



UNIVERSIDADE
CATÓLICA
PORTUGUESA

EQUILEAD: PATHWAYS TO LEADERSHIP EQUALITY

Project to Universidade Católica Portuguesa to obtain a
Master's Degree in MSc Communication Studies: Strategic
Communication & Leadership

By

Eline Teresinha Eleonora de Weerd

Faculty of Human Sciences

September 2023



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Under the supervision of Carla Ganito

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Acknowledgements

This final project was written at the end of my two-year MSc in Strategic Communication & Leadership. In November 2022, I started the project process, which I completed and delivered beginning October 2023. I believe that this project offers valuable information because it provides insights into why there is a leaky pipeline of women achieving higher management positions and – most crucially – a training program to improve the situation.

Conducting my survey would not have been possible without the respondents. I wish to express my thanks and appreciation to the top women who participated in this study. They all had busy schedules, yet everyone made time for me and were willing to cooperate in the study. I found the interviews to be highly pleasant and friendly conversations, and I thank the interviewees for their openness. Without your contributions, I would not have been able to conduct my research in this form.

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Resumo

Em Portugal, 54% da força de trabalho é feminina (OIT, 2022). No entanto, quando se analisam os cargos superiores de gestão, a percentagem de mulheres desce para 28,3%. Existem várias hipóteses sobre o que poderá estar na origem desta "fuga na canalização", com a perda de mulheres pelo caminho. O projeto proposto visa criar um programa de formação avançada em igualdade de liderança denominado "EquiLead", numa tentativa de contribuir para a igualdade de género na liderança. Em primeiro lugar, este estudo identificou os potenciais obstáculos que impedem a maioria das mulheres de aceder a cargos de gestão superiores, através de entrevistas a duas mulheres líderes e de um inquérito a oito mulheres líderes. As suas respostas proporcionaram uma visão mais clara dos componentes a incorporar no EquiLead. Em segundo lugar, a estrutura da formação foi determinada de acordo com as diretrizes de Formações Avançadas anteriores da Universidade Católica Portuguesa. A desigualdade de género na liderança é um desafio permanente, mas iniciativas como esta acabarão por se acumular e criar consciência e mudança.

Palavras-chave: *Liderança Feminina, Desigualdade de Género, Formação, Mentoria, Portugal*

Abstract

In Portugal, 54% of the labor workforce is female (ILO, 2022). However, when one examines higher management positions, this percentage drops to 28.3% female. Various hypotheses exist as to what could cause this “leaky pipeline” of losing women along the way. The proposed project aims to create an Advanced Training Program in leadership equality named “EquiLead”, in an attempt to contribute to gender equality in leadership. First, this study identified potential obstacles that prevent the majority of women from entering higher management positions by interviewing two female leaders and surveying eight female leaders. Their answers provided a clearer picture of which components to incorporate into the EquiLead. Second, the structure of the training was determined following the guidelines of previous Advanced Training Programs at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa. The inequality of gender in leadership is an ongoing challenge, but initiatives like these will eventually accumulate and create awareness and change.

Keywords: *Female Leadership, Gender Inequality, Training, Mentorship, Portugal*

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Part I: Literature Review and Needs Assessment

Introduction

Background

In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the need to promote gender diversity and increase female representation in leadership positions across various sectors. Despite progress in some areas, women remain underrepresented in executive roles in many countries, including Portugal. As part of my master's project, I explored the potential for establishing a training program in Portugal, provided by the Universidade Católica Portuguesa, with the aim of providing participants with the necessary tools and networking opportunities to advance their careers and reach leadership positions. Through this research, I hope to contribute to the ongoing conversation on female leadership and provide practical insights for organizations seeking to increase gender diversity in their leadership teams.

The issue of gender diversity in leadership has gained increasing attention as an increasing number of organizations have recognized the importance of promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace (Jonsen et al., 2010). However, the history of women in leadership positions has been marked by discrimination and inequality, with women facing numerous barriers to entering and advancing in leadership roles (Powell, 1990). Throughout history, many societies have traditionally excluded women from positions of power and authority, expecting them to instead fulfil more domestic roles (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The advent of the feminist movement in the 20th century brought about significant changes in attitudes toward women in leadership, and many countries have implemented policies to promote gender equality (Smith & Sinkford, 2022).

This project will review research that has demonstrated that women are often subject to gender stereotypes and biases and may be penalized for exhibiting traits that are traditionally associated with masculinity, such as assertiveness and ambition (Eagly et al., 2003). This can make it difficult for women to be taken seriously in leadership roles, which may limit their opportunities for advancement. In addition to these individual-level factors, cultural and societal norms can also significantly shape attitudes toward female leadership. In some

cultures, there may be solid expectations for women to prioritize their family responsibilities over their career aspirations, making it difficult for them to pursue leadership roles (Woodbridge et al., 2021). Moreover, women who do enter leadership positions may face resistance and pushback from their colleagues and subordinates, who may be uncomfortable with the idea of a woman in a position of authority (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

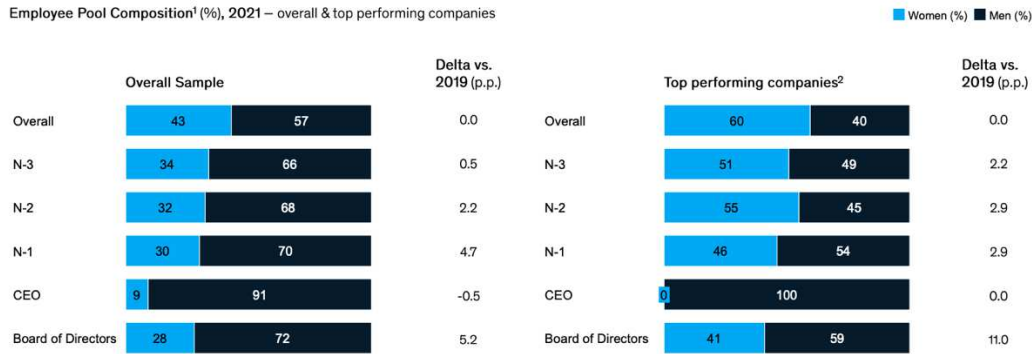
A McKinsey & Company study titled “Women Matter Portugal 2023: Ways to go” (2023) conducted an in-depth analysis on gender inequality for their Women Matter reports globally, providing insights into how companies can more effectively prepare to increase the presence of women at all levels of responsibility. First, the McKinsey & Company (2023) study sought to understand the context in which women find themselves in organizations, perceptions regarding professional development and the measures that organizations apply to advance in terms of diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as their effectiveness. Second, the study sought to analyze actual progress made in women’s participation in the labor force as well as progress since previous studies.

Despite Portugal leading in the European Union (EU) in terms of workforce parity with 50% women and 50% men, the country lags behind the European average for women in leadership positions, with almost no growth in these roles over the past two years. Thus, in Portugal, women do not move up the career ladder as much as men do. McKinsey & Company (2023) demonstrated that the overall workforce is balanced; however, compared with Europe, Portugal still lags behind in the flow of women into higher management positions. Figure 1 indicates that 34% of women move higher up from the number two management position (N-2) to the number one position (N-1). With the management position increasing (i.e. from “overall” to N-3, N-2, N-1, CEO and “Board of Directors”, the female employee composition decreases with only 9% of CEO positions being filled by women. Hence, a significant drop can be observed in the number of women entering higher management positions. This is also called the “leaky pipeline”.

Figure 1

Leaky Pipeline

In the overall sample, the share of women in leadership positions is significantly lower
Iberia (Portugal and Spain)



1.Pool composition figures are the overall average of every company's proportion of women and men at each level
2.First quartile in terms of women representation in positions in N-2 and above
Source: McKinsey "2022 Women Matter Iberia" Study

Note: Retrieved from “Portugal: Women are Still Far from Top Corporate Leadership Positions by McKinsey & Company, 2023 (<https://shorturl.at/dAKS1>) © 1996-2023 McKinsey & Company

According to the study, gender inequality in the labor market in Portugal remains, and women continue to face disparity in professional progression, particularly progression to leadership positions. Over the years, the business world has made progress in terms of diversity in the workforce; however, this progress remains limited in leadership positions, where invisible barriers persist due to the motivations of the company itself, those of society, and those intrinsic to women’s career choices.

The McKinsey study also sought to identify the most effective measures that promote the creation of an inclusive work environment and an equal society. The literature review of this project will further explore some of their findings.

In conclusion, regardless of progress and advances, women still face significant challenges in entering and advancing in leadership positions.

Motivation and Purpose

I am a woman who is driven to climb the corporate ladder and eventually reach a higher management position. But as I have progressed in my career, knowing about the glass ceiling effect, I was curious to study what female leaders I look up to, have to say about this. Also, the fact that we see more male CEO's than female CEO's in Portugal made me curious about the topic of gender diversity leadership roles, hence I want to dive deep into it to learn more.

