

### **INTERSECCIONALIDADE E SISTEMA DE COTAS:**

examinando as experiências de mulheres afro-brasileiras no ensino superior e no local de trabalho

### **INTERSECTIONALITY AND THE QUOTA SYSTEM:**

examining the experiences of afro-brazilian women in higher education and the workplace

### **INTERSECCIONALIDAD Y SISTEMA DE CUOTAS:**

examinando las experiencias de las mujeres afrobrasileñas en la educación superior y el lugar de trabajo

### **INTERSECTIONNALITE ET SYSTEME DE QUOTAS :**

examen des experiences des femmes afro-bresiliennes dans l'enseignement superieur et sur le lieu de travail

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#### **Resumo**

Esta pesquisa procurou lançar luz sobre as experiências das mulheres afro-brasileiras tanto no ensino superior como na força de trabalho, considerando a intrincada interação entre raça e gênero. O estudo faz uma análise crítica das políticas de ação afirmativa em vigor, com o objetivo de discernir sua eficácia na abordagem dos desafios específicos enfrentados por esse grupo demográfico. Ao analisar a sua representação nas instituições de ensino superior, o estudo visava descobrir padrões nas taxas de inscrição, retenção e graduação, proporcionando assim uma compreensão abrangente das suas trajetórias educativas. Além disso, uma exploração aprofundada das suas experiências profissionais permitiu analisar os factores que influenciam a progressão na carreira, as disparidades salariais e a sua presença em posições

de liderança. Através de entrevistas qualitativas e inquéritos, a pesquisa captou as vozes e perspectivas das mulheres afro-brasileiras, oferecendo informações valiosas sobre as suas percepções das políticas de ação afirmativa e as suas experiências vividas. Além disso, a disponibilidade e o impacto dos sistemas de apoio, iniciativas de orientação e recursos foram avaliados para determinar sua eficácia em facilitar o progresso e o sucesso das mulheres afro-brasileiras em ambientes educacionais e profissionais. Os resultados desta investigação culminaram num conjunto de recomendações políticas baseadas em evidências, destinadas a implementar abordagens mais interseccionais que tenham em conta a dupla dinâmica da raça e do género, com o objetivo último de criar ambientes mais inclusivos, solidários e equitativos para as mulheres afro-brasileiras.

**Palavras-chave:** Sistema de Cotas no Brasil, Integração da Perspetiva de Género, Mulheres Brasileiras, Educação, Local de Trabalho

#### Abstract

This research sought to shed light on the experiences of Afro-Brazilian women in both higher education and the workforce, considering the intricate interplay of race and gender. It undertakes a critical examination of the affirmative action policies in place, aiming to discern their efficacy in addressing the specific challenges faced by this demographic. By scrutinizing their representation within higher education institutions, the study aimed to uncover patterns in enrollment, retention, and graduation rates, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of their educational trajectories. Furthermore, an in-depth exploration of their professional experiences delved into factors that influence career advancement, wage disparities, and their presence in leadership positions. Through qualitative interviews and surveys, the research captured the voices and perspectives of Afro-Brazilian women, offering valuable insights into their perceptions of affirmative action policies and their lived experiences. Additionally, the availability and impact of support systems, mentorship initiatives, and resources were assessed to determine their effectiveness in facilitating the progress and success of Afro-Brazilian women in educational and professional settings. The findings of this research culminated in a set of evidence-based policy recommendations aimed at implementing more intersectional approaches that account for the dual dynamics of race and gender, with the ultimate aim of creating environments that are more inclusive, supportive, and equitable for Afro-Brazilian women.

