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## ***Organisational justice, organisational values and gender-based equity of leadership opportunities: a case study in a Brazilian public security organisation***

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**Abstract:** The work environment is a diverse place, where people interact daily to obtain results for organisations. Organisations have been providing gender-based equity actions to promote meritocracy. The situation worsens when criteria for ascension to leadership positions are discussed, most of the time intentionally occupied by men, violating the premise of impersonality. Diversity management and social inclusion have been intensively developed, generating engagement and psychological safety for the social actors involved. The main of this paper is to test two predictive models, in a Brazilian public security organisation, that include variables related to the perception of organisational justice, organisational values, and the perception of equality in professional advancement criteria. The sample was composed of 988 Brazilian police officers, chosen through stratified random sampling. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression. The results suggest that there is a strong and positive relationship between perceived organisational justice and perception of gender-based equity of opportunities. None of the organisational values predicted the two criteria variables. As limitations, the collected data were anonymous, a reason that did not allow the comparison between means due to some clustering variable. The equity suggested that organisational values need to be, in fact, operationalised in terms of formal practices that promote them. Limitations and suggestions were made.

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## **Introduction**

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and organisational justice are closely linked values held by many organisations in the whole world. Numerous organisational policies and practices have been implemented to reduce inequalities based on gender (WEF, 2023). The challenges seem to have intensified with the COVID-19 pandemic, which has provoked less controlled work designs (Gómez et al., 2024).

It is essential to promote commitment to equity and inclusivity in the organisational scenarios (Mukherjee & Krammer, 2024). Female participation in leadership positions still seems to have not been fully implemented in the Brazilian reality (Moura-Paula & Silva Ferraz, 2015). The recognition of good practices aimed at promoting women to leadership positions is still far from being achieved (Duarte & Shalimar, 2022). The generation of opportunities for professional advancement, based on criteria of justice, is the agenda of organisational policies of most Brazilian organisations, especially those of a public nature.

Equity is a variable complicated to demonstrate in the workplace, especially considering spaces of power (Weck et al., 2022). Seeking fair treatment permeates the social relations built in the work scenario, while they are determined by formally established management policies (Ryan & Haslam, 2005).

One of the barriers for women in the job market involves unconscious biases (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Sieweke & Santoni, 2020). To deal with this situation, it is essential that organisations have structured and inclusive selection processes and well-designed career plans. The fact that women correspond to 40% of leadership positions in Brazil (IBGE, 2021) is probably related to some cultural obstacles.

Gender diversity most commonly refers to an equal ratio of men and women in the organisational contexts. In general, in a workplace, this means that both have the same working opportunities (Fazal et al., 2020; Sabharwal et al., 2018).

Organisational practices related to the promotion of gender diversity have become more common in the current Brazilian scenario (Camargo et al., 2016; Monteiro et al., 2019). These practices have driven the professionalisation of Brazilian public management organisations in general, and public security organisations in particular. Diversity management in organisations is still considered a very recent and controversial subject (Sabharwal et al., 2018). This is because, according to Triandis (2003) and Liff (1999), the diversification of society as a whole has influenced, above all, the diversity in labour organisations in terms of the adoption of new values, attitudes, and the search for changes in thinking and paradigms (Del Prete et al., 2024). New complex work and employment relationships are emerging (Ellis

and Sonnenfeld, 1994), which leads to a need to search for balance and promote equity.

In the field of work, has increased the possibility of working with groups that are more heterogeneous in terms of gender and race (Sabharwal et al., 2018). It is essential to promote frank and open communication in the organisational scenario (Mukherjee & Krammer, 2024). The increasing emphasis on managing diversity, both in terms of scientific research and its organisational practice, reflects the changing workforce in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Afzali et al., 2021). Managing diversity is complex because it is an important contextual variable for organisations in general, considering all aspects associated with the organisational culture.

The issue becomes even more complex in police organisations, markedly with a strong ingrained culture and still centred on the lack of equal opportunities between men and women to assume leadership positions. In Brazil, according to Torres Vasques-Menezes and Presotti (2017), police institutions still face dilemmas in promoting equal opportunity actions between men and women, hence the relevance of this research. Still considered organisations predominantly occupied by men, public security institutions in Brazil face historic challenges related to the presence of women in leadership positions. Proportionally, the contingent of women and men in the Brazilian police workforce has a high male prevalence in relation to the female one.