One thing I have noticed is that there is not a lot of academic research on this topic in Portugal. That is a problem because research can shed light on the challenges and opportunities women face in leadership positions. Therefore, I wanted to research this by interviewing women in higher management positions to fill this gap in knowledge.

But it is not just about me – it is about all the women out there who, like me, have big dreams but not a lot of work experience. I was sure I could not be the only one looking for a push in the back on this, which is why I thought of creating an Advanced Training Program for Universidade Católica Portuguesa (UCP). I went to look for training programs in Portugal, and found out there is not much out there. The programs that are there, are for women who already have a lot of work-experience. While, whether you are a seasoned professional or just starting out, my goal is to make sure we have the resources and inspiration to chase our ambitions and break through those glass ceilings.

Research shows that you cannot start early enough with awareness to nurture ambition in women (Sealy & Harman, 2017). Despite training for already experienced female professionals being good and helpful, even better would be to explore female leadership ambition in early careers. It is important to nurture ambition from an early stage and acknowledge the need to develop and train women for leadership roles as early as possible in their development (Sealy & Harman, 2017).

Research Structure

The current project consists of two parts. The first part (Part I) includes a literature review and a state of the art that involved a needs assessment for determining the specific challenges and barriers that women face in accessing top management positions in the targeted industries, which is the core of my research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with

female leaders in Portugal and female respondents were surveyed. With the data acquired through the interviews, a training/mentorship program will be set up that also provides advice for women aspiring to leadership positions. The research question for this first part of the study was as follows:

What obstacles do women face in achieving higher management positions?

The literature review and state of the art provided an idea of earlier successful initiatives and identified the needs and gaps in the industry. They also enabled me to define the project goals for EquiLead and create a project plan that entails the modules, structuring the project as a training program. The training program took into consideration the identified needs and suggestions.

Part II introduces EquiLead: An Advanced Training Program in gender equality leadership, designed to address the challenges identified from the literature review, state of the art and interviews. The aim is that this knowledge together provided a fundamental base for EquiLead.

Project Overview

This comprehensive project delves into the critical issue of gender equality in leadership, focusing on the Portuguese context. The following overview provides a clear understanding of the project's structure, significance, and objectives.

Part I of this project begins with chapter 1 by exploring the fundamental concept of leadership and its historical evolution. It examines the traits and styles associated with effective leadership, including transformational, authentic, and transactional leadership. Additionally, it investigates how gender influences leadership traits and underscores the importance of promoting gender diversity in leadership roles.

Chapter 2 dissects the persistent gender inequality in leadership positions, particularly within the Portuguese context. It sheds light on the unique challenges women face, such as glass

ceilings, gender stereotypes, recruitment biases, and organizational barriers. The chapter emphasizes the urgency of addressing these disparities.

Building upon the previous chapter, chapter 3 examines the state of gender inequality in Portugal, highlighting the importance of the issue. It also reviews successful initiatives in Portugal and explores the significance of mentorships, traineeships, training, and support programs. The chapter concludes with an actionable plan to tackle gender inequality.

Chapter 4 establishes the research framework, defining research questions and objectives. It provides an in-depth look at the research methodology, data collection procedures, ethical considerations, and data analysis techniques. Notably, the chapter reviews literature and existing methods on crafting effective training programs.

At the core of the project, chapter 5 presents empirical findings related to gender stereotypes, hiring practices, work-life balance, social structures, and organizational culture. These results shed light on the real-world experiences of women in leadership roles.

Chapter 6 engages in a critical analysis of the empirical results, delving into the root causes of gender inequality. It addresses issues such as stereotyping, bias in recruitment, organizational structures, work-life balance, and the importance of professional support. Furthermore, it explores empowerment, negotiation skills, mentorship, and networking as potential avenues for change.

The project's part II introduces EquiLead: A gender equality leadership program designed to address the identified challenges. Chapter 7 introduces and proposes EquiLead as an Advanced Training Program at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa (UCP). Hence, this chapter is devoted to outline objectives, participant criteria, structure, modules, professors, certification, scheduling, and financial considerations. Together, these form the proposal for EquiLead. Moreover, this chapter acknowledges the limitations of the research and the program, offering a transparent perspective on the project's scope and boundaries.

Ultimately the project concludes emphasizing the need for addressing gender inequality in leadership roles and accentuates the prospective of EquiLead.

Chapter 1: Leadership

This chapter aims to provide a broader understanding of the concept leadership. Then it will narrow down to leadership in organizations and eventually explore different styles of leadership.

1.1 Concept of Leadership and its Evolution

From an evolutionary perspective, humans are stronger in groups, which explains our natural behavior of creating groups (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008). Naturally, a group will adopt a hierarchy, including one or multiple leaders. Research demonstrated that a leader brings many advantages to a group, such as structure, a common goal, and cooperation (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008).

Leadership is an intrinsically subjective concept with a variety of definitions. In most definitions in the literature, leadership primarily revolves around an individual's efforts to influence groups or followers in the pursuit of specific goals (Hassan & Daud Silong, 2008). At its core, leadership involves the ability to influence and inspire others toward a shared goal or vision (Walumbwa et al., 2008). However, since multiple leadership styles define the concept, multiple leadership styles are discussed later in this project to provide a thorough understanding of what leadership can look like in practice. Most research on leadership focuses on studying its consequences, which are also touched upon later.

First, it is crucial to review the predictors and origins of leadership. Northouse (2007) asserted that after decades of disagreement, scholars came to the consensus that they could not provide a standard definition for leadership. Due to factors like increasing global influences and generational disparities, leadership will maintain distinct interpretations among individuals. Ultimately, leadership remains a multifaceted concept with no settled definition. One standard definition of leadership is that it involves the ability to create a vision and inspire others to work toward it (Grant, 2012). This definition emphasizes the importance of setting a clear direction for an organization or group and of motivating and inspiring others to pursue that vision. A vital aspect of this definition is the idea of leading by example and embodying the values and principles that are central to the vision. Another definition of leadership focuses on the ability to influence others and achieve collective goals

through collaboration and cooperation (Northouse, 2007). This definition highlights the importance of building relationships, working effectively with others, and being able to navigate complex social dynamics and power structures. It also emphasizes the importance of shared decision making and the collective ownership of goals and outcomes. Another definition of leadership emphasizes the importance of adaptability and flexibility in responding to changing circumstances and environments (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). This definition suggests that influential leaders must be able to recognize and respond to changing conditions and adjust their strategies and approaches accordingly. It also emphasizes the importance of innovation and creativity in developing new solutions and approaches to problems.

Leadership is known to involve establishing direction, aligning individuals, and motivating and inspiring them (Algahtani, 2014). Leaders see things from a broad perspective and focus on the long term. Their main focus should be to inspire, work with people, and influence others to achieve goals (Algahtani, 2014; Toor & Ofori, 2018).

One of the main questions that arises when it comes to leadership is whether leaders are born as a leader or whether leadership can be taught, for which contradictory evidence exists. One of the standpoints is that leaders are born different compared with non-leaders and are extraordinary people (Zaleznik, 1977). This is part of the *trait view of leadership*, which suggests that the personality traits of a leader can predict their authentic leadership style. According to Ahuja and van Vugt (2010), some people naturally lead while others follow. They proved this by differentiating between formal and informal leaders. In stressful situations, people informally select a leader who is only sometimes the official formal leader. A significant body of research has examined the factors that the selection of informal leaders is based on. Certain traits, such as intelligence and a bold personality, influence an individual's selection as an informal *natural leader*.

Research has also demonstrated that personality traits help to predict leadership behaviors. Ahuja and van Vugt (2010) found that personality is an essential aspect of the natural selection of informal leaders. Furthermore, Shahzad et al. (2021) presented the impact of the Big Five personality traits on authentic leadership. They demonstrated that “while

extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience were positively related to authentic leadership style, *neuroticism* was negatively related to it.” Shahzad et al. (2021, p. 20). Thus, their findings supported the *trait view of leadership* and the idea that managers could potentially identify authentic leaders in the selection process using personality tests. Most effective leaders have a good understanding of emotional intelligence. Social intelligence is the ground skill required for leadership (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008). Without good emotional intelligence, a person can have a high level of training but will never be a good leader: “The five components of emotional intelligence at work are self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills” (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008, p. 34). Mackenzie and Welch (2005) studied emotional intelligence concerning leadership and identified it as a crucial threat to effective leadership, regardless of gender.

Furthermore, some common leadership skills and traits include communication, problem solving, decision making, and team building. Team building refers to the ability to build and maintain effective teams by fostering collaboration, cohesion, and adaptability. Notably, these skills and traits are not specific to a particular gender and can be found in individuals of any gender. Thus, it is essential to recognize and value these skills and traits in individuals of any gender and to provide opportunities for them to develop and use their leadership skills.