**Keywords:** Brazil Quota System, Gender Mainstreaming, Brazilian Women, Education, Workplace

#### Resumen

Esta investigación pretende arrojar luz sobre las experiencias de las mujeres afrobrasileñas tanto en la enseñanza superior como en el mundo laboral, teniendo en cuenta la intrincada interacción entre raza y género. Se lleva a cabo un examen crítico de las políticas de acción afirmativa en vigor, con el objetivo de discernir su eficacia a la hora de abordar los retos específicos a los que se enfrenta este grupo demográfico. Al analizar su representación en las instituciones de enseñanza superior, el estudio pretende descubrir patrones en las tasas de matriculación, permanencia y graduación, proporcionando así una comprensión global de sus trayectorias educativas. Además, una exploración en profundidad de sus experiencias profesionales ahondó en los factores que influyen en la promoción profesional, las disparidades salariales y su presencia en puestos de liderazgo. A través de entrevistas cualitativas y encuestas, la investigación captó las voces y perspectivas de las mujeres afrobrasileñas, ofreciendo valiosas perspectivas sobre sus percepciones de las políticas de acción afirmativa y sus experiencias vividas. Además, se evaluó la

disponibilidad y el impacto de los sistemas de apoyo, las iniciativas de tutoría y los recursos para determinar su eficacia a la hora de facilitar el progreso y el éxito de las mujeres afrobrasileñas en entornos educativos y profesionales. Los resultados de esta investigación culminaron en un conjunto de recomendaciones políticas basadas en pruebas, destinadas a aplicar enfoques más interseccionales que tengan en cuenta la doble dinámica de raza y género, con el objetivo último de crear entornos más inclusivos, solidarios y equitativos para las mujeres afrobrasileñas.

**Palabras clave:** Sistema de cuotas de Brasil, integración de la perspectiva de género, mujeres brasileñas, educación, lugar de trabajo

### Résumé

Cette recherche vise à mettre en lumière les expériences des femmes afro-brésiliennes dans l'enseignement supérieur et sur le marché du travail, en tenant compte de l'interaction complexe entre la race et le genre. Elle entreprend un examen critique des politiques d'action positive en place, visant à discerner leur efficacité à relever les défis spécifiques auxquels est confrontée cette population. En examinant leur représentation au sein des établissements d'enseignement supérieur, l'étude vise à mettre en évidence les tendances en matière d'inscription, de rétention et de taux d'obtention de diplômes, ce qui permet de mieux comprendre leurs trajectoires éducatives. En outre, une exploration approfondie de leurs expériences professionnelles a permis d'étudier les facteurs qui influencent l'avancement professionnel, les disparités salariales et leur présence à des postes de direction. Grâce à des entretiens qualitatifs et à des enquêtes, la recherche a permis de recueillir les voix et les points de vue des femmes afro-brésiliennes, offrant ainsi des informations précieuses sur leur perception des politiques d'action positive et sur leurs expériences vécues. En outre, la disponibilité et l'impact des systèmes de soutien, des initiatives de mentorat et des ressources ont été évalués afin de déterminer leur efficacité à faciliter le progrès et la réussite des femmes afro-brésiliennes dans les milieux éducatifs et professionnels. Les résultats de cette recherche ont abouti à une série de recommandations politiques fondées sur des données probantes, visant à mettre en œuvre des approches plus intersectionnelles qui tiennent compte de la double dynamique de la race et du genre, dans le but ultime de créer des environnements plus inclusifs, plus favorables et plus équitables pour les femmes afro-brésiliennes.

**Mots-clés :** Brésil Système de quotas, intégration de la dimension de genre, femmes brésiliennes, éducation, lieu de travail

### Introduction -Rationale for The Study

The status of women in Brazil serves as a poignant reflection of Brazil's internal struggles with gender equality. While there has been some global progress in women's rights, Brazil still faces substantial challenges in achieving true gender parity. Although legal frameworks to support gender equality, particularly in addressing violence against women, are largely in place, there remains significant work to be done. As of February 2021, a mere 15.2% of parliamentary seats were held by women (UN Women Data Hub, 2021), indicating a substantial gender gap in political representation. Additionally, the persistent wage gap is a glaring issue, with women in Brazil earning 21% less than their male counterparts (Oliveira, 2022). In sectors predominantly employing women, such as health, education, and social services, this disparity widens to a staggering 32% (McCowan, 2020). Moreover, the availability of gender-specific data to monitor

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Brazil is still inadequate, with only 49.2% of necessary indicators accessible as of December 2020 (UN Women, 2021). Crucial areas like gender and poverty, harassment, women's access to assets, and the intersection of gender with environmental issues still lack standardized methodologies for consistent monitoring. Bridging these gender data gaps is imperative for fulfilling Brazil's commitments to gender-related SDGs.