One of the most relevant issues in research on diversity management concerns the possibilities of professional advancement considering both culturally instituted phenomena (as entrenched organisational values, for example) regarding the justice contained in the perception of opportunities (Corwin et. al., 2022). Can certain organisational values encourage gender equity, regarding the application of criteria, when choosing someone to occupy a leadership (or managerial) position? Do the organisational justice influence the perception of equality of opportunity?

Our main research question is: do the perception of organisational justice, considered in its three theoretical dimensions, distributive, interactional/relational, and procedural, and the importance attributed to the organisational values of an important Brazilian police organisation, predict the perception of opportunities for professional advancement? The main objective is to empirically analyse if the perception of the organisational justice and the importance attributed to the organisational values predict the perception of opportunities.

Direct relationships between the antecedent and criterion variables will be tested. Personal and professional variables, such as gender, age, and leadership position, will be tested as control variables. The antecedent variables tested in both models were the same. We consider that aspects related to the sample, such as the time of service and the leadership position, may influence the pattern of responses to be obtained.

Some studies indicate that there are historical difficulties associated with women's rise to leadership positions (Mitra et al., 2021). These invisible barriers prevent women from occupying leadership positions, even though they have the skills and

merit to do so. This fact generates a perception of injustice regarding the criteria used in ascending to leadership positions.

Gender diversity is highlighted here, referring to the equality of the conditions to promote men or women to managerial positions. We consider the reality of a Brazilian police organisation. We intend to understand the insertion of women in a specific Brazilian police environment, considering the opportunities of professional ascension and a dominant masculine culture (McLeod & Herrington, 2017). The development of managers is, therefore, very important (Nascimento et al., 2013). We consider that the diversity management ends up stimulating the continuous professionalisation of resource management practices (Shjarback & Todak, 2019). From the perspective of innovation, Kirsch (2018) indicates that the analysis of the cultural context is necessary for understanding the symbolic, normative, and political dimensions of the concept of gender equity. Organisational policies to promote equity may impact the modification of the organisational values that represent the dominant culture, promoting metanoia. Some key challenges, according to Matsa and Miller (2013), are related to understanding the gender-based divergences observed in the organisational policies, emphasising the importance of studying the impact of individuals and social variables related to the promotion of equity in organisations (Androniceanu & Marton, 2021). Therefore, it is evident that culture represents an important aspect to be considered when identifying factors that can influence both the organisational values and the organisational justice perceived related to the promotion of gender equity.

Diversity contributes decisively to strengthening trust in police organisations (Stergioulis, 2017) and, consequently, can increase social acceptance and support for the police work. This work also touches on themes of representativeness, equity, democracy, and police accountability (referring to the managerial practices adopted).

## **1. Literature review**

### **1.1 Gender-based diversity**

According to Kirsch (2018), some studies on gender diversity in organisations have traditionally sought to identify cultural barriers to the effective implementation of balance in opportunities for professional advancement (Wentling, 2004). Several variables have been associated with the investigation of the success or failure of diversity management programs in the workplace. Variables related to discrimination due to gender, creation/propagation of stereotypes, ingroup inclusion, beliefs, social categorisation, differences in performance and alignment to the organisational identity, among others, are common in the scientific literature related to the theme (Singh et al., 2013; Androniceanu et al., 2022).

There is a lack of scientific knowledge about gender-diversity in organisations (Sims, 2018). For Guajardo (2016), the promotion of diversity can offer the chance to retain talented workforce, increase their performance (Sharma & Sharma, 2015),

and create an environment where gender adds to decision making (Lu & Herremans, 2019).

Promoting the equity of opportunities in the occupation of managerial positions is essential (Langan et al., 2018). The ascension criterion, however, must be inserted in the set of competences and requirements necessary for the performance of the position, not in issues related to gender (Thijs et al., 2019).

Diversity involves not only how people recognise themselves but also how they recognise others (Makhdoomi & Nika, 2018). Some studies investigated gender equality and the adoption of good corporate governance practices establishing regulations to promote the social representation of women (Yildiz et al., 2019; Martínez et al., 2019; Musa et al., 2017). Monteiro et al. (2019) point that understanding the persistence of asymmetric conceptions based on gender stereotyping is essential to develop management plans for gender-equality.

Scarce Brazilian studies, developed in the context of public police organisations, have, as a background, the consideration of the gender approach related to accessing some managerial positions (SENASP, 2013). Scientifically, in Brazil, little is discussed about the representation of women in the Brazilian police scope, especially in light of issues involving organisational perceived justice and organisational values.

