging a movement of various changes in countries, along various fronts of our global reality, leaving behind other national problems, and recommend 360° vigilance in seeking common behavior and acceptable coexistence for the next generations (GALVÃO, 2020; GIRARDI, 2018; ROMA, 2019).

Oliveira et al. (2012) point out that the definition of sustainability has been discussed ever since it emerged in 1987 in the UN's World Commission on Environment and Development. According to Brasil (1988a, p.9), sustainability is understood as "[...] the capacity to satisfy the needs of the present without compromising the capacity of future generations to satisfy their needs".

Sustainability seeks to develop an environment in which wealth and well-being are in harmony with the social, environmental, and economic dimensions to guarantee the quality of life of current generations without harming the capacity of future generations to survive and develop. Therefore, human well-being depends on the health of the environment which is linked with that of society and the economy (DELAI; TAKAHASHI, 2013).

The Global Reporting Initiative is an international report with 21 indicators and 76 variables in five dimensions. In 2015, the United Nations approved the Sustainable Development Goals, which complement the Millennium Development Goals (ONUBR, 2015, GIRARDI, 2018, ROMA, 2019). Article 225 of the Brazilian Constitution establishes the right of every citizen to a harmonious environment for the common use of the people, which is essential to a healthy quality of life, with it being the

responsibility of the government and the population to defend and protect it for current and future generations (BRASIL, 1988b).

Social, economic, and environmental determinants influence the health of the population therefore a discussion is necessary between social and political leaders and those dependent on public policies, which can solve inequalities in access to health, education, and culture so that the State can promote a reduction in these inequalities (CARRAPATO; CORREIA; GARCIA, 2017).

The SDGs are proposed goals and targets that need to be adopted by countries following priority criteria. They constitute a framework of tasks that governments need to perform for civil society, the private sector and all citizens involved in the collective sustainable 2030 agenda, to improve the quality of life and human development. The discussion among social actors is designed to deal with how the SDGs will be implemented and how the pertinent actions, the transparent technology, the technical training, and international commerce will be financed (ONU, 2021; ROMA, 2019).

Together with the 17 SDGs, there are 169 targets established which need to be met as agreed to by the 193 members nations of the United Nations (ONU, 2021). To achieve these goals, there will need to be intervention by the executive and legislative branches and all the social actors involved in these issues, because they are essential for social policies in civil society and organizations to break the ideologies of sexism and racism. According to Melo and Lopes (2012), as women realize their value as citizens, they will be able to escape from the vicious cycle of poverty by reflecting on its descendants. Women and girls will promote the empowerment of new generations for better social well-being through their access to education.

Couto and Saiani (2021, p.1) emphasize that female empowerment permeates economic, domestic, and psychological dimensions and can be understood as “a multi-dimensional process of transforming the social role of women, who cease to be subordinate to men and come to figure as active agents capable of making personal and collective decisions”.

Female empowerment begins with education, however the Commission on Social Determinants of Health (2008b) stresses that barriers related to education refer to access, quality and accessibility, and in the poorest countries, children in low-income families and parents with little education are less encouraged to go to school and are more likely to avoid it. This is why it's necessary to prioritize elementary and high school attendance for girls in low-income families as a response to the permanent challenges to gender equality in education and training in accordance with SDG5.

Gender inequality is common in all societies and this injustice occurs in terms of power, resources, rights, norms, and values, as well as the organization of services. It is strongly reflected by the position of women in society. The role of gender power relationships is configured by norms and values that are internalized in the socialization process. This is evidence of the extent to which laws need to become agents for gender equality, equal pay for equal work among the sexes, with women contributing to the world economy (CSDH, 2008a).

Empowerment can be classified from the political-sociological perspective which refers to emancipation and control and women's search for social and political power to control their own lives. The perspective of gender relationships contemplates breaking with patriarchal tradition and the loss of dominant masculine power, with women having autonomy over their bodies, sexuality, opinions, and their right of movement. From this perspective, the advance of women presents itself in educational terms, careers, and leadership positions in politics, in organizations or as CEOs etc., as well as in the perspective of the performance of women in organizations, with the advancement of education and rise to positions of power, diminishing conflict at work and the family in terms of gender equality (MELO; LOPES, 2012).