However, even if someone is innately charismatic, this does not mean that they can become a leader. They would still require education, training, and coaching to become one (Almager et al., 2021). Hence, an opposing theory named neocharismatic theory argues that leadership is not necessarily innate, but rather someone must obtain specific skills to become an effective leader (Angawi, 2012). According to this theory, specific skills can be taught and adapted, but someone can also be born with talent, making it easier for them to acquire those skills to become a good leader. The popularity of neocharismatic theory explains the increasing number of successful self-help books on how to become a leader. Suggesting that specific skills to become a good leader can be adopted by anyone makes room for the idea that anyone can become a leader if they want to. Leadership emerges from one’s life story and experiences, among other factors, which facilitates authentic morality and integrity

(Wang & Hsieh, 2013). Thus, one could argue that being born with specific leadership characteristics is unnecessary.

1.2 Effective Leadership in Organizations

This section provides an overview of the concept of leadership and its importance in organizations.

Leadership is a critical aspect of organizational effectiveness and success (Northouse, 2007). A leader's ability to motivate, inspire, and guide their followers toward a common goal is a fundamental determinant of organizational performance. First, leaders play a crucial role in setting the strategic direction of an organization, aligning goals and objectives, and creating a shared vision for the future (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Without solid leadership, organizations can lack direction and purpose, which leads to confusion, disengagement, and poor performance.

Second, leaders are responsible for creating a positive work environment that fosters collaboration, creativity, and innovation (Yoshida et al., 2014). Leaders who are supportive, empathetic, and inclusive can create a culture of trust and respect, which can increase employee morale, job satisfaction, and productivity. Moreover, leaders are responsible for developing and managing the talent within an organization. By identifying and nurturing high-potential employees, providing coaching and mentoring, and creating opportunities for learning and growth, leaders can build a solid and capable workforce that is equipped to tackle complex challenges and drive organizational success (Northouse, 2007).

Finally, effective leadership is critical in times of change and uncertainty. During times of crisis, such as a pandemic or an economic downturn, leaders must be able to make difficult decisions quickly and communicate effectively with their employees, stakeholders, and customers. Leaders who are able to adapt to changing circumstances, remain calm under pressure, and provide a sense of stability and direction can help their organization to weather difficult times and emerge stronger (Wilson & Newstead, 2022). Thus, leadership is a critical component of organizational success. Influential leaders are responsible for setting the strategic direction of an organization, creating a positive work environment, developing and

managing talent, and navigating times of change and uncertainty. While leadership is a complex and multifaceted concept, it is clear that organizations that invest in developing strong and effective leaders are more likely to succeed in achieving their goals and objectives (Stone & Gandolfi, 2018). Northouse (2007) concluded that leadership is a skill, process, responsibility, position of authority, influencing relationship, characteristic, and ability. Leaders should be aware that leadership is communication and that they can choose different ways in which to communicate (Sims et al., 2021).

1.3 Leadership Styles and Traits

This section aims to understand the differences in male and female leadership styles and what we can learn from this. Organizations state they would like to see more women represented in leadership positions, but in practice this is still lagging behind. Often, the women who have reached the top are praised and seen as an exceptional species with perhaps more masculine than feminine qualities.

Numerous studies have been conducted on leadership and the factors that contribute to effective leadership. Some research has specifically focused on the relationship between gender and leadership and found that effective leadership is not determined by one's gender but, as previously stated, by various factors such as communication skills, emotional intelligence, and the ability to inspire and motivate others. Cahyati et al. (2021) stated that "effective leadership is based on behaviour, not on gender." Ultimately, a leader is a person who leads a group. It is not accurate or appropriate to define leadership based on gender, as individuals of any gender can possess leadership qualities and be effective leaders. Leadership involves various skills and traits, such as communication, problem solving, decision making, and the ability to motivate and inspire others. As these skills and traits are not specific to any particular gender, they can be found in individuals of any gender. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize that individuals of any gender can be effective leaders and provide opportunities for them to develop and utilize their leadership skills.

1.3.1 Transformational Leadership

With the increase in the number of women in the labor market, research into women and leadership styles in organizations is also increasing; noteworthy, this challenges the old

leadership models, which were more masculine (Galsanjigmed & Sekiguchi, 2023). Simultaneously, a shift is occurring within organizations in the demand for types of leadership among managers. Some research has suggested that women tend to be slightly more “transformational” in their leadership style, while men may exhibit more “transactional” qualities. Thus, transformational leadership is generally seen as a more feminine leadership style (Eagly et al., 2003). It compasses certain leadership behaviors that make employees perform above expectations. Transformational leaders can inspire employees, as their individual needs are met and new ones are created to encourage approaches and effort to solve problems (Sims et al., 2021). However, these differences are small and not consistently supported by research. Organizations attach increasing value to developing relationships, empowering others, and resolving conflicts in a nonconfrontational manner (Galsanjigmed & Sekiguchi, 2023). These qualities are much more in line with traditionally feminine qualities, such as caring for others.

1.3.2 Authentic Leadership and Servant Leadership

Walumbwa et al. (2008) defined authentic leadership as a construct that comprises four aspects; thus, they provided a broader and more comprehensive definition compared with other slightly different views of authentic leadership. The first aspect of authentic leadership is *self-awareness*, which refers to the individual’s worldview and how their ideologies shape their views about their self. Second, *relational transparency* is the tendency to present one’s authentic self to others and thus to be original. Third, *balanced processing* is the propensity to make data-driven decisions, where a leader analyzes all relevant data before reaching a decision. Lastly, *internalized moral perspectives* refer to internal and integrated self-regulations (Shahzad et al., 2021).

The key to effective leadership is treating employees authentically, which promotes a humane enterprise and results in enduring success (Wang & Hsieh, 2013). One of the most essential components of natural leadership is that leaders should motivate and support their followers. Crucially, leaders should serve their employees (Spears, 2010), which leads to the concept of the servant leader. This concept is inspired by the notion that when leaders want respect, they should start by giving it. When something is not going well, it is essential to return to oneself, and the organization will follow. The goal of a leader is not to control

people but to inspire and to “serve,” which means that a leader is there when people need them, ensuring that freedom and resources are available.

1.3.3 Transactional Leadership

Another form of leadership is transactional leadership. Bono and Judge (2004) defined the transactional leader as someone who recognizes what employees want out of their work, attempts to ensure that employees get what they want if their performance is legitimized, offers rewards for appropriate effort, and responds to interested employees as long as they get the job done. Research has indicated that transformational leadership is generally considered more effective and satisfactory than transactional leadership, although every leader uses features of both styles (Bono & Judge, 2004; Nandal & Krishnan, 2000). Therefore, organizations that want to be effective must look for transformational leaders. Women should be able to benefit from this, as various studies have demonstrated that women are more transformational leaders than men (Eagly, 2005; Eagly & Carli, 2003).

Nevertheless, a leader is still often seen as someone with more masculine traits. As a result, female leaders often need to meet the expectations of others (Heilman & Haynes, 2005). This can negatively affect female executives’ sense of competence, whereas men can take advantage of it. This was also evident from the results of Schyns et al. (2008), who found a male advantage concerning the relationship between transformational leadership and competence (self-efficacy). This masculine advantage can arise because transformational leadership is seen as a female leadership style, and therefore, employees will expect women to display it.

It is much more unusual for men to exhibit a transformational leadership style; however, when they do, studies have found that it is experienced as unexpected and evaluated positively more quickly. As a result, it is likely that transformational male leaders will receive more positive responses to their leadership style than female leaders who lead in the same way (i.e., also transformational). When a female leader receives less positive reactions than a male leader for exhibiting transformational leadership, she will see no benefit in or from demonstrating said style. Thus, exhibiting a transformational leadership style is expected not to have a positive influence on a female leader’s sense of competence (self-

efficacy). By contrast, a transformational leadership style demonstrated by a male leader (who receives more positive reactions for this) would positively affect his sense of competence (self-efficacy).

1.4 Influence of Gender on Leadership: “Male” and “Female” Leadership Traits

The following section will explore the existing literature about the relationship of gender and leadership. The aim of this chapter is to dissect 'male' and 'female' leadership traits, examine how gender influences leadership.

In leadership research, gender and sex has been distinguished. Gender is perceived as a set of culturally constructed traits categorized as either male or female, while sex encompasses attributes that arise from biological characteristics (Dwiri & Okatan, 2021). There are multiple definitions of female leadership but most studies recognize that female leadership involves the process of leading and influencing others in organizations, communities, or society at large. Ward et al. (2010, p. 363) proposed a definition that includes characteristics such as “women being a leader, feeling a sense of superiority or dominance over other females, having others seek one’s guidance, feeling extroverted in social situations, believing in gender equality, and feeling driven”. Another slightly more comprehensive definition is that female leadership is the process of women leading and influencing others through the use of power, influence, and authority in the pursuit of common goals and objectives (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010).