Current managerial barriers and challenges faced by women, due to gender, lead to the need to rethink the management that has been carried out, especially in Brazilian public organisations. Are opportunities for professional advancement, in fact, being given due to the fulfilment of professional competences necessary for performance?

## **1.2 Challenges to female leadership in work organisations**

The aspects related to women's leadership in the organizational space, according to Santos and Medina-Vicent (2020) and Li et al. (2021), involves discrimination in the access to positions of power and decision-making in general. The presence of women in command positions can help to eradicate or reduce discriminatory practices (Guajardo, 2016; Schuck, 2014). It is necessary to modify culturally instituted traits, and to transform personal and even organisational values.

The perception of underrepresentation is also found in some police subjects. Shjarback and Todak (2019), by highlighting that increasing gender diversity in American police has been a focus of reform efforts since the 1960s, claim that most departments obtain only passive representation at the patrol level and that they offer these minority officers little chance of making a significant impact on policy and culture. Some Brazilian studies (Alves & Galeão-Silva, 2004; Fontenele-Mourão, 2006) also discuss the influence of gender for leadership positions.

These Brazilian studies discuss the influence of male stereotyping about women ascending to executive positions. The studies conclude that there is no isonomy, especially if the access to these managerial positions depends on political appointment. Leadership behaviours depend, in fact, on the set of competences expected for this. It should be a question of choice by professional criteria (Eagly &

Karau, 2002; Vaz, 2013). There are, according to Bendl and Schmidt (2010), invisible cultural barriers understood as a firewall or glass ceiling, focused on maintaining the status quo and the institutionally entrenched structures. These structures act to promote barriers in the organisational space (horizontal or vertical barrier) to higher career posts (Santana et al., 2019).

### **1.3 Cultural and organisational barriers**

Cultural elements in the organisational space, in turn, with emphasis on organisational values (Paanakker, 2019) are also highlighted as decisive for the advancement of female leaders in organisations, as discussed by Bhattacharya et al. (2018), Langan et al. (2018) and Neri et al. (2019). Understanding the influence of organisational values is essential to investigate what beliefs and attitudes are shared by members of organizations (Hofstede, 2011).

The importance of organisational values is also highlighted by Bourne et al. (2019). The authors consider that the organisational values adopted a significant role to encourage specific acceptable social behaviours of the members. Behaviours more adherent to organisational values will be more consolidated from the positive judgment of alignment that workers may have in relation to such values (Gormley et al., 2023). It is one of our theoretical assumptions (Gupta et al., 2020). Therefore, based on the literature, a general research hypothesis has been outlined as follows:

**H<sub>1</sub>** The organisation's values affect the perception of equal opportunities for advancement to leadership positions between men and women.

### **1.4 Organisational justice**

Promoting equity in career advancement opportunities also means promoting organisational justice. The transparency of criteria is essential. Justice concerns how the individual perceives the organisational context as fair (Pattnaik & Tripathy, 2019).

Typically, the perception of organisational justice is defined in three theoretical main dimensions: distributive, interactional, and procedural (Crawshaw et al., 2013). The first concerns how fair results are (of a performance appraisal, for example). The second deals with the social dimension (relationship between superiors and subordinates). The third concerns the strategies or means used to achieve the results. Karam et al. (2019) and Pedron (2017) discuss that these dimensions of justice are based on distinct assessments of justice in decision making. The perceptions of distributive justice (or justice of results) are made based on a comparison of the proportion of their inputs and outputs with the inputs and outputs of others. Procedural justice suggests that individuals assess fairness in decision-making processes and in their ability to have a voice in that process. Interactional justice reflects perceptions considering the relationship among managers and subordinates.

The concept of justice is about transparency, free communication, adequacy, impartiality, and veracity of the reasons given to the individuals (Pan et al., 2018). According to Marler et al. (2019), meta-analytic evidence suggests that individuals who perceive outcomes as fair are more likely to engage in organisational citizenship behaviour. They perform better on task and are less likely to do counterproductive behaviours in workplace. A general research hypothesis has been outlined as follows:

**H<sub>2</sub>** Perceived organisational justice affects the perception of equal opportunities for advancement to leadership positions between men and women.