This study addresses a pressing facet of social equity in Brazil, focusing on Afro-Brazilian women who face intersecting challenges related to race and gender. These complexities have historically led to disparities in accessing education and opportunities within the workforce (Marteleto, 2012). By delving into the experiences of Afro-Brazilian women, this research seeks to unravel the intricate interplay of race and gender in shaping their educational and professional trajectories. Central to this investigation is an evaluation of the effectiveness of affirmative action policies, notably the Quota System, in meeting the specific needs of this demographic (Miguel, 2008). The research carries immense significance as it confronts deep-seated systemic inequalities and the underrepresentation of Afro-Brazilian women. This study stands to provide empirical evidence on the impact of affirmative action policies on this marginalized group, offering insights that can inform more targeted and effective interventions. Furthermore, the research endeavors to contribute to a broader discourse on inclusivity and diversity in higher education and the workplace, ultimately aspiring towards a more equitable and inclusive Brazilian society where the potential of all individuals, regardless of their background, is acknowledged and celebrated.

### Research Objectives:

The main goal of this research was to explore the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Afro-Brazilian women in higher education and the workforce, considering the intersectionality of race and gender. The study analyzed the effectiveness of affirmative action policies in addressing their specific needs.

### Key Components:

- a) Intersectionality Analysis:** Investigate the complex interplay of race and gender in shaping the experiences of Afro-Brazilian women. Understand how multiple identities influence their educational and professional trajectories.
- b) Educational Attainment and Access:** Examine the representation of Afro-Brazilian women in higher education institutions. Evaluate the impact of affirmative action policies on their enrollment, retention, and graduation rates.
- c) Workplace Experiences:** Analyze the experiences of Afro-Brazilian women in the workforce, including factors affecting their career advancement, wage disparities, and representation in leadership positions.
- d) Perceptions of Affirmative Action:** Explore the perceptions and experiences of Afro-Brazilian women regarding affirmative action policies. Assess whether these policies effectively address the unique challenges they face.

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- e) **Support Systems and Resources:** Investigate the availability and effectiveness of support systems, mentorship programs, and resources for Afro-Brazilian women in educational and professional settings.
- f) **Policy Recommendations for Intersectional Approaches:** Provide recommendations for policies and initiatives that take into account the intersectionality of race and gender to create more inclusive environments for Afro-Brazilian women.