Female empowerment involves six components: a) cognitive-analytical, which encompasses knowledge, training, study, and knowledge itself, awareness of the real facts and motives behind masculine domination; b) subjective, which refers to personal power, self-confidence, autonomy and emancipation; c) politics, which involves power relationships within organizations, due to gender relationships in decision making; d) economic, which relates female financial independence with their contribution to paying household expenses; e) social, which is the recognition of women in the family sphere, social groups and organizations; and f) cultural, which is power and intersectional relationships which are the center of society in terms of gender, race, social class, culture and history (MELO; LOPES, 2012).

Reid, Adelman, and Jaret (2007) point out that the discrepancy between the salaries of white and black women, especially in inter-metropolitan areas, could be influenced by their substantial presence in the areas of retail commerce, education, health, and social services, where black women receive lower wages. These discrepancies also occur where there is a larger population of immigrant women who earn less than white women. Finally, metropolitan areas influence the salaries of women which leads to inequality in terms of race and ethnicity.

In Magalhães et al. (2011), a study of Brazilian women who are socially vulnerable and receive a family stipend from the government, the main factors which influence whether these women can realize their dreams is little education, precarious informal work, and lower wages, which lead to conformism and giving up hope for a better life. These findings point out that policies that mitigate poverty need to broaden their human capacities and encourage structural action to emancipate families and foster greater social inclusion.

Dezső, Ross and Uribe (2016) identify that women face an implicit quota in occupying upper management, which is the reason for the low number of women in these positions. When a woman is at the top of the administration of a given institution, there is an impediment for another woman to occupy a similar position, given that one decisive instance is not enough to place more women in these positions, meaning that they remain underrepresented. This fact demonstrates that SDG5 – gender equality – in the 2030 Agenda will not be accomplished unless there is change that favors greater female representation for both white and black women.

Mallinger, Starks and Tarter (2017) raise the issue of the glass ceiling, which translates into structural barriers which represent challenges to women climbing the career ladder

to achieve equality of opportunity in organizations. The authors also emphasize the need to stimulate debate about sexism, investing in leadership abilities, and fighting gender discrimination. Men are over-represented in upper management and create gender biases which impede female access to leadership positions and salary equality.

Other research portrays the glass ceiling, such as Vaz (2013), who discusses the glass ceiling in public service careers in Brazil and Marry and Pochic (2017), who do the same in France. Although they are more egalitarian in terms of entry-level positions, in both cases few women occupy upper management due to stereotypical gender discrimination.

Girls should learn gender awareness in the classroom, because women continue to face stereotypes, harassment, and prejudice in society. In universities, even when they have the same education as men, only 30% of women have full professorships. When other characteristics are observed such as race, class, and sexual orientation, which intersect with gender, stereotypes make it difficult to break the glass ceiling (ANDRUS; JACOBS; KURILOFF, 2018). The Federal Accounting Court of Brazil points out that Brazil will not fulfill SDG5 of the 2030 Agenda because of the discrimination and violence against women and children which will make gender equality difficult, impeding a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world (TRIBUNAL DE CONTAS DA UNIÃO, 2019).

Women are discriminated against in power environments because there is still a masculine hegemony in the decision-making sphere, and when women begin to reach this sphere, overcoming the glass ceiling, their voices are not heard due to the stereotypes which lead to female oppression and accentuate salary inequality and career progress (FERREIRA et al., 2021).

The domestic violence, lower income, the way they enter the labor market, the unequal distribution of household chores, and their political under-representation discourage women from changing this scenario, especially black women, creating a negative environment. This is why female empowerment involves a change of paradigm in terms of their social role, ending their subordinate position in relation to men, which signifies a multidimensional process. (COUTO; SAIANI, 2021)

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), at times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, women are the first to lose their jobs (5%), compared to men (3.9%). They continue their arduous unremunerated work at home and the glass ceiling resists change. As a result, gaps in terms of job choices and quality proliferate in addition to the violence and harassment that they face in this context. Thus, this situation has tended to worsen in relation to the intersection of gender, race, disability, and social class (INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION-ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT, 2021).