Theoretical dimensions of organisational justice (procedural, relational/social, and distributive) will constitute others research hypotheses as follows:

**H<sub>2a</sub>** Perceived procedural justice affects the perception of equal opportunities for advancement to leadership positions between men and women.

**H<sub>2b</sub>** Perceived social/relational justice affects the perception of equal opportunities for advancement to leadership positions between men and women; and

**H<sub>2c</sub>** Perceived distributive justice affects the perception of equal opportunities for advancement to leadership positions between men and women.

In general, we considered, according to Karam et al. (2019) and Santos and Medina-Vicent (2020), that the three theoretical dimensions of justice (distributive, interactional, and procedural) will positively predict the perception of opportunities for professional advancement of women. This means that those who consider the procedures for ascending to leadership positions as fair will positively evaluate the equality of opportunity between men and women in the organisation under study. More specifically, we will test the predictive power of the importance attributed to organisational values and the perception of organisational justice, among Brazilian policies in a specific organisational context, in relation to the perception of opportunities of women to rise to managerial positions. The organisation's values are essential (Bourne et al., 2019; Paanakker, 2019). They will be evaluated in terms of their importance perceived to promote gender-based equity. Some personal variables, as suggested by Li (2021) and Sims (2018) will also be tested as control.

## **2. Research methodology**

### **2.1 Design of the research**

This empirical research had a quantitative approach, with cross-sectional data and primary data collection. This is a unique case study, considering the great relevance in the context of public security in Brazil. It is a very representative institution.

## **2.2 Characterisation of the organisation**

The organisational mission is to carry out judicial and administrative police duties of Brazil, acting in the maintenance of law and order. Its organisational objectives refer to proposing specific guidelines for the prevention and repression of crimes attributable to the Police, in order to support the operational planning of central units and to carry out integrated police operations with central units, related to the uniform repression of crimes attributable to the Police. There are several other objectives and strategic indicators for its operations in Brazil and abroad.

## **2.3 Sample**

This survey was carried out with police officers throughout Brazil, by email. The participants were chosen through stratified random sampling. Mailed surveys were sent out to 2.500 police officers, with canvassing done several weeks later to increase response rate. The total sample was of 988 Brazilian police officers. The majority (n=648, 65.6%) was male, with the prevalence of age group between 33 and 49 years old (n=685, 69.4%) and the average length of service between 10 and 15 years of work at the organisation (n=389, 39.4%). Of the total number of participants, 845 (85.5%) have never held an executive or managerial position.

## **2.4 Variables and instruments of research**

The research's variable of interest is represented by the measure of the perception of equality of opportunities given to men and women to be in organisational leadership. Therefore, this attribute will be treated as dependent variables in the research. As independent variables, we will analyse the attributes related to organisational justice and its three theoretical factors. Another independent variable was the importance attributed to organisational values for promoting gender-based equity.

The scale of organisational justice was construed and validated by Mendonça, Tamayo and Paz (2003). This is a Brazilian instrument (KMO = 0.954) with twenty (20) items grouped into three (% total explained variance: 73.921) theoretical factors: distributive justice (06 items; eigenvalue = 10.615; % explained variance = 53.074; Alpha's Cronbach= 0.94; M=3.38; SD=1.81), interactional/management (07 items; eigenvalue = 2.718; % explained variance = 13.588; Alpha = 0.95; M = 4.45; SD = 1.76) and procedural (07 items, eigenvalue = 1.452; % explained variance = 7.259; Alpha's Cronbach = 0.91; M= 2.99; SD=1.40). The perception of justice was measured on a Likert-type scale from 1 to 7, in which the number 1 meant total disagreement and 7, full agreement with the statement.

The scale of importance attributed to the organisation's values has one-factor (KMO = 0.798; eigenvalue = 3.218; % accumulate explained variance = 64.355) with five (5) items (Alpha's Cronbach = 0.857; M = 6.49; SD= 0.72), related to the organisational values defined strategically by the own organisation researched: "courage", "loyalty", "legality", "ethics and probity" and "respect for human rights".



The perception of importance to the organisational values to promote gender-equity was measured on a Likert-type scale from 1 to 7, in which the number 1 referred to “no importance given to the organisational value described” and 7, “full importance given to the organisational value described”.

We used a scale with thirteen (13) items to measure the perception of opportunities for promotion to managerial positions (KMO = 0.927; % cumulative explained variance = 63.379). Six (6) of the items were adapted from a Brazilian validated scale of Zauli-Fellows (2006), and the other seven (7) items were adapted by Sousa (2020) and UNDP (2019). We chose to adapt these 13 items to the Brazilian police reality because of their adherence to the object of this work. There were other items that were beyond the scope of the object of study, so we chose to discard them.