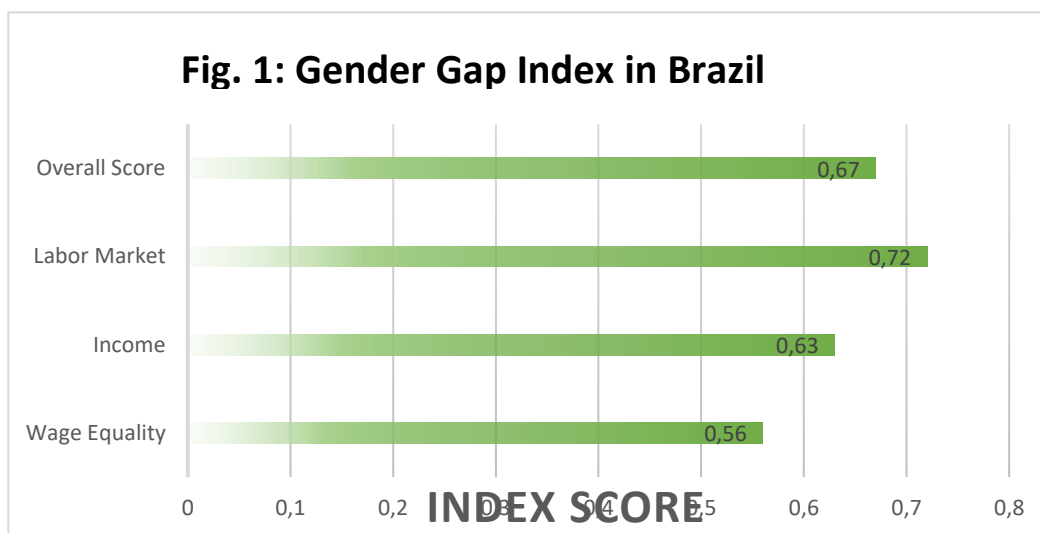
### Methodology

The study employed a mixed-methods research design to comprehensively examine the experiences of Afro-Brazilian women in higher education and the workplace. Quantitative data was gathered through surveys distributed among Afro-Brazilian women in various educational institutions and professional settings, allowing for the collection of structured, numerical information on enrollment rates, retention, graduation, wage differentials, and career progression. Additionally, qualitative insights were derived through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, providing a nuanced understanding of the lived experiences, challenges, and aspirations of Afro-Brazilian women. This dual approach facilitated a holistic view of their intersecting identities and how they influence educational and professional trajectories. Furthermore, extensive literature reviews and policy analyses were conducted to contextualize the findings within the broader landscape of affirmative action policies and their implications. The triangulation of quantitative data, qualitative narratives, and policy insights ensured a robust and comprehensive assessment of the complex dynamics at play.

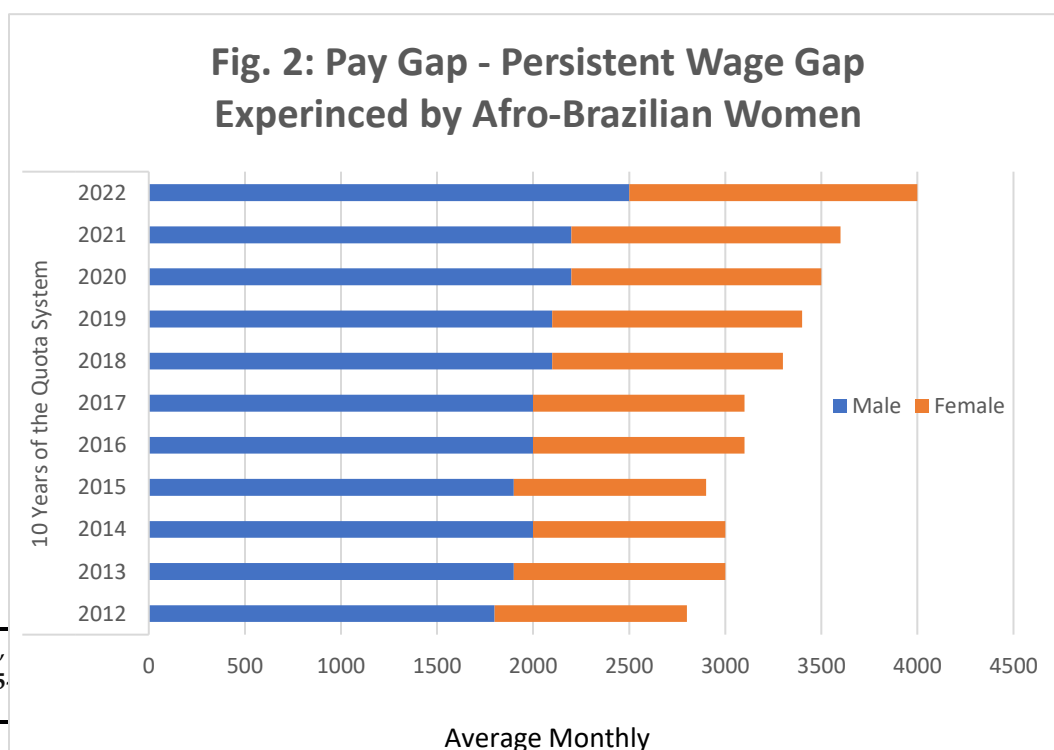
### Results

Afro-Brazilian women in Brazil continue to grapple with significant challenges in various aspects of their professional lives.