Female participation in the economies of the G20 nations increased between 2012 and 2019 for the 15 to 64 age group, reducing the difference with men. However, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a significant fall in the participation of women in the economy, mainly in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, and Turkey (ILO-OECD,

2021). Rizzotti and Pires Nalesso (2021) add that the pandemic effect concentrated and made monetary inequality more translucent in Brazil.

The labor models over recent decades have elevated vulnerability, outsourcing, and unemployment, and have diminished salaries and productive skilled labor (PRADO, 2021). Silveira and Siqueira (2021) argue that black women receive less for their work compared to what white men, black men and white women receive, independent of age. Compared to white men for the 26 to 34 age group they receive 51%; for the 35 to 45 age group, they receive 48%; and for the 46 to 55 age group, they receive 44%. White women do better in this comparison. For the 26 to 34 age group, they receive 62%; for the 35 to 45 age group, 78%; and for the 46 to 55 age group, they receive 59%, which confirms the inequality of gender/race in terms of salary in Brazil. Fonseca and Jorge (2021) argue that black women in Bahia, even when they have the same production attributes as white and black men, receive less due to gender discrimination.

In the judicial sphere, structural reform is needed to decimate institutional racism and sexism, because the predominance of white men still reigns in its upper echelons and in decision making (MACHADO et al. 2021). According to Maia (2021), in 2019 only 13% of company presidents in Brazil were women, and just 1% were black women.

However, the number of women in leadership positions is increasing in Brazil. In 2020, the proportion of women in CEO positions was 32%. In the years 2020 and 2021 there were female directors in various areas. In operations the figures were 16% and 28%, compared to the global average of 22%. In finances the figures were 34% and 43%; in information technology 12% and 23%; in human resources 32% and 43%; in marketing 16% and 40%; in sales 12% and 25%; and in controllerships 8% and 9%. However, it was only in controllership that the figures were below the global average of 9%. (GASPARINI, 2021).

Despite this growing tendency, only 4% of women were company partners in 2015, which is an equal percentage with 2020 and less than the global average of 7%. To correct for gender disparities in business, companies are implementing targets or quotas to balance gender differences in terms of upper management. Other actions to improve gender equality in Brazil are: linking salaries in upper management to progress in gender equality; offering training; permitting flexible work; creating an inclusive culture; revising approaches to recruitment, providing guidance and training (coaching); and guaranteeing equal access to work opportunities and development (GASPARINI, 2021).

This article is presented as follows: in addition to this introduction, there are the methodological procedures, followed by the results and discussion. At the end, the final considerations and references used in the study are presented.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This is a documental and quantitative study (YIN, 2010; CRESWELL, 2010) that uses secondary data from institutions such as Cenpec – Center for Educational, Cultural



and Community Action Studies and Research (CENPEC, 2021), for the period from 2015 to 2020, IBGE – Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2020a), and PNADc – National Household Survey (PNADc) for education data, and DIEESE – Union Department of Statistics and Socioeconomic Studies (DIEESE, 2021) and IBGE (2020b), to obtain labor market data. Frame 1 presents the dimensions, variables and data sources. As there is no broad consensus in terms of a gender empowerment indicator, as proposed by Raj (2017), we chose to consider the economic issue in terms of the basic pillars for inclusion in the Brazilian formal labor market.