We used a Likert-type scale, from 1 to 7, in which the number 1 designated total disagreement with the assertion and 7, total agreement with the assertion. Considering all 13 items, two empirical factors were founded after exploratory factor analysis: “Gender-Based Organisational Practices and Equal of Criteria” (SCOEQUALPRACT, 8 items, eigenvalue = 6.979; % explained variance = 53.685; Alpha’s Cronbach = 0.895; M = 3.90; SD = 1.71) and “Formal/Organizational Institutionalization of Equality” (SCOEQUALINSTIT, 5 items, eigenvalue = 1.260; % explained variance = 9.695; Alpha’s Cronbach = 0.874; M = 3.27; SD = 1.25).

In our two tested regression models, we recodified and analysed participants’ responses to the following antecedent variables: Do you hold, or have you held, a position of leadership? - DAS (0 = yes; 1 = no); Gender (0 = Female and 1 = Male); Age – AGE (measured by time intervals: 0 = 18 to 25 years; 1 = 25 to 33; 2= 33 to 41; 3= 41 to 49; 4= 49 A 57; and 5= over 57 years of age); Time of Service at the Organisation – TS (measured by time intervals: 0 = 1 to 5 years; 1 = 5 to 10; 2= 10 to 15; 3= 15 to 20; 4= 20 to 25; and 5= over 25 years of service). We calculated the factor score for the empirical factors: “Factor Score of Perception of Distributive Justice” (JUSTDIST), “Factor score of Perception of Relational/Interactional Justice” (JUSTMANAG), “Factor Score of Perception of Process/Procedural Justice” (JUSTPROCESS) and “Factor Score of Importance attributed to Organisational Values” (SCOVALUES). The factor score corresponds to the average of the participants’ responses to the items of the scales’ factors.

The dependent/criterion variable (gender-equity of opportunities for promotion to managerial positions) was tested using two empirical factors scores that we calculated: Factor Score for “Gender-Based Organisational Practices and Equal of Criteria” (SCOEQUALPRACT), tested in the first model, and Factor Score for “Formal/Organisational Institutionalisation of Equality” (SCOEQUALINSTIT), tested in the second model. The antecedent and control variables tested in both models were the same. Table 1 describes the variables used in the research:

**Table 1. Definition of dependent and independent variables**

Variables	Definition	Location
<b>Dependent Variables</b>		
<b>Factor Score for “Equal Organisational Practices” (SCOEQUALPRACT)</b>	Tested in the first model, it aims to measure the perception of equal opportunities and criteria, in terms of actions made and leadership styles oriented by to promote equity, for the advancement to leadership positions between men and women from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)	Zauli-Fellows (2006), UNDP (2019), and Sousa (2020)
<b>Factor Score for “Institutionalisation of Equality” (SCOEQUALINSTIT)</b>	Tested in the second model, this variable represents the perception of the level of organisational institutionalisation of the equity as a consolidated organisational value in the organisational culture, transversal, rooted, and consolidated in terms of organisational policies, the organisation ranging from 1 to 7	Zauli-Fellows (2006), UNDP (2019), and Sousa (2020)
<b>Independent Variables</b>		
<b>Factor Score of Perception of Distributive Justice (JUSTDIST)</b>	The degree to which individuals evaluate how fair results, resource distributions, and procedures are in relation to the formal organisational policies, ranging from 1 to 7	Mendonça et al. (2003)
<b>Factor Score of Perception of Relational/Interactional Justice (JUSTMANAG)</b>	The second deals with the social dimension and it is about the relationship between superiors and subordinates, considering that the interpersonal and social relationships are decisive, from 1 to 7	Mendonça et al. (2003)
<b>Factor Score of Perception of Process/Procedural Justice (JUSTPROCESS)</b>	The third concerns the strategies or means used to achieve the results and corresponding to the quality performance of organisational procedures, impartiality, and respect for all the criteria used, ranging from 1 to 7	Mendonça et al. (2003)
<b>Factor Score of Importance attributed to Organisational Values (SCOVALUES).</b>	Degree of importance attributed to influence of each organisational value in promoting gender-based equity, from 1 (without importance) to 7 (very important)	Organisational Values Index
<b>Control Variables</b>	DAS (Do you hold, or have you held, a position of leadership? - 0 = yes; 1 = no); GENDER (0 = Female and 1 = Male); AGE (0 = 18 to 25 years; 1 = 25 to 33; 2= 33 to 41; 3= 41 to 49; 4= 49 A 57; and 5= over 57 years of age); Time of Service at	Personal and Professional Variables