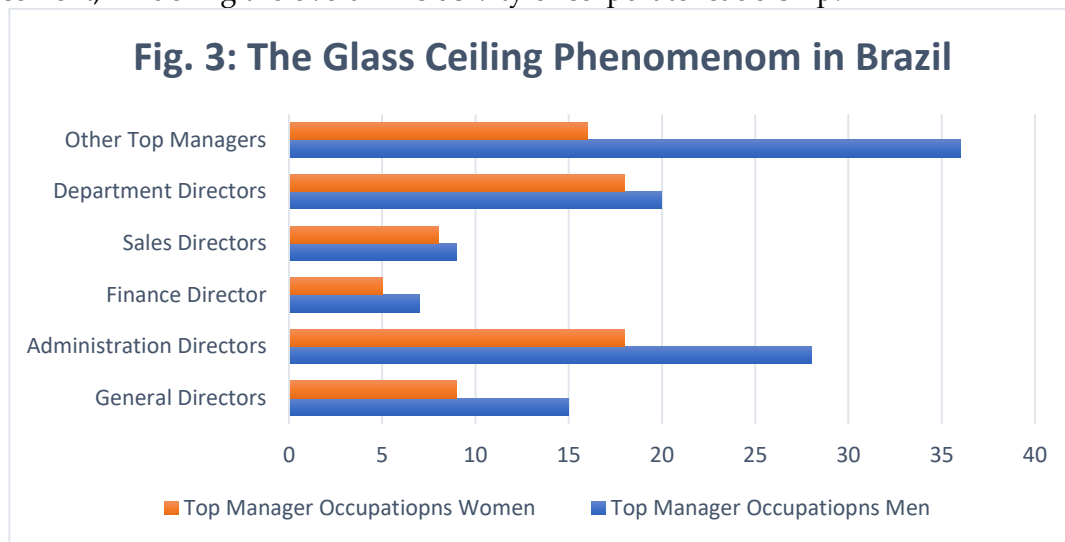
- a) **Representation:** Afro-Brazilian women face underrepresentation across several industries, particularly in higher-paying sectors. In fields ranging from technology to finance and academia, the presence of Afro-Brazilian women remains limited. This lack of representation (Fig. 1) not only reflects a disparity in opportunities but also contributes to the perpetuation of stereotypes and biases.



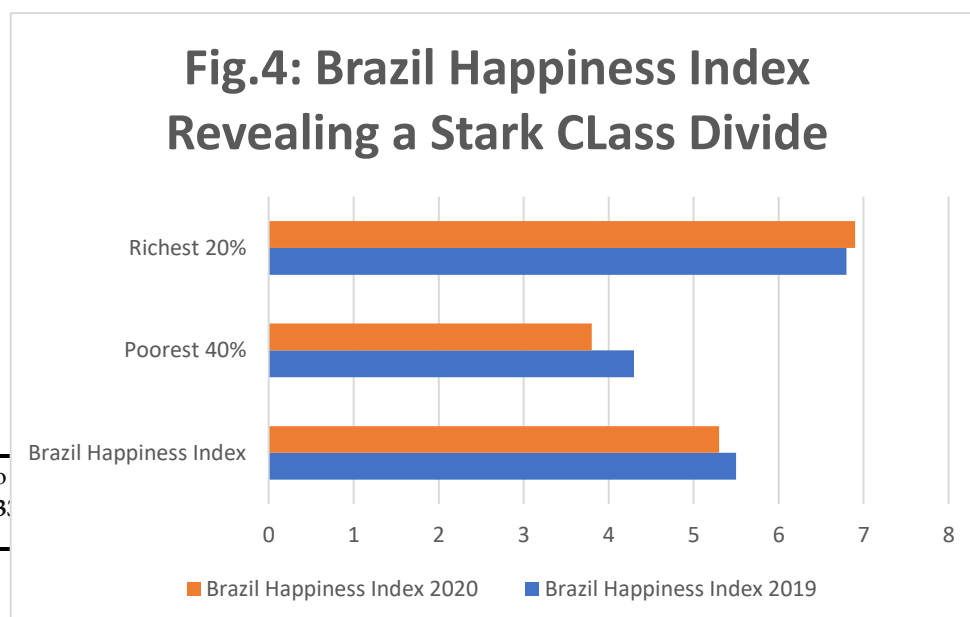
**b) Pay Gap:** Despite advancements in gender equality discussions, Afro-Brazilian women still experience a persistent pay gap. Even when factors such as time in the job, skill level, and other considerations are controlled, studies reveal that Afro-Brazilian women earn 5% to 7% less than their male counterparts (Fig. 2). This economic disparity further exacerbates existing inequalities and limits the financial empowerment of Afro-Brazilian women.