**Frame 1.** Constructs, Variables and Data Sources

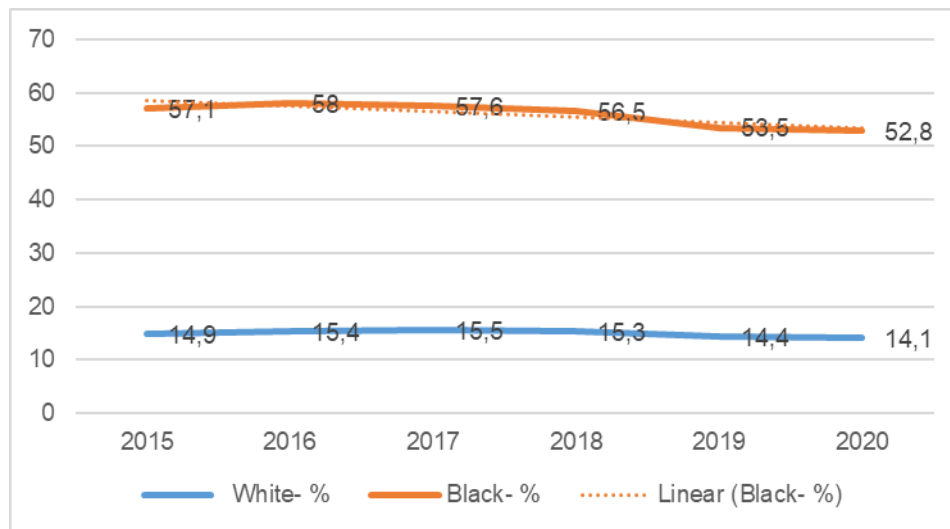
Dimensions	Study variables	Sources
Education	School age-grade distortion	Cenpec, 2021
	Percentage graduating high school	IBGE (2020a) - PNADc, 2018, 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter
	College – ages 18 to 24. Data by race.	
	College – type of institution: public/private. Data by gender and race.	
Labor market	Income – average value per region and Brazilian states by gender/sex.	IBGE (2020b) - PNADc, 2020, 3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter
	Black and white women Average income in reais (R\$) Informal work (unprotected) in proportion Underutilization rate in the workforce Proportion in occupation of management positions	Union Department of Socioeconomic Statistics and Studies (DIEESE), 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter 2021a
	Women in general	Union Department of Socioeconomic Statistics and Studies (DIEESE), 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter 2021b

**Source:** FERREIRA; CARVALHO; NUNES (2022).

The statistical treatment of the data, as well as the construction of the graphs and the tables was carried out in Excel 2010. The dimensions researched were education (basis for female autonomy) and the labor market (conditions for women to obtain income and seek gender equality).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSION

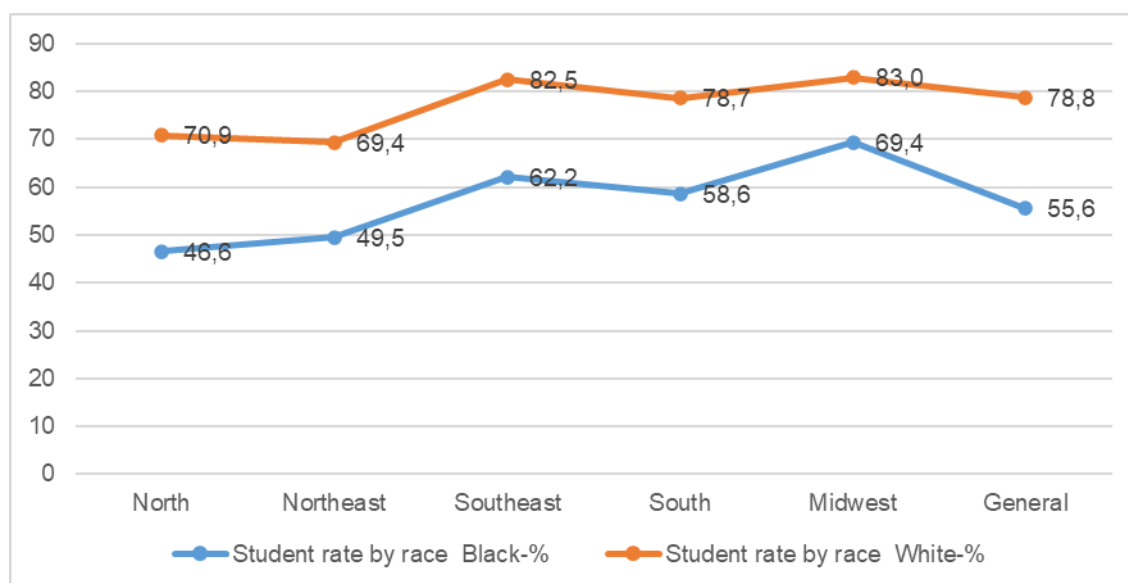
Education is the cornerstone to reduce multidimensional poverty, thus it is necessary to empower girls and women. The Cenpec (2021) data from 2015 to 2020, depicted in figure 1, shows that black girls had more school age-grade distortion during this period than white girls, with the data demonstrating a decreasing tendency. The age-grade distortion corresponds to at least two years above the considered age in relation to the school grade. However, the study stresses that, for boys enrolled in elementary and secondary education in 2020, the age-grade distortion was 24.1% and for girls 16.6%. For the period from 2015 to 2020, girls represented 22.1% of the age-grade distortion and boys 17.9%.