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Variables	Definition	Location
	<b>Dependent Variables</b>	
	the Organisation – TS (0 = 1 to 5 years; 1 = 5 to 10; 2= 10 to 15; 3= 15 to 20; 4= 20 to 25; and 5= over 25 years of service)	

Source: Author's processing

Based on the information provided in the table above, there are four control variables, two dependent variables, and four independent variables. For the analysis of these variables, a panel data regression model will be used, due to the analysis of cross-sectional database. In general, results will be generated for two regression models, with variations only in their dependent variables. Here is the general model that will be adopted in this research:

$$SCOEQUALPRACT_{it} / SCOEQUALINSTIT_{it} = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 DAS_i + \beta_2 GENDER_i + \beta_3 AGE_i + \beta_4 TS_i + \beta_5 JUSTDIST_i + \beta_6 JUSTMANAG_i + \beta_7 JUSTPROCESS_i + \beta_8 SCOVALUES_i + \mu_{it}$$

The results generated in this research for the identified regression models will be conducted using the statistical software Stata®.

### 2.5 Data collection procedures

The on-line platform used to apply our questionnaire was Google Forms®. The invitations to participate were sent by e-mail, with a link to access the questionnaire and general instructions for filling it out. In the email there was an explanation about the objectives of the research and all ethical procedures were informed.

All items in the questionnaire were mandatory. The participants were informed that the research would be part of an academic study and that there would be no possibility of identifying the respondents.

Furthermore, the participants were informed that, by clicking on the link to access the questionnaire, they were agreeing with the free and clear term about their voluntary and spontaneous participation in this research. It was also informed that they could withdraw at any time if they chose to. All responses were analysed in a grouped manner, without the possibility of identifying who answered the questionnaire.

### 2.6 Data analysis procedures

Initially, exploratory, and descriptive analyses of the distribution and investigation of omitted cases and extreme cases were carried out (uni and multivariate outliers). All statistical assumptions were used according to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), required for performing inferential statistical analyses. To test our research

hypotheses, we used linear regression, considering the direct relationship between predictors and predicted variables, in addition to the indirect influence of the control variables. The results are showed below.

### 3. Research results and discussions

Two theoretical models were tested. One for each factor score of “Opportunities for promotion to managerial positions” (SCOEQUALPRACT variable was the dependent/criterion on the first model; SCOEQUALINSTIT’ was the dependent variable in the second). All antecedent variables tested were the same.

For the first model, the results showed in Table 1 shows that “JUSTDIST”, “JUSTPROCESS”, “Gender” and “whether the respondent had already held a managerial position” explained 31.1% of the variance of SCOEQUALPRACT. It means that men, with less time of service in the organisation, who have not yet held a leadership position and who perceive that there is both distributive justice and procedural justice, consider that there are equalitarian organisational practices for the occupation of the managerial positions. The organisational values did not predict the dependent variable. Table 2 summarises the statistical results.

**Table 2. Standard Multiple Regression for the Dependent Variable “Equal Organisational Practices for Occupations (SCOEQUALPRACT)”**

<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Standard Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>sig.</b>
Constant	0.537	0.396	-	1.356	0.175
Importance attributed to Organisational Values (SCOVALUES)	0.101	0.055	0.050	1.853	0.064
Perception of Distributive Justice (JUSTDIST)	0.064	0.032	0.074	2.021	0.04*
Perception of Relational/Interactional Justice (JUSTMANAG)	0.013	0.029	0.014	-0.424	0.672
Perception of Process/Procedural Justice (JUSTPROCESS)	0.420	0.044	0.376	9.638	0.000*
Time of service	0.013	0.032	0.010	0.387	0.699
If the respondent had already held a managerial position	0.437	0.123	0.098	3.553	0.000*
Gender	1.181	0.088	0.360	13.492	0.000**
Age	0.008	0.059	0.005	0.137	0.891

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*Notes.* The dependent variable is “Gender-Based Organisational Practices and Equal of Criteria” (SCOEQUALPRACT); \*p<.005, \*\*p<001, R<sup>2</sup> = 0.316, R<sup>2</sup> Adjusted= 0.311, R = 0.562; F = 64.612

For the second model, we identified that JUSTPROCESS, Age, Gender and “whether the respondent had already held a managerial position” explained 28% of variance of SCOEQUALINSTIT. It means that older men who have not yet held a leadership position and who perceive procedural justice consider that there is institutionalisation of equality in the organisation. Table 3 summarises the results.