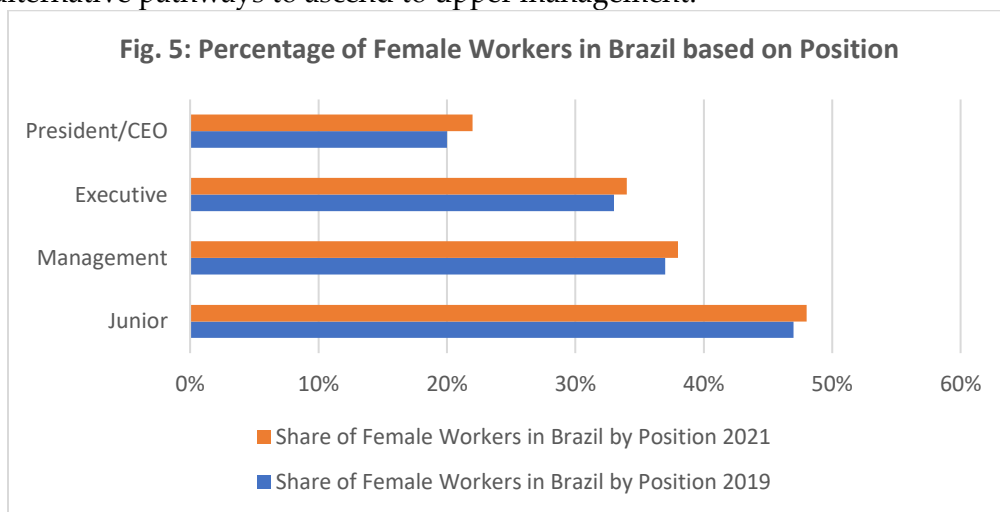
c) **Glass Ceiling:** The glass ceiling phenomenon remains a formidable barrier for Afro-Brazilian women aspiring to reach leadership positions. The upper echelons of organizations continue to lack diversity, with Afro-Brazilian women finding limited opportunities for career progression into executive roles (Fig. 3). Structural and systemic barriers impede their advancement, hindering the overall inclusivity of corporate leadership.