**Figure 1.** School Age-Grade Distortion for Race and Female Gender in Brazil - 2015 to 2020. **Source:** Panel of educational inequalities (CENPEC, 2015-2020). Organized by the authors.

The high school graduation rate in 2018 diverges between black students (56.2%) and white students (72.0%). In relation to gender/sex, the rate is 67.6% for black students and 81.6% for white students (IBGE, 2020a). The data shows that women complete high school at a higher rate than men, regardless of race. However, black students – male and female – are less likely to complete their high school than the white students.

The inequality in higher education indicates a perpetual disadvantage of the black population in comparison with the white population in all regions of Brazil, with there being a difference of 23.2% for the black students to reach the white students' numbers, as we can see in figure 2. This is a result of structural racism in education in general and indicates the need for anti-racist education (CENPEC, 2020).



**Figure 2.** Students from 18 to 24 in higher education for region in 2018. **Source:** IBGE - PNADc 2020. Organized by the authors.

In the second quarter of 2021, which included indigenous people, yellow people, and people without declaration of color or race, in total, the black population represented 55% of the total population in Brazil, concentrated mainly in the North and Northeast regions, in the Brazilian states of Amapá (83%), Amazonas and Maranhão (82%), Pará (81%), Acre and Bahia (80%), Piauí and Tocantins (79%). In Brazil in general, black women are at a disadvantage in relation to black men, white women, and white men in terms of inclusion in the Brazilian labor market and average financial income. The underutilization rate of black women was 40.9% and white women 27.5%. (DIEESE, 2021a).

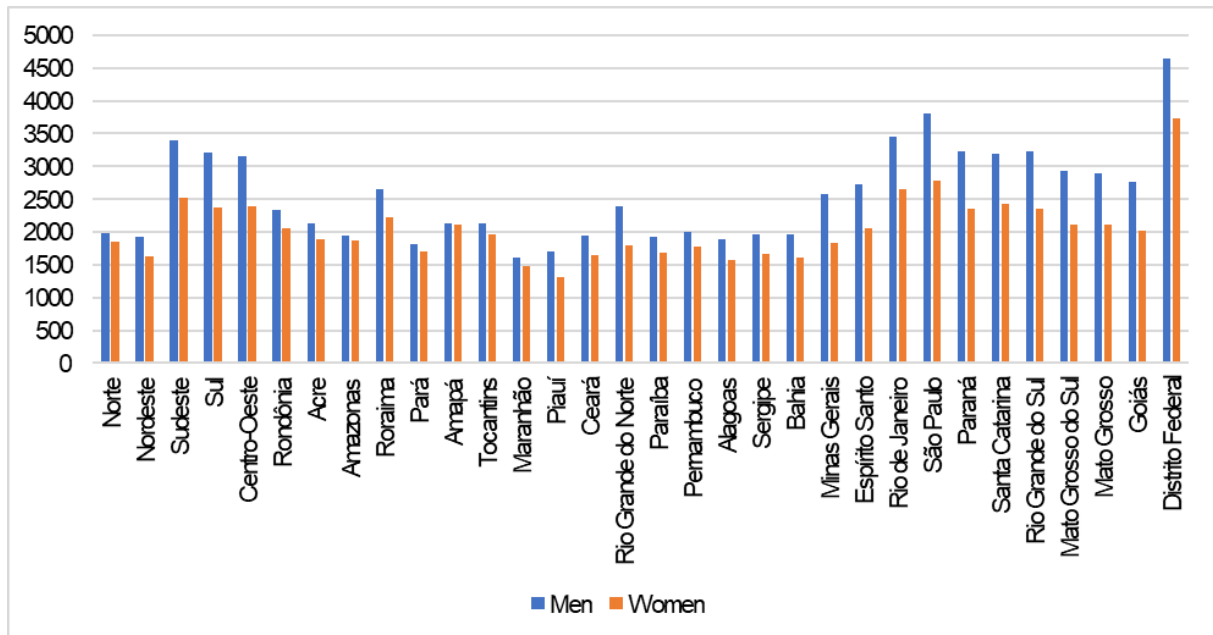
In terms of upper-level management, black women represented just 1.9% and white women 5.0%, in accordance with Table 1. The wage gap between black women is substantially smaller than white women and white men are paid twice as much as black women.