**Table 3. Standard Multiple Regression for the Criterion Variable “Formal/Organisational Institutionalisation of Equality” (SCOEQUALINSTIT)”**

<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Standard Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>sig.</b>
Constant	0.263	0.414	-	0.636	0.525
Importance attributed to Organisational Values (SCOVALUES)	-0.006	0.056	-0.003	-0.11	0.909
Perception of Distributive Justice (JUSTDIST)	0.031	0.033	0.036	0.957	0.339
Perception of Relational/Interactional Justice (JUSTMANAG)	0.011	0.031	0.012	0.355	0.723
Perception of Process/Procedural Justice (JUSTPROCESS)	0.469	0.045	0.412	10.38	0.000*
Time of service	0.001	0.044	0.000	0.013	0.990
If the respondent had already held a managerial position	0.537	0.127	0.119	4.225	0.000*
Gender	1.048	0.091	0.313	11.52	0.000**
Age	0.123	0.056	0.079	2.185	0.029*

*Notes.* The dependent variable is “Formal/Organisational Institutionalisation of Equality” (SCOEQUALINSTIT); \*p<.005, \*\*p<001, R<sup>2</sup> = 0.302, R<sup>2</sup> Adjusted= 0.297, R = 0.550; F = 53.044

It is very interesting to note that, contrary to the first model, “Age” was included as a predictor variable. This indicates that the perception of the type of organisational actions related to the institutionalisation of gender equality varies depending on whether if the participant is younger or older.

Hypothesis 1 was refuted in both models. Hypothesis 2 was partially confirmed. We identified that hypothesis 2a and 2c were confirmed. Age, gender, and experience in a leadership position were statistically significant control variables.

The promotion of equal opportunity in the workplace means that individuals are treated without discrimination, especially as it applies to gender (Monteiro et al., 2019; Yildiz et al., 2019). We emphasise that, differently than we expected, organisational values did not predict as statistically significant both dependent variables in the tested models. How important are the organisational values, then, in promoting gender-based equity? Does the fact of being a public security institution influence this non-result? This can lead, according to Fazal et al. (2020) and Guajardo (2016), the relationship between values and professional advancement to be not direct. This verification may constitute a research agenda on this theme.

The results obtained, considering the two empirical models, emphasise the importance of developing practices related to the management of diversity in the Brazilian context (Sabharwal et al., 2018; Torres et al., 2017). Diversity management needs to consider what are the possibilities for professional advancement in terms of promoting equality of conditions between men and women (Shjarback & Todak, 2019; Triandis, 2003), especially in the context of public police organisations (McLeod and Herrington, 2017; Stergioulis, 2017).

The difficulties in women's access to leadership positions seems to be a feature strongly rooted in the culture of the studied organisation. The lack of opportunities for professional advancement indicates inequality in the search for gender equality. Organisational practices and policies need to be redesigned with a view to promoting equal opportunities, valuing meritocracy (Liff, 1999; Karam et al., 2019).

Diversity management practices encourage the continuous professionalisation of people management activities in the environment of public organisations in general (Shjarback and Todak, 2019). Managerial training needs to consider the professional competences required for the performance of the position, regardless of the gender of who is seeking such a position (Wentling, 2004).

Cultural barriers, as discussed by Lu and Herremans (2019) and Crawshaw et al., (2013), sometimes historically entrenched, need to be removed, with a view to promote, in fact, the equality of opportunity regardless of gender. The perception of justice will be encouraged to take place in the light of organisational practices that encourage equal opportunities. The ethical-organisational behaviours of leaders also need to be taken into account in the search for equal opportunities for professional advancement (Martínez et al., 2019; Medina-Vincent, 2020).

The results obtained signal the need to debate more, scientifically, about the role and representation of women in police forces (Thijs et al., 2019). Issues involving organisational culture (Neri et al., 2019) and perceived justice (Pan et al., 2018), regarding the criteria for professional advancement, seem to exert an influence on the indication of opportunities between men and women to assume managerial positions (Bhattacharya et al., 2018).