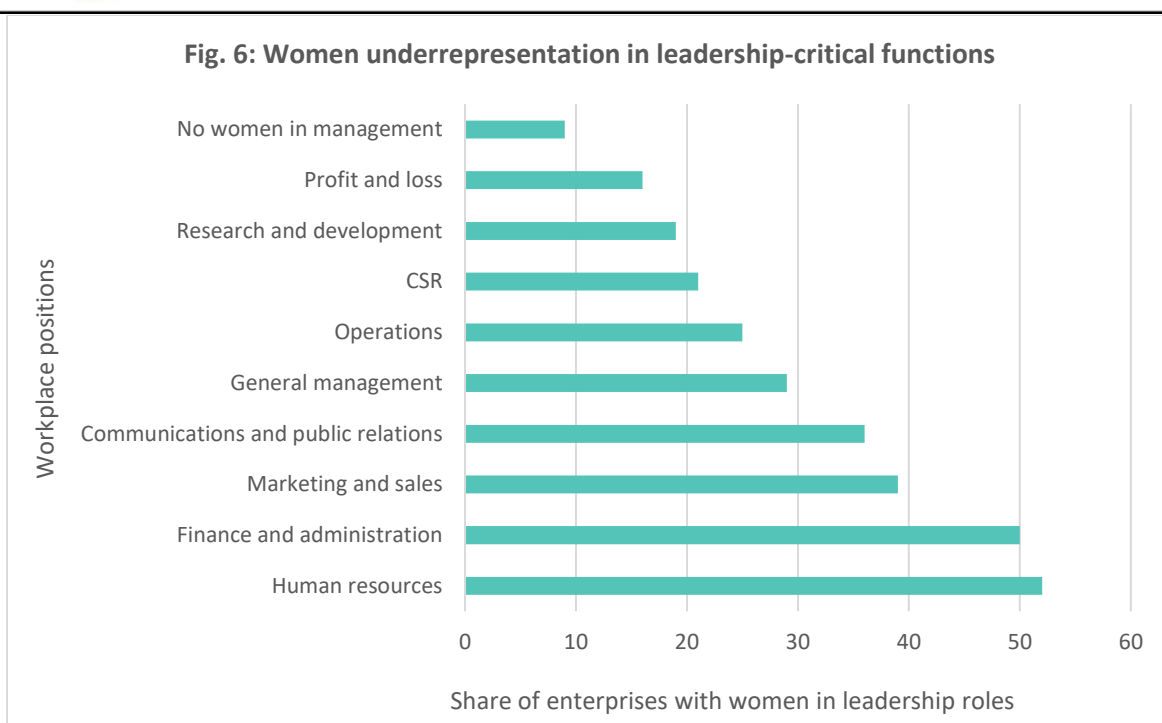
d) **Glass Elevator:** Conversely, the glass elevator phenomenon often benefits men, providing them with faster career progression compared to their female counterparts (Fig. 4). This dynamic is particularly challenging for Afro-Brazilian women, as it perpetuates gender and racial disparities within organizational hierarchies. The accelerated advancement of men reinforces the need for targeted strategies to dismantle these structural inequalities.



e) **Non-linear Career Paths:** Afro-Brazilian women often navigate non-linear career paths, seeking unconventional routes to overcome obstacles. Hindered by systemic barriers, some Afro-Brazilian women may find themselves in roles that, while still impactful, are not traditionally associated with leadership (Fig. 6). Careers in Human Resources or Marketing, for example, become alternative pathways to ascend to upper management.



f) **Skills and Style Dilemma:** Female managers, including Afro-Brazilian women, confront a persistent dilemma concerning their managing style (Fig. 5). Striking a balance between authentic leadership and conforming to traditional "male styles" poses challenges. This struggle reflects broader societal expectations and underscores the need for a more inclusive understanding of effective leadership styles.



**g) Gender Leadership Disparities:** The way management duties are split between genders brings up worries about possible gender stereotypes in hiring and promotions. Moreover, it suggests that women and men might be choosing different academic paths, signaling that the gender-based division of roles starts earlier than managerial positions.

In addressing these challenges, it is crucial to implement policies and initiatives that foster diversity, equity, and inclusion. By dismantling systemic barriers and promoting a more inclusive workplace culture, Brazil can harness the full potential of its Afro-Brazilian women, contributing to a more vibrant and equitable society.

### Recommendations and Conclusions

Addressing the challenges faced by Afro-Brazilian women in higher education and the workplace requires comprehensive policy measures that encompass legislative reforms, cultural shifts, and targeted interventions. Firstly, there is a need for the expansion and enhancement of affirmative action policies in higher education to ensure increased representation of Afro-Brazilian women in academic spaces. This involves not only setting quotas but also implementing support programs that address the unique obstacles these women face in pursuing and completing their education.

In the workplace, policies should focus on fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment. This includes the development and enforcement of anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies, as well as initiatives that encourage diverse hiring practices. Mentorship and sponsorship programs can play a crucial role in providing Afro-Brazilian women with the guidance and opportunities needed to navigate their careers successfully. Additionally, there should be a concerted effort to challenge and change prevailing cultural biases through awareness campaigns, education, and diversity training.