**Table 1.** A Gender/Race Comparison of Data for the Brazilian Labor market

Labor market	Black Women	White Women	Black Men	White Men
Average monthly income in reais (R\$)	1,617.00	2,674.00	1,968.00	3,471.00
Informal work (unprotected)	46%	34%	48%	35%
Underutilization rate in the workforce	40.9%	27.7%	26.9%	18.5%
Occupation of leadership roles	1.9%	5.0%	2.2%	6.4%

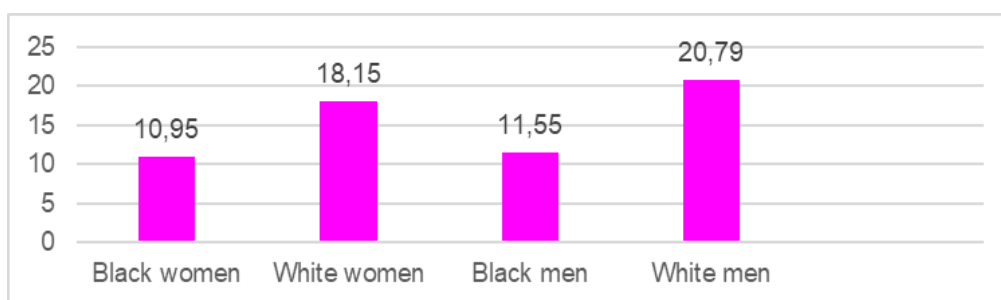
**Source:** DIEESE, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2021. Organized by the authors.

According to data from the IBGE (2020b) and the PNADc for the third quarter of 2021, the distribution of unemployment by sex was: women 54.5% and men 45.0%. Average real monthly income received during the first quarter of 2020 demonstrated gender inequality in all Brazilian states (IBGE, 2020). The highest verified average monthly income for women was in the Federal District, followed by São Paulo and the Southeast. Figure 3 shows average monthly income by sex, region, and Brazilian states in reais.



**Figure 3.** Average Income by Sex, Region, and Brazilian states in Reais. **Source:** IBGE-PNADc. Organized by the authors.

In terms of average hourly wage in reais, black women had roughly 50% lower wages compared to white men, and 8% lower wages compared to white women in 2020 (Figure 4). Figure 4 represents a comparison of real average hourly wages in directors and manager's positions for men and women in the same position using the same criteria: a college education and the requirement of a college education to occupy these positions (DIESSE, 2021b). We may add that the percentage of average real financial income per hour for men in leadership roles was 37.8% in 2019 and 45.83% in 2020. For women in the same positions the percentage in 2019 was 25.89% and in 2020 it was 32.35%, a considerable lag compared to men, given that they occupy positions at the same level with lower income.



**Figure 4.** Comparison of Monthly Income by Gender and Race in 2020 (Reais). **Source:** DIEESE, 2021b. Organized by the authors.