The present study sheds light on the importance of professionalisation of management in public security organisations, especially in the Brazilian context. It

has been shown that organisational justice is crucial to the formation of mental models and behaviours. This research adds to past research by reporting the reality in Brazil, in the example of the researched organisation, offering to managers, researchers and other organisational development specialists, empirical data that allow them to guide their managerial actions and academic research.

Organisational justice, according to Karam et al. (2019) and Pedron (2017), is an important predictor associated to ascension opportunities. There must be transparency and focus on the meritocracy profile (McLeod and Herrington, 2017).

#### **4. Conclusions**

The main objective of this research was to test, empirically, if the perception of organisational justice (considered in its three dimensions, distributive, interactional, and procedural) and the importance attributed to the organisational values of a Brazilian police organisation predicted the perception of gender-based equity related to the opportunities to be in a leadership position in a Brazilian public police organisation.

By applying an on-line survey to 988 Brazilian police participants, we identified that the personal and professional variables and the perception of organisational justice predicted important variance regarding the researched criterion variable. Unlike the initial expectations, the importance attributed to organisational values did not predict the perception of opportunities for ascending to managerial positions.

In the context of this paper, the result must be interpreted considering how much the perception of equity of professional opportunities for Brazilian police officers is influenced by the perception of judgments formed around the processes of choice of their occupants. Considering all the procedures carried out, and the analyses carried out, it is believed that the general objective was fully achieved. We believe that the research question was also answered, and the hypothesis were confirmed or refused. The organisation studied here has a culture predominantly rooted in organisational values that encourage meritocracy and equality which should be considered when women are able to assume senior leadership positions. This research study provides empirical data that will be helpful for human resources areas to the development of organisational policies related to promote transparency and gender equity. It will also provide help to leaders in developing an organisational culture that values teamwork, trust in organisational processes and valuing meritocracy.

Equal opportunity means that every person can participate freely and equally in all areas in the workplace. An example of an equal opportunity employment issue is wages. Paying someone less because of gender is unacceptable. So, if a woman is doing the same work just as well as a man, she should be getting the same opportunity of leadership access. This is a real and effective promotion of equality. Managerial roles and positions should be open to all, regardless of gender (Sabharwal et al., 2018). Those who have professional, technical, and behavioural competences, necessary for its competent performance, under conditions of fair

equality of opportunity, must be selected for leadership positions. The choice should be less political and more technical. The occupation of public and private professional spaces by women is intertwined with several themes and raises several important questions, for example, on representativeness, distribution of power in organisations, diversity management and equal opportunities (Bhattacharya et al., 2018). The quality of occupations to managerial positions needs to consider the attributes necessary for the effective performance of the position, avoiding repeating the historical asymmetry, apparently ingrained, due to the gender difference.

The organisational culture is the main factor in the promotion of equal opportunities, and needs to be further investigated (Bourne et al., 2019). It is necessary to identify the existence and the level of the segregation based on gender, reproduced historically over time in the organisational space. Organisational power spaces need to be better understood (Fazal et al., 2020).

As for the limitations of this research, data collection coincided with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented face-to-face focus groups and individual interviews from taking place, as it had been planned. The data may also have been biased, due to the self-assessment of each participant.

As another limitation, the use of self-perception measures stands out, which may have generated bias in the responses given by the participants (self-report biases). We recommend further studies applying qualitative approaches. It is necessary to try to identify which culturally instituted phenomena may be contributing to the low rise of women to managerial positions within the scope of the organisations. It is necessary to deepen the role played by the perception of justice in relation to the perception of opportunities to rise to executive positions. What cultural values may be preventing women from accessing leadership roles? How to change them?

Furthermore, we recommend studies that compare managerial styles between men and women, within the same organisational space. The decision-making process and the influence of gender in this process must be investigated. The comparison between leadership styles may be a first step towards better understanding the managerial role between men and women in the same organisational workplace.

New studies may also consider the role of the meritocracy for professional advancement to managerial positions. Evidence of validity can be sought, even counting on the development and validation of new scientific research instruments. Criteria associated to the impartiality in accessing and meeting the minimum required professional competences should be researched.

We also suggest improving the selection processes in the occupation of leadership positions. They should be based on competences developed by police officers regardless of their gender. This can ensure transparency and fairness in the selection process.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares that the research was conducted without any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.



## **Acknowledgment**

That is not the case.

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