By adopting these comprehensive policy measures, Brazil can create an environment where Afro-Brazilian women are not only present but can thrive and contribute meaningfully to higher education and the workforce. The success of such policies requires collaboration between the government, private sector, educational institutions, and civil society to create a sustained and impactful change in the status quo. Some of these policy recommendations should include:

**a) Enhance Diversity and Inclusion Policies:**

- Implement and strengthen diversity and inclusion policies that explicitly address the unique challenges faced by Afro-Brazilian women.
- Set clear diversity goals, including targets for the representation of Afro-Brazilian women in various sectors, especially in leadership positions.

**b) Education and Awareness Programs:**

- Launch educational programs to raise awareness about intersectionality, unconscious biases, and stereotypes that affect Afro-Brazilian women.
- Develop training initiatives for employees and leaders to promote cultural competency and create a more inclusive work environment.

**c) Affirmative Action in Higher Education:**

- Expand and reinforce affirmative action policies in higher education to ensure increased access and representation of Afro-Brazilian women in universities and research institutions.
- Provide targeted scholarships, mentorship programs, and support networks to encourage Afro-Brazilian women to pursue higher education.

**d) Workplace Flexibility and Inclusive Policies:**

- Introduce flexible work policies to accommodate diverse needs, including family responsibilities and other socio-economic considerations.
- Establish inclusive policies that address the specific challenges faced by Afro-Brazilian women, such as discriminatory practices and biased evaluation criteria.

**e) Corporate Accountability:**

- Encourage companies to publicly disclose diversity metrics and progress reports, holding them accountable for fostering an inclusive workplace.
- Recognize and reward organizations that demonstrate a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion through awards or certification programs.

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**f) Mentorship and Networking Opportunities:**

- Implement mentorship programs that connect Afro-Brazilian women with established professionals who can provide guidance and support in their career development.
- Facilitate networking opportunities to help Afro-Brazilian women build professional relationships and access career advancement resources.

**g) Government Support and Legislation:**

- Advocate for and enact legislation that mandates diversity and inclusion practices in workplaces, with a specific focus on addressing the intersectional challenges faced by Afro-Brazilian women.
- Provide financial incentives or support for organizations that actively promote diversity and demonstrate progress in creating an inclusive environment.

**h) Research and Data Collection:**

- Invest in research initiatives that focus on collecting and analyzing data related to the experiences of Afro-Brazilian women in higher education and the workplace.
- Use research findings to inform policy decisions and measure the effectiveness of implemented initiatives.
- Implementing these policies collectively can contribute to creating a more inclusive and equitable environment for Afro-Brazilian women, fostering their professional development and success in higher education and the workplace.

## **Conclusions**

The examination of the experiences of Afro-Brazilian women within the context of intersectionality and the quota system reveals a complex web of challenges that hinder their full participation and advancement in higher education and the workplace. Systemic issues such as underrepresentation across various industries, pay gaps, and the existence of glass ceilings persist, impeding the progress of Afro-Brazilian women in achieving equal opportunities and recognition (Benedito, 2005). The intersectionality of race and gender compounds these challenges, necessitating targeted policies and interventions that address the unique barriers faced by this specific demographic. The quota system, while a step towards inclusivity, must be complemented by broader initiatives that target cultural biases, discriminatory practices, and insufficient support structures (Booyesen, 2016).

Moving forward, a multifaceted approach is required to dismantle these barriers effectively. Policy recommendations should include the enhancement of diversity and inclusion initiatives, educational programs to address unconscious biases, the expansion of affirmative action in higher education, and the establishment of inclusive workplace policies. Mentorship programs, corporate accountability, and government support in the form of legislation and incentives are crucial components of a comprehensive strategy. By implementing these measures, Brazil can not only rectify the existing disparities but also leverage the untapped potential of Afro-Brazilian

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women, contributing to a more vibrant, equitable, and prosperous society where diversity is embraced and celebrated.

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