However, leadership is often entangled with masculinity by patriarchal social structures (Williams & Dempsey, 2014). A good leader is usually referred to as one masculine man, and the expectation of a masculine man is that he is a good leader (Newstead et al., 2021). Therefore, when people think of a good leader, they do not initially think of a woman (Williams & Dempsey, 2014). In recent years, there has been a reduction in the traditional distinction between femininity and leadership. Ambitions and achievements in women’s careers are more similar to those of men (Townsend, 2009), and there are more women in high leadership roles. Much recent literature has emphasized the importance of interpersonal qualities within leadership, which are often attributed to women (Townsend, 2009). While women were ignored in research until recently, leadership is now widely used in research

conducted into the female role in leadership, which often distinguishes between female and male leadership (Appelbaum et al., 2003).

Male leadership is associated with characteristics such as dominance, authority, and assertiveness. If one combines different studies, one can conclude that “the male gender is categorized as aggressive, independent, objective, logical, rational, analytical, decisive, confident, assertive, ambitious, opportunistic, and impersonal” (Appelbaum et al., 2003; Dwiri & Okatan, 2021; Gibson, 1995). In summary, this is called agentic leadership, which alludes to persuasion and control (Appelbaum et al., 2003). By contrast, female leadership is associated with character traits such as being helpful, kind, sympathetic, and gentle, which are associated with communal qualities, alluding to compassion for others (Appelbaum et al., 2003; Dwiri & Okatan, 2021; Gibson, 1995). Thus, when male gender qualities are distinguished from female gender qualities, research presented that “male gender qualities are oriented toward a more impersonal, task-oriented and a transactional approach to leadership, while female gender qualities tend toward a more nurturing, relationship-oriented style of leadership, in line with the transformational leadership approach” (Hassan & Daud Silong, 2008, p. 363).

Wille et al. (2018) demonstrated that among male and female executives with similar jobs, education, and age, the women tended to be more transformational in their leadership style than men. Other evidence that gender has an effect on leadership was reported by Kouzes and Posner (1990, as cited in Abu-Tineh et al. 2009), who used their own version of the transformational leadership model. The authors concluded that female leaders were more likely to practice “modelling the way” and “encouraging the heart” than male leaders. Furthermore, a cross-cultural study by Gibson (1995) which encompassed Norway, Sweden, Australia, and the USA, it was discovered that male leaders tended to place a higher emphasis on goal-setting compared to their female counterparts. Notably, female leaders were more inclined to concentrate on fostering interaction than their male counterparts. One study argued that some notions of leadership – either implicitly or explicitly – link leadership to gender (Hassan & Daud Silong, 2008). Furthermore, various studies have demonstrated that differences exist in the leadership approaches of male and female leaders. A significant

portion of the discourse surrounding these distinctions revolves around the concepts known as ‘concern for production’ and ‘concern for people’

However, Jonsen et al. (2010) emphasized that no conclusive evidence exists to support the idea that men and women have inherently different leadership styles or abilities. According to their study, the relationship between gender and leadership is influenced by multiple factors, including stereotypes, expectations, actual gender differences, individual differences, and the cultural context.

Emancipation in modern Western society gave rise to discussions and curiosity about the influence of gender on leadership. A significant number of recent studies have concluded that leadership style is independent of gender. A meta-analysis found that both men and women can be influential leaders and that no significant differences exist in leadership effectiveness between the two genders. Another study found that men and women do not differ in their overall leadership styles but rather in how others perceive and treat them. Powell (1990) indicated that “male and female leaders exhibit similar amounts of task-oriented and people-oriented leadership behavior” (p.68). Furthermore, a review by Kolb (1999), as cited in Hassan & Daud Silong, (2008) of two decades of research concluded that there are minimal, if any, differences in the leadership behaviors exhibited by men and women. Therefore, it is crucial to note that stereotypes regarding “male” and “female” leadership traits are oversimplified and inaccurate generalizations about groups of people (Jonsen et al., 2010).

Additionally, it is not productive or fair to assign certain traits or characteristics to individuals based on their gender or any other identity. It is essential to recognize that individuals of any gender can exhibit these traits and that they are not inherently linked to one’s gender. In fact, research has demonstrated that effective leadership is not determined by one’s gender but rather by a variety of factors, including communication skills, emotional intelligence, and the ability to inspire and motivate others (Jonsen et al., 2010). Stereotypes about male and female leadership traits can be harmful and limiting, and it is crucial to evaluate individuals on their own merit rather than assigning characteristics based on their gender or any other identity. Jonsen et al. (2010) suggested that while some slight differences

may exist in leadership styles between men and women, these differences are not significant enough to support the notion of distinct gender-based leadership styles.

1.5 Importance of Promoting Gender Diversity

A growing body of research examines the relationship between gender diversity and organizational performance. Some studies have found that organizations with more gender-diverse leadership teams tend to perform better than those with less gender diversity. For example, Smith et al. (2006) found that gender diversity in top management was positively associated with firm performance, as measured by profitability and shareholder return.

Other research has also suggested that gender diversity can positively impact organizational performance. Research in this field has discovered a positive correlation between gender diversity in boardrooms and a company's performance, as gauged by metrics like return on assets and return on equity (Badal & Harter, 2014; Jiang et al., 2021). Ziman (2013) provided a multitude of rationales for why addressing gender inequality is advantageous for both employees and the company. Women in leadership positions contribute to elevated profitability and introduce novel and efficient leadership approaches, while the scarcity of women in higher management positions was deemed to negatively influence organizational and financial performance levels (Bonneywell & Gannon, 2022).

One must consider that the relationship between gender diversity and organizational performance is complex and may be influenced by a variety of factors, including the specific industry and context in which the organization operates. However, a study demonstrated that having a gender-diverse executive team boosts the probability of improved financial results by 25% (Hunt et al., 2018). Furthermore, a gender-diverse team was also found to reinforce the attraction and retention of talent. Another report by McKinsey & Company (2023) on Spain indicated that a “positive perception of equal opportunities in a company triples the possibility of retaining talent, while non-inclusive work environments can limit talent attraction by up to 39%” (p. 3). A focus on female leadership can help to create friendlier work environments that are more favorable to the professional and personal development of all employees.

Moreover, having more women in leadership positions has a positive influence on employees' beliefs about career advancement. Employees with women as primary managers are more likely to report receiving positive feedback and concrete recommendations in relation to their career advancement. They also are more likely to report having a senior mentor in the company; specifically, 49% of employees with a female manager have a mentor compared with 38% of those with a male manager (McKinsey & Company, 2023, p.17). Moreover, employees in companies with a higher share of women leaders feel they have a better chance to advance: 74% of people at companies with more women in higher management positions were confident that they would have access to equal opportunities for advancement, which is approximately 10 percentage points more than the overall company sample. When it comes to work–life balance, it appears that female managers are more flexible with their teams in relation to remote work: 49% of employees with female managers claimed to have much flexibility compared with 45% of employees with male managers.

Furthermore, female managers seemed to generally be more supportive of their employees' personal well-being and day-to-day workload. They scored higher on questions like “Did your manager consistently check in on your personal well-being in the past year?” and “Did your manager consistently work with you to make sure your workload is manageable?” (p. 20). McKinsey & Company (2022) concluded that, looking at the impact of diversity on financial performance, a strong correlation exists between the high presence of women leaders and stronger organizational results.

Individually, everyone comes to the table with a perspective formed by their experiences and interactions. Research indicates that hiring diverse teams is more beneficial than homogeneous groups in making better decisions because it enables one to view challenges from more angles and examine a problem from different perspectives. When there are other ideas, finding those differences and ways to incorporate them to achieve the best results is essential. Madgavkar et al. (2020) found that teams with gender diversity in higher management positions were 25% more likely to achieve financial returns that surpass those of companies in the lowest quartile. This would indicate that having a diverse leadership team benefits businesses in the short and long term. When women are represented at senior

levels within the financial sector, it gives them a unique opportunity to influence how organizations handle matters that are important to them, such as gender equality and sustainability.

Many studies have investigated the optimal strategies for creating a workplace culture where people can bring their authentic selves (Chatman & Cha, 2003; Schein, 2010). Yet, many organizations find it challenging to become inclusive organizations. Human nature and behavior have developed over millennia to keep us safe and in groups we are familiar with. When one starts to build something, one tends to build it with people in one's circle whom one is familiar with and comfortable around. Many of these mechanisms make it difficult to mix with others. Therefore, one of the most significant challenges is representation. Many organizations tend to lack diversity in terms of gender and ethnicity because their structures have grown organically. Even with good intentions, some of their processes end up perpetuating the status quo. It is important to recognize this and work toward creating a more inclusive culture. Kweilin Ellingrud et al. (2021) demonstrated that this involves creating a flexible and supportive culture. Furthermore, balanced decision making and diverse perspectives in leadership are associated with greater effectiveness and business growth (Dodd, 2012).