In 2020, even with a college education, to the extent that women reached these positions, there was a larger difference in average income, with a salary of R\$3,999.00, which is well below the average income for men which was R\$6,363.00. In the case of positions that require a college degree, the average income for women was R\$4,913.00, which shows discrimination and a continuing glass ceiling, given that the average income for men was R\$8,136.00. Given these data, we may observe that the SDG5 target was not met (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Comparison of Income Growth and Value by Gender in Leadership Positions in Reais

Gender	Real Average Income – Reais per hour		Real Average Income - R\$ (with college education)		Real Average Income - R\$ (positions that require a college education)	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Women	28.59	32.35	3,910.00	3,999.00	4,832.00	4,913.00
Men	37.80	45.83	6,339.00	6,363.00	7,833.00	8,136.00

**Source:** Adaptado do DIESSE, 2021. Organized by the authors.

The age/grade distortion of girls influences whether or not they complete the course. Carvalho et al. (2020) point out that the inconsistent development of education capacity can lead to the risk of dropping out of school. The education issue is a serious problem, which needs to be faced incisively by everyone, especially by the state apparatus and civil society, so that racial and social inequalities can be mitigated in the long term.

The low rate of education for young and adult women, due to not concluding high school is an indication of high unemployment and there is no social change to empower them, especially black women, which perpetuates the cycle of exclusion, according to Oliveira (2014). The lack of instruction makes them dependent on social policies like the Family Stipend, because in terms of education only 2.7% of women graduated high school. (MAGALHÃES et al., 2011).

The number of students in higher education increased from 5,958 (2016), 5,845(2017) and 6,303 (2018) by one thousand in private higher education. There are more women in public higher education (52.6%) as well as private higher education (58.0%). Men correspond to 47.4% in public institutions and 42.0% in private institutions. In relation

to participation by race, in the public sphere 48.2% are white and 50.3% are black. In the private sphere, 52.3% are white and 46.6% are black (IBGE, 2020b). The data shows that blacks have greater participation in public higher education and lower participation in private higher education, which may be due to the Quota Reserve Law 12,711/2012 (BRASIL, 2012).

Table 2 presents inequality for black women in almost all the labor market data and shows that diversity in companies and gender equality still have a long way to go. Female empowerment begins with education, and thus women need to invest more in their education to have greater representation in upper management and to be able to promote social equity policies, given that the number of women in leadership positions is still low, according Gasparini (2021).

Figure 3 points out gender inequality in terms of salary equality which is failing to fulfill the SDG5.5 and 5.c targets (ONU, 2021; TCU, 2019) indicating the perpetuation of gender inequality, which shows how important it is to combat sexism in Brazilian society (PRADO, 2021; COUTO; SAIANI, 2021).

The DIEESE (2021b) data offers a general panorama of the labor market, describing the unemployment rate for women in 2019 as 13.9% and in 2020 as 16.8%. In terms of the Brazilian states, all the 2020 data was greater than 8% with the lowest rates being in Santa Catarina (8.4%) among the best Brazilian states. The worst Brazilian states in terms of unemployment were Roraima (22.6%), Bahia (24.9%), Rio de Janeiro (21.3%), Rio Grande do Sul (11.7%) and Mato Grosso do Sul (14.5%). In relation to race, the unemployment rate for black women in 2019 was 16.6% and in 2020 it was 19.8%. In terms of white women, in 2019 this rate was 10.6% and in 2020 it was 13.5%.

In numerical terms, employed women numbered 41.2 million in 2019 and 35.5 million in 2020. In terms of the employment regime, the number of women who were working informally and lost their jobs (except household work) in 2019 was 13.5 million, and in 2020 was 10.8 million. There was a reduction in protected household work for women in 2019 (1.5 million) and in 2020 (1.1 million) in comparison with unprotected household work in 2019 (4.2 million) and in 2020 (3.1 million) (DIEESE, 2021b).

The numbers referring to average monthly income by gender and race (Figure 4) show salary inequality by gender and race, with black women in the worst situation, corroborating the data of Silveira and Siqueira (2021), with black women earning around 15% less compared to white women according to the research of Fonseca and Jorge (2021).