Chapter 2: Female Leadership and Gender Inequality

2.1 Gender Inequality in Higher Management Positions

Despite the increase in attention to the opportunity for entrepreneurship for every gender, the inequality of women in higher management positions is still a fact. In some countries, women continue to encounter a range of barriers when aspiring to attain a higher management position. Cahyati et al. (2021) asserted that “the obstacles and opportunities women face in reaching top leadership positions vary by country; each country has its own rules, norms, customs, culture, and perceptions.” (p.7). Notably, such research has yet to be conducted in Portugal. Leadership in combination with Portuguese women is almost entirely absent from the literature.

Therefore, the current study aimed to identify barriers and opportunities for Portuguese women in higher management functions. The percentages regarding the representation of women in higher management positions globally and in various regions and countries were obtained from the International Labour Organization (ILO). The ILO is a United Nations agency that works to advance and promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity and security. The ILO regularly publishes data and statistics on various aspects of the labor market, including the representation of women in leadership positions. Notably, the representation of women in higher management positions varies significantly around the world, and in 2020, the proportion was 35.6% (ILO, 2020). However, this proportion varies significantly between regions and countries. In some regions, such as North America and Western Europe, the representation of women in higher management positions is relatively high at 43.1% and 41.7%, respectively. By contrast, in other regions such as the Middle East and North Africa, the representation of women in higher management positions is much lower at just 14.9%.

There are also significant differences within regions and countries; for example, within the European Union (EU), the proportion of women in top management positions ranges from 18.9% in Bulgaria to 49.8% in Sweden. Thus, while progress has been made in increasing the representation of women in higher management positions globally, there is still a significant gender gap in leadership roles, with men being more likely to hold these positions

than women. This is especially true in specific regions and countries where the representation of women in higher management positions is much lower.

In addition, an ongoing debate persists concerning discrimination and gender inequality. Yet, there remains a lack of research on the obstacles that women face in attaining leadership positions (Cahyati et al., 2021). As previously stated, according to Grove and Montgomery (1999), effective leadership is based on behavior, not on gender. Nevertheless, gender continues to pose a barrier for women aspiring to attain leadership roles. Cahyati et al. (2021) argued that “one of the fundamental reasons for few women being found in leadership positions is gender inequality. While effective leadership is based on behavior, gender remains an obstacle for women ascending to leadership positions” (p.2).

As long as society continues to associate leadership with masculine traits, female leaders will be judged more harshly, even when they are just as competent as their male counterparts. An experiment that contributes to this argument is the Heidi versus Howard dilemma (Kong, 2022). Half of the participants in the experiment were given a case study featuring Heidi Roizen, a Silicon Valley entrepreneur and venture capitalist. The other half received an identical case study, except for a single difference namely that Heidi’s name got replaced to Howard. People’s responses to the case study changed significantly based on the individual’s gender. The study uncovered a negative relationship between power and success for women, whereas a positive correlation between power and success was observed among men. The recruitment process has far-reaching implications for diversity when these types of inherent biases exist. When people hire in their own image, whether intentionally or unintentionally, the implications grow even greater, with a potential impact on hiring women as well as ethnic minorities, sexual orientations, people of color, people of nontraditional backgrounds, and individuals with disabilities.

2.2 Differences in the Prioritization of Values

People value recognition, compensation, and opportunities for advancement when deciding whether to join or stay within an organization (McKinsey & Company, 2023). However, both genders prioritize these values differently. A McKinsey & Company (2023) survey with almost 6000 respondents illustrates that men place significantly greater emphasis on

compensation than women, while women prioritize recognition much more than compensation. These different priorities that mark men and women's expectations in terms of professional options and work environments are vital to account for in the development of human resource policies. One of the main findings in the McKinsey & Company (2023) report was that "56% of women stated that being recognized and rewarded for their work is the most relevant factor when deciding to join or stay with an organization" (p. 22).

The same survey also found that women care more about a "flexible schedule (40% versus 36%)" and the "option to work remotely (35% versus 24%)" than men when deciding whether to join a company. Women, especially young women, stated that the two factors that drive their motivation the most are having the flexibility to set their own working hours and seeing senior leaders with a healthy work-life balance. They stated that these factors would "make them more interested in advancing to more senior levels" (p. 23). Therefore, companies with more women in leadership positions (>40% or more women in all levels up to CEO-1) focus on professional development, flexibility, and workload management. McKinsey & Company (2023) demonstrated that companies in the top quartile in terms of women in leadership positions offer an environment that facilitates a balance between their personal and professional lives. Women are still the primary caregivers in most households, which makes it challenging to balance their work and family responsibilities. Women may be less likely to take on leadership roles that require long hours or extensive travel due to their family responsibilities (Woodbridge et al., 2021).

Given that women take on more responsibility for doing unpaid work and taking care of minors/dependents, they demand an improved work-life balance. To maintain equal opportunities for promotion for men and women, it helps to keep women connected to the workplace, especially after they have children. Moreover, 80% of the surveyed women valued support in childcare more than professional preparation for management roles. Notably, the top quartile of companies offered on-site childcare. In addition, these companies focused more on equal opportunities for professional development, which institutes a culture of equality through training and creates clear promotion pathways for women. The gender inequality in top leadership positions in Portugal can be attributed to various factors, including the unequal distribution of unpaid work and caregiving responsibilities between

men and women. These are elements to be discussed in training programs, which the next section will elaborate on.

2.2 Obstacles to Female Leadership

This section will provide an in-depth exploration of the obstacles women encounter in attaining higher management positions drawn from the existing literature. This section identifies and dissects the obstacles that hinder women's progress in leadership roles, including issues such as glass ceilings, gender stereotypes, recruitment biases, organizational structures, traditional gender roles, and the importance of professional support and mentors.

2.2.1 Glass ceilings and sticky floors

Grangeiro et al. (2021) discussed a few crucial metaphorical concepts that must be discussed regarding female obstacles – namely the sticky floor and the glass ceiling. They essentially mean that once one reaches a certain position in the organizational chart, one's opportunities are limited by whom one can interact with within the organization. It is difficult to break a glass ceiling or glass floor down because a natural hierarchy exists in the workplace that actually acts as a barrier to getting things done. The glass ceiling is often used to describe the invisible barriers that prevent women and other underrepresented groups from advancing to leadership positions. These barriers can be caused by a variety of factors, including gender bias and discrimination, a lack of access to resources and support, gendered expectations and stereotypes, and work–life balance challenges (Jonsen et al., 2010).

Bond and Haynes (2014) coined the term “sticky floor” to refer to a disproportionately high representation of women among the low performers within a company. It is a term that helps to explain why women get promoted to a certain level of management but are unable to get the lead roles. In the business world, not all women are equal; there are massive gender gaps, and one has the potential to progress through the ranks in the company based on numerous factors. A woman may not get promoted or may get stuck at a certain level.

A debate is ongoing regarding the existence and impact of the glass ceiling, with some scholars arguing that it is a significant barrier to the advancement of women and other underrepresented groups, while others argue that it is a less significant factor or that it does

not exist at all. This project mostly discusses the glass ceiling as a significant barrier that can limit the career opportunities and advancement of women and other underrepresented groups, even if they are qualified and capable of taking on leadership roles. These invisible barriers can be difficult to identify and address, and they can perpetuate inequality and disadvantage for these groups. However, an opposing view argues that the glass ceiling is less significant or that it does not exist at all. Its proponents may argue that individual factors, such as education and experience, are more crucial in determining career success and that any barriers that do exist are not caused by discrimination or bias but rather by individual choices and circumstances. This is problematic because it results in resistance to change.

In a nutshell, the debate about the glass ceiling reflects the complex and multifaceted nature of the issues surrounding diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is a complex issue that is influenced by various factors. To address it and promote more gender-balanced leadership, it is vital to address these and other contributing factors through initiatives such as diversity and inclusion programs, leadership development opportunities, and policies and practices that support the advancement of women in the workplace. By promoting greater gender diversity in leadership, organizations can benefit from a broader range of perspectives and insights and more accurately reflect the diverse communities they serve (Jonsen et al., 2010).

The gender gap in higher management positions has been a persistent issue in organizations worldwide. Despite the efforts made by many organizations to close the gap, women are still underrepresented in higher management positions, with men occupying a more significant proportion of leadership roles. Many factors contribute to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. A vast body of research analyses the obstacles and opportunities that women have experienced in achieving higher management positions. Cahyati et al. (2021) found that “the most dominant obstacles were familial responsibilities, a patriarchal culture, and a lack of support” (p.7). Moreover, an integrative and holistic review by van ‘t Foort-Diepeveen et al. (2021) explained the underrepresentation of women at the corporate top and explained why this is the case. They presented various studies concerning how and why women in higher management positions are still a minority compared with men. van ‘t Foort-Diepeveen et al. (2021, p. 2) found the following barriers: gender stereotypes, bias in

recruitment and promotion, masculine organizational culture, work–family issues, and a lack of professional support.

2.2.2 Gender stereotypes

One of the most significant obstacles faced by women in attaining higher management positions is gender stereotypes and bias (Jonsen et al., 2010, p. 552). Gender stereotypes are beliefs and expectations about what men and women should do, think, and act based on their gender (Ellemers, 2017). Women are often stereotyped as communal, nurturing, and emotional, while men are stereotyped as agentic, dominant, and rational (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021a). These stereotypes can influence the perceptions of women’s leadership capabilities, and women may be viewed as less competent for or suited to leadership roles (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). Additionally, women may face bias from male colleagues and superiors, who may favor male colleagues for leadership roles due to their shared gender and similarities (Ellemers, 2017). These perceptions may erode over time but still contribute to prejudice and discrimination against women in leadership (Dodd, 2012). The media also plays a role in shaping perceptions of women’s leadership abilities. Exposure to media images of women in counter-stereotypical roles was found to reduce negative self-perceptions and increase leadership aspirations among women (Simon & Hoyt, 2013). However, despite the potential advantages of women’s leadership styles and effectiveness, they remain underrepresented in powerful leadership positions (Simon & Hoyt, 2013). Increasing women’s representation in leadership positions is important for achieving gender equality and improving organizational performance.

Women may face societal expectations and stereotypes that can limit their career aspirations and opportunities. Jonsen et al. (2010) stated that stereotypes play a role in shaping beliefs about gender and leadership. A common belief exists that men and women have inherently different ways of leading, but empirical evidence does not support this notion. Moreover, the authors explored how cultural factors influence perceptions of gender and leadership. Different cultures may have different expectations and stereotypes about gender roles, which can impact how leadership is perceived (Jonsen et al., 2010). For example, they may be expected to prioritize caregiving responsibilities over their careers or be perceived as less suitable for leadership roles because of gender-based stereotypes. Moreover, women may

experience stereotype threat, which refers to the fear of confirming negative stereotypes about their group. This can lead to self-doubt and reduced performance, which can limit their opportunities for advancement.

2.2.3 Bias in recruitment and promotion

Women may face barriers and discrimination in the workplace that make it more difficult for them to advance to leadership roles. These can include explicit bias and discrimination, as well as more subtle forms of bias that may be unconscious or unintentional. The ILO (2017) reported another issue called unconscious bias. Unconscious bias is the tendency for people to make judgments and decisions based not on facts but rather on their opinions and stereotypes (Madsen & Andrade, 2018). This tendency prevents people from seeing things objectively and from being able to hear and understand the views of others. Another barrier is implicit bias, which stems from people making judgments about others based on their race, gender, or other characteristics that are not related to their job performance. As an ongoing result, women may have fewer female role models and mentors in leadership positions, which can make it more difficult for them to envision themselves in these roles. It may also lead to a lack of confidence in their ability to succeed as leaders. Furthermore, women being less visible in leadership roles can make it more difficult for them to gain recognition and opportunities for advancement.

2.2.4 Organizational structure

Exley and Kessler (2019) demonstrated that in a context where women are expected to perform without complaining, there is often no real opportunity to negotiate terms such as flexibility or family-friendly schedules. They noted that “this double-bind is particularly problematic for women with children.” Thus, the real barrier here is the fact that these women are already in an incredibly difficult situation to begin with, and the added stress created by the ways in which they are expected to operate in the workplace can severely impact their mental health. Furthermore, “women in financial services are more likely to want flexibility in their work arrangements but less likely to feel comfortable asking for it: when they do ask for flexibility, they are often reprimanded for it because they should want to please their superiors” (Kweilin Ellingrud et al., 2021, p). Women will often limit themselves because they have their network and their social standing in their communities, and then they also have their careers. Internal communications can shape the narrative by

being the people's voice and challenging organizational thinking about how things are done (Qin & Men, 2022).

The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in companies can be attributed to various factors, including the organizational structure. Research suggests that the organizational structure and culture contribute to the gender disparity in leadership positions (Seo & Han, 2017). The gendered social status belief system embedded in the organizational structure and culture portrays women as less suitable for senior leadership positions than their male counterparts (Seo & Han, 2017). This belief system is often influenced by cultural stereotypes and status beliefs that artificially promote men's status and competencies in organizations (Seo & Han, 2017). The organizational structure can create barriers to women reaching leadership positions. For example, a relatively low number of women in an organization can affect women's chances of being appointed to managerial positions (Mushi et al., 2021). In conclusion, the organizational structure in companies can affect the representation of women in leadership positions.

2.2.5 Traditional gender roles

Mathur-Helm (2005) highlighted the barriers to women's advancement in corporate positions, including the glass ceiling effect and barriers related to family responsibilities. Women may face more challenges in achieving a work-life balance, particularly if they have caregiving responsibilities that are not supported by adequate policies and practices. Moreover, Ziman (2013) argued that many women are not entering the workforce because of the traditional gender roles, where it is more common for the mother to stay home and take care of the family while the father is at work. Women also do the majority of the chores and care of the household. Therefore, some women realize that they simply cannot juggle a career and a family (Ziman, 2013).

Another factor that directly affects women's advancement within their organization is the type of work assigned to them. A study by Bloksgaard et al. (2020) examined differences in the types of tasks allocated to men and women found that women have a significantly higher likelihood of being assigned domestic office tasks (e.g., note-taking during meetings or organizing company events). Conversely, men are more likely to be assigned glamorous

tasks (e.g., developing a project for a key client or forming a new team) (Bloksgaard et al., 2020). The latter is more visibly impactful and contributes more actively to progression. The authors argued that this work allocation difference cannot be solely attributed to women's preferences, as women also express dissatisfaction regarding the amount of glamorous work they are assigned.

2.2.6 Lack of professional support and mentors

Women may have less access to the resources and support they require to develop their leadership skills and pursue leadership opportunities. These can include access to education, networking opportunities, and professional development resources. Awareness is growing that gender representation makes a difference in how decisions are reached and how new ideas are explored; therefore, companies have realized that they must consciously hire women. Studies have indicated that some barriers that keep people out are structural. Some of the most significant factors that inhibit women are hierarchical relationships in the organization and a culture of permission-giving, which makes people afraid to take risks or make mistakes.

2.3 Conclusion

The interrelatedness of various obstacles to female leadership, as discussed by van 't Foort-Diepeveen et al. (2021), emphasizes the need for comprehensive measures to address bias and improve women's representation in leadership positions. While women in Portugal have made significant strides in various sectors, a persistent gender gap prevails in leadership roles which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Gender Inequality in Portugal – Relevance of the Topic

This chapter examines the state of gender inequality in Portugal, particularly focusing on the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. Despite efforts by the government and various organizations to promote gender equality and support women's leadership development, challenges persist. The chapter sheds light on these challenges, initiatives aimed at addressing them, and the broader implications of gender inequality in Portuguese society. Additionally, it explores earlier successful initiatives in Portugal that have contributed to the advancement of female leadership, offering valuable insights for shaping future strategies.

3.1 State of the Art

In recent years in Portugal, women have made significant progress in their representation in higher management positions. However, a significant gender gap remains in leadership roles, with men being more likely to hold these positions than women. According to a report published by the European Commission (2020), the proportion of women in top management positions in Portugal was 35.6%, which is slightly above the EU average of 35.3%. However, this proportion was still lower than the target of 40% set by the EU for 2020.

Various initiatives and programs have been aimed at promoting gender equality and increasing the representation of women in leadership roles in Portugal. For example, the Portuguese government has implemented a number of measures to promote gender equality in the workplace, including legislation that requires companies to report on the gender balance of their boards and to adopt measures to promote gender equality. The implementation of gender quotas for corporate boards, as required by law since 2018, has led to the increased representation of women in some companies. In addition, several organizations and initiatives in Portugal are focused on promoting women's leadership and advancing gender equality in the workplace. These include professional associations, networking groups, and training programs designed to support women's development and advancement in leadership roles. Additionally, although women are still underrepresented in leadership positions in the financial service sector compared with men, evidence suggests that gender inequality may be shrinking.

According to Catalyst (2022), in the United States, as indicated by the 2022 Fortune 500 list, women account for only 8.8% of CEOs, which is equivalent to 44 female CEOs out of the total 500 companies. Thus, men overwhelmingly dominate CEO positions, with 91.2% of CEOs being men. While the percentage of women in CEO positions in Fortune 500 companies has been slowly increasing, progress has been relatively slow. Some key points from the search results are presented in the following paragraph.