The data in Table 2 shows the glass ceiling as a limiting factor in terms of gender equality for upper management positions besides salary inequality. The higher the position, the greater the salary difference between men and women. Discriminatory barriers based on sexism and racism, practiced by many companies and related to business type, have led to women not exercising their rights in an equal manner as men in both the Brazilian public sector (VAZ, 2013), and the French public sector (MARRY; POUCHIC, 2017) as well as various areas such as journalism in Brazil (LIMA-SOUZA; MOTA-SANTOS; CARVALHO NETO, 2021). Gasparini (2021) shows an improvement in female participation in data from 2019 to 2020 with a variation of

3.76%, however, for the period of this study, men occupied more leadership positions (8.83%).

Gender equality in the labor market involves two types of empowerments: the gender perspective, involving the advance of women in high school and college education, making it possible to occupy leadership positions and others; and the organizational perspective where women seek gender equality (MELO; LOPES, 2012).

The panorama of data shows gender inequality and the difficulties that Brazil faces in fulfilling target 5 of the SDGs. The inability to achieve these goals indicates the fragility of Brazilian public policies in terms of gender and race, and they need to be monitored, evaluated, and adjusted periodically to reduce the inequities in society, because female autonomy will make it possible to reduce violence of all types, including violence against girls.

The study's data shows that black women are in a lower position than white women, due to intersectionality. Collins and Bilge (2021) explain the way in which, in each society and historical moment, power relations involving race, class and gender do not manifest themselves as distinct and mutually exclusive entities, but overlap and function in a unified way, affecting all aspects of social life.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The objective of this work is to analyze empowerment based on gender and racial equality in Brazilian society. The data shows that girls have greater age-grade distortion than boys; and the black population is at a disadvantage compared to the white population in college education for the ages from 18 to 24. Black women are at a disadvantage compared to black men, white women and white men in terms of inclusion in Brazilian labor market and average financial income; they are under-represented in management/director positions and are also have a gender disadvantage in all of the Brazilian states, as in opportunities for occupation and valorization in all areas that are predominantly male. Black women in the labor market are at the lowest level of social inequality.

It may thus be observed, that if in the public sphere it is not possible to meet these targets, the situation is even more difficult in the private sphere. Only income transfers will make gender equality possible because this income is just to guarantee their survival. We urge the creation of policies to promote greater female participation and inclusion in education and the public and private labor markets and training measures to improve female skilled labor so that women can occupy all positions. Furthermore, prohibit income inequality in relation to the same positions held by men.

This study is related to the 2030 Agenda to analyze women's education and training, from the age-grade distortion in relation to girls to college education and the representation of women in leadership positions and in terms of average income. This is an urgent theme that needs to be on the State's agenda to implement, evaluate, and reward institutions and companies for adopting policies and practices that promote gender equality, and as a result, racial equality in education and the labor market.

Companies engaged in the 2030 Agenda are helping to build a more egalitarian world, and these measures favor greater female representation in all areas, given that the empowerment of one woman encourages the empowerment of another. Female and racial geography points out that social and racial inequality is a compromising factor in achieving the goal of the 2030 Agenda.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

**Conception:** Cláudia Aparecida Avelar Ferreira and Paulo Fernando Braga Carvalho. **Methodology:** Cláudia Aparecida Avelar Ferreira and Paulo Fernando Braga Carvalho. **Formal analysis:** Cláudia Aparecida Avelar Ferreira, Paulo Fernando Braga Carvalho and Simone Costa Nunes. **Research:** Cláudia Aparecida Avelar Ferreira. **Data preparation:** Cláudia Aparecida Avelar Ferreira. **Article writing:** Cláudia Aparecida Avelar Ferreira; Simone Costa Nunes. **Proofreading:** Cláudia Aparecida Avelar Ferreira, Paulo Fernando Braga Carvalho and Simone Costa Nunes. **Supervision:** Cláudia Aparecida Avelar Ferreira, Paulo Fernando Braga Carvalho and Simone Costa Nunes. **Acquisition of funding:** Cláudia Aparecida Avelar Ferreira and Simone Costa Nunes. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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