As of 2009, women were CEOs at 9.4% of Fortune 500 companies; in 2022, the percentage was 8.8%; in January 2023, the percentage of women CEOs reached a milestone, with more than 10% of Fortune 500 companies being led by women; and by June 2023, the percentage had further increased to 10.4%. Despite the slow progress, the fact that more than 10% of Fortune 500 companies are now led by women is a positive sign that gender diversity in leadership positions is slowly improving. Therefore, it is crucial to continue advocating for gender equality and promote opportunities for women to reach leadership positions in the corporate world.

No specific information exists on the percentage of women in leadership positions in the financial sector in Portugal. However, a report titled “Portugal: Women are Still Far from Top Corporate Leadership Positions” by Mckinsey & Company (2023) revealed that women are still far from top corporate-leadership positions in Portugal, and the number of women in top positions lags behind the European average. The report highlights that while women account for half of the labor force in Portugal, the percentage of women in top positions is still low. It suggests that companies need to take action to promote gender diversity in leadership positions and create a more inclusive culture. Furthermore, the report indicates that companies with a higher share of female leaders scored consistently higher in employee happiness, feelings of fairness and inclusion, and the perception of support (Mckinsey & Company, 2023). This report is crucial to shaping the state of the art because it is the most recent data available about Portugal, and sample sizes are significant. While the report includes insights from 45 Portuguese and Spanish companies, it solely offers McKinsey’s perspective on Portugal; 79% of men and women working at companies with greater female leadership were happy with their organization, compared with 65% for companies across the board. Thus, employees from companies with a high share of women leaders are more

satisfied with their jobs and company, and they believe that they have better opportunities for advancement.

In Portugal, the situation for women in leadership is complex. On the one hand, the country has made significant progress in promoting gender equality in recent years. Women now comprise a significant proportion of the workforce and hold a range of high-level positions in both the public and private sectors (European Commission, 2021). However, women are still underrepresented in top leadership positions, with men continuing to dominate in areas such as politics and business (European Commission, 2021). Moreover, women in leadership positions face significant challenges, including gender-based discrimination and a lack of support and mentorship from their male colleagues. Thus, while progress has been made in promoting gender diversity in leadership, much work remains to be done to ensure that women have equal opportunities to enter and advance in leadership positions. This will require ongoing efforts to challenge gender stereotypes and biases, promote cultural and institutional change, and provide women with the support and resources they need to succeed (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

One area in which research on female leadership in Portugal has been conducted is women in positions of power (Nogueira, 2009). Nogueira (2009) suggested that the contradictory positions and discourses of women in positions of power in Portugal have both theoretical and political implications. At a theoretical level, these discourses affect the construction and adaptation of women's own identities as well as the construction of their identities as role models presented by the media and in society. At a political level, the study raised questions about whether these women advocate for change in gender-social relationships, whether their self-identification constitutes resistance to norms about the role of women in power positions, and whether their presentations enable or encourage others to see them as role models. The author also emphasized the importance of women publicly acknowledging their experiences with discrimination and sexism to advocate for an increase in the number of women in power and work toward the eradication of sexism and social change.

3.2 Earlier Successful Initiatives in Portugal

Studying successful efforts to promote female leadership provided useful insights into what strategies have worked before and why. By looking closely at these achievements, I was able to better understand how challenges have been tackled and progress made in boosting female leadership in Portugal. This analysis also helped me to determine what is missing in current efforts so that I could develop better ideas to fill those gaps. Additionally, looking back at past initiatives assisted me in building a solid foundation for my own research and to determine what questions I should be asking. Through examining these success stories, a smarter and more well-rounded approach to improving female leadership can be developed. As a researcher writing a project on female leadership, it is important for me to use real examples of initiatives that demonstrate why training programs are required to empower women. The following five subsections present five such initiatives.

3.2.1 Women Leading Change (University of Cambridge)

Women Leading Change: Shaping Our Future is an online short course offered by the University of Cambridge's Institute for Sustainability Leadership. Women Leading Change is an 8-week course designed to provide women with the skills and knowledge required to become effective leaders in various fields (University of Cambridge, 2023). The program is based on the premise that women face unique challenges when it comes to leadership, including biases, stereotypes, and structural barriers. By offering training and support, this course aims to equip women with the tools and confidence required to overcome these obstacles and make meaningful contributions in leadership positions.

The Women Leading Change course is led by a team of experienced instructors and facilitators who are experts in their respective fields. Participants have the opportunity to engage in discussions with peers from around the world and receive feedback from their instructors on their progress. The course is a valuable initiative that underscores the importance of training programs aimed at empowering women in leadership roles. By equipping women with the skills and knowledge necessary to overcome the barriers they face in leadership, this program has the potential to create positive change in organizations and communities worldwide. Table 1 presents the six modules of the Women Leading Change course:

Table 1*Modules of the Women Leading Change Course at Cambridge*

Module	Contents	Hours
Module 1: Shaping the future we want	Understand the world in which we operate, the systemic challenges we face, and the important role that women can play in leading change	7–10 hours per week, self-paced learning online
Module 2: Being an agent of change	Familiarize yourself with the evolving theories of leadership and identify potential levers of change	7–10 hours per week, self-paced learning online
Module 3: Building confidence and catalyzing impact	Explore methods to increase your confidence and personal impact	7–10 hours per week, self-paced learning online
Module 4: Leading flourishing and effective teams	Learn how to create a psychologically safe workplace, build strong relationships, and nurture a team for long-term effectiveness	7–10 hours per week, self-paced learning online
Module 5: Cultivating purpose-led organizations	Understand the importance of leading with purpose to drive transformational change	7–10 hours per week, self-paced learning online

Module 6: Collaborating for positive impact	Explore how to proactively engage with stakeholders to overcome barriers and maximize collaboration	7–10 hours per week, self-paced learning online
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Note: From University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership Women Leading Change: Shaping Our Future, 2023 (<https://shorturl.at/hklrv>) Copyright ©2023 GetSmarter. All rights reserved.

The course is divided into six modules, each of which covers a specific aspect of leadership (University of Cambridge, 2023). Through a combination of online lectures, interactive exercises, and real-world case studies, participants develop a comprehensive understanding of leadership and acquire practical skills that they will be able to apply in their professional lives.

3.2.2 Projeto Promova

Projeto Promova is an initiative that was launched in Portugal to promote female leadership (CIP, 2023). It provides training, mentorship, and networking opportunities for women executives. It is a Portuguese government initiative aimed at promoting the development and growth of Portuguese companies, particularly those led by women. The project seeks to enhance the competitiveness and innovation of these businesses by providing support in areas such as access to financing, training and mentoring, networking opportunities, and internationalization. Women have historically faced barriers in accessing the funding and resources necessary for entrepreneurship, which has hindered their ability to start and grow businesses. Projeto Promova seeks to address these inequalities and promote gender equality in the business sector (CIP, 2023).

Furthermore, the project’s emphasis on training and mentoring provides a unique opportunity to develop leadership skills among women entrepreneurs, which can help to address the gender gap in leadership positions. Research has demonstrated that women tend to possess different leadership styles compared with men, which can lead to better

organizational outcomes when implemented effectively. By providing support in these areas, Projeto Promova can contribute to the development of a more diverse and inclusive business ecosystem in Portugal. As a researcher focusing on female leadership, I recognize the project's potential to address gender inequalities in entrepreneurship and to contribute to the development of a more diverse and inclusive business environment in Portugal.

If the project is successful, it may attract a significant number of women entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds, industries, and levels of experience. It may also increase collaboration and partnerships among participants and improve access to various resources, such as funding, mentoring, and training. Another measure of the success of this project could be the extent to which it has contributed to women's empowerment in business (CIP, 2023).

I reached out to Projeto Promova to obtain answers to questions I had to measure success, such as "Did Projeto Promova increase recognition of women's contributions to the business community?", "What were the number and diversity of participants involved in the initiative?" and "Did it increase the recognition of women's contributions to the business community?". Even though they did not get back to me, their initiative is inspiring.

3.2.3 Women in Business

The Women in Business project is an initiative that was launched by the British–Portuguese Chamber of Commerce in 2016. It is designed to foster connections among female business leaders in Portugal and link them with other countries' leaders. The initiative seeks to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences among women entrepreneurs and to provide a networking and collaboration platform. The project encompasses various activities and events that are tailored to the needs and interests of women in business, including seminars, workshops, and roundtable discussions. Through these activities, the project aims to provide a supportive environment for women in business to share their expertise and insights, learn from each other, and establish valuable connections.

Moreover, the Women in Business project seeks to promote gender equality and empower women to achieve their full potential in the business world. The initiative recognizes women's significant contributions to the economy and society and seeks to support their

efforts to succeed in the face of systemic barriers and gender-based discrimination. Women in Business is an important initiative that aims to empower women in business and promote their leadership and entrepreneurial skills. The project seeks to contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society by fostering connections and providing a supportive environment for women entrepreneurs. However, without access to comprehensive data and information, it is difficult to determine the level of success of the Women in Business project.

3.2.4 Women on Boards

Women on Boards is a platform that was launched in 2016 with the objective of connecting female entrepreneurs in Portugal with investors and other resources. The initiative aims to address the gender gap in entrepreneurship by facilitating access to funding and support for women-led businesses. The Women on Boards platform offers a range of resources and services to female entrepreneurs, including access to a network of investors, mentoring, and training opportunities. It seeks to provide women entrepreneurs with the skills and resources they need to succeed in a competitive business environment.

The initiative is based on the recognition that women-led businesses often face systemic barriers to accessing capital and resources and that this can impede their growth and development. Monteiro et al. (2022) explored the factors that influence the presence of women on boards of companies. Their study analyzed multiple factors and how they interact to affect women's representation on the boards of 42 Portuguese companies. They found that the presence of women on boards was positively associated with firm size, internationalization, and the presence of women in top management positions. Moreover, the study highlighted the importance of women on boards in increasing awareness about the UN 2030 Agenda.

Overall, Women on Boards seeks to address these issues by connecting female entrepreneurs with a network of investors and other resources, thereby enhancing their visibility and access to funding. Moreover, it aims to promote gender diversity and inclusion in business by encouraging more women to take on leadership roles and participate in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. By providing a platform for female entrepreneurs to connect with investors and

other resources, the initiative seeks to increase the representation of women in leadership positions and promote the value of diversity in the business community.

3.2.5 Grande Conferência Liderança Feminina

A notable event that has been held in Portugal each October for the past 10 years is the “Grande Conferência Liderança Feminina”, which brings together creative, innovative, and influential leaders. At the heart of this conference is a unique opportunity to draw inspiration from leaders who epitomize creativity, innovation, and influence. By engaging with these accomplished individuals, attendees are offered a chance to expand their horizons, broaden their perspectives, and embrace novel ideas that can catalyze their own professional growth.

Moreover, the conference provides a platform to amplify the voices of women who confront and conquer challenges on a daily basis to excel in their professional endeavors. Their stories serve as a testament to determination, resilience, and the power of pushing boundaries. By listening to these stories, attendees are encouraged to recognize their own potential to overcome obstacles and thrive in their careers. In the context of the conference, real stories that impart invaluable life lessons and actionable advice take center stage. These narratives resonate with participants on a personal level, offering insights that have the potential to make a profound difference in their lives. Such stories and tips become guiding lights, illuminating pathways to success and fulfillment.

The conference also provides a platform for attendees to delve into what truly matters when advancing in their careers. By engaging in discussions and exchanges with accomplished leaders, participants can refine their understanding of their own career trajectories. This newfound clarity empowers them to make informed decisions and take purposeful steps toward professional advancement. In the midst of career aspirations, the conference reminds attendees of the significance of their well-being and the delicate balance between their professional and personal lives. Through insightful sessions, participants are encouraged to prioritize self-care, mental health, and the importance of achieving equilibrium between their ambitions and personal fulfillment.

Attendees depart the conference with fortified confidence and rekindled motivation to pursue their professional objectives. The insights gained, stories heard, and connections established collectively reinforce their determination to reach new heights. With a renewed sense of purpose, they are better equipped to surmount challenges and propel themselves toward their goals. The executive conference in Portugal offers a multifaceted experience that encompasses inspiration, empowerment, insights, and personal growth. By participating in this enriching event, attendees stand to gain knowledge, perspective, and motivation that can reshape their professional trajectories.

In conclusion, what we can learn from previous sections is that there is a variety of different initiatives that address the gap in gender in higher management positions.

3.3 An Action Plan

The literature discussed in chapter 3 reveals that the underrepresentation of women in higher management positions has several implications for organizations. It can lead to a lack of diversity in leadership, which can limit an organization's ability to adapt to changing environments and perspectives. Additionally, it can create a perception of inequity among employees, leading to lower morale and decreased job satisfaction. Organizations can implement several strategies to overcome the obstacles faced by women in attaining higher management positions. First, they can create awareness and training programs to address gender stereotypes and bias among employees, helping to reduce the impact of gender stereotypes on the perception of women's leadership capabilities.

Second, organizations can implement policies and programs that support work-life balance, such as flexible work arrangements, parental leave, and on-site childcare facilities. This can help women to balance their work and family responsibilities as well as reduce the likelihood of them leaving their jobs due to competing demands. Research found that the availability of family-friendly policies positively affects women's job satisfaction and commitment to their organization (Chung & van der Horst, 2017).

Third, organizations should ensure that recruitment and promotion processes are fair and transparent and that there are no gender biases in the selection criteria or decision-making

processes. This can be achieved through the training and education of hiring managers and decision-makers on unconscious bias as well as diversity and inclusion. Research found that diverse and inclusive teams are more innovative and perform better (Herring, 2009).

Finally, it is vital for organizations to have female role models in leadership positions to provide inspiration and guidance to aspiring female leaders. This can be achieved through mentoring and sponsorship programs, where senior female leaders can provide guidance, support, and advocacy to younger women in the organization. Research found that mentorship programs can positively affect women's career advancement and job satisfaction (Burke & McKeen, 1997). Women face several obstacles in attaining higher management positions, including gender stereotypes and biases, a lack of access to networks and opportunities, work-life balance challenges, and recruitment and promotion biases. Organizations can address these obstacles by implementing policies and programs that support work-life balance, promoting diversity and inclusion, and providing mentorship and sponsorship opportunities for female employees. By addressing these obstacles, organizations can create a more equitable and inclusive workplace that allows women to reach their full potential in leadership positions.

As we have explored the significant barriers women face in reaching leadership positions, the methods chapter will unveil the proactive approach of EquiLead: A comprehensive training program designed to equip women with the skills, knowledge, and support needed to overcome these obstacles and thrive in leadership roles.

Chapter 4: Method

This chapter describes the method and design of the needs assessment that has been carried out for determining the specific challenges and barriers that women face in accessing higher management positions, which is the core of my research. It also offers insights into the key considerations for designing a successful training program

4.1 Research Question and Objectives

To establish the relevance of the training program that will be set up, it was crucial to determine the specific challenges and barriers that women face in accessing top management positions in Portugal. Jonsen et al. (2010) emphasized the importance of considering the cultural context in shaping beliefs about gender and leadership. Cultural norms and values can influence perceptions of leadership and contribute to gender stereotypes. Therefore, understanding the role of culture is crucial for managing diversity effectively. Hence, for this research, 2 female leaders in Portugal were interviewed, and their perceptions were gathered regarding:

1. characteristics generally seen more in women than men;
2. barriers that female leaders face;
3. how they overcame those barriers;
4. the importance of formal education, legislation, empowering movements, mentors, and role models for female leaders.

Table 2 presents an overview of the research participants who have been interviewed.

Table 1

Participants of the interviews

Participant No.	Name	Job Position	Day, Time, and Place	Duration
1.	Ana-Claudia Ruiz	General Manager Coca-Cola Portugal	Oral interview, May 5, 2023	50 min
2.	Isabel Canha	Founder and CEO of Conferencia Executiva	Oral interview, August 30, 2023	60 min

I have reached out to many female leaders in Portugal, but often I did not get a response. Therefore, instead of interviews, I decided to create a Google Form, with all the questions I was planning on asking in the face-to-face interviews, so that people with less time, could at least give me some information on their experiences. The respondents from the Google Form all wanted to be anonymized. Table 3 provides an overview of the respondents:

Table 2

Overview of the respondents

Participant No.	Occupation and Job Position	Day, Time, and Place
1.	Founder at a law firm	Google Docs, August 26, 2023
2.	Program developer	Google Docs, August 30, 2023
3.	CFO program & information systems director	Google Docs, September 1, 2023
4.	CFO	Google Docs, August 25, 2023
5.	Marketing director	Google Docs, August 25, 2023
6.	Manager	Google Docs, August 25, 2023
7.	Real Estate developer	Google Docs, August 25, 2023
8.	Senior Adviser	Google Docs, August 25, 2023

With the data acquired through the interviews, a training/mentorship program will be set up that also provides advice for women aspiring to leadership positions. The research question for this first part of the study was as follows:

What obstacles do women face in achieving higher management positions?

I sought to qualitatively obtain more information about the experiences of women when it comes to leadership. Qualitative research was an appropriate methodology for gathering more context on the topic at hand, given that it focuses on the ‘understanding’ of situations as well as insights into the experiences and perspectives of respondents regarding those situations (Busetto et al., 2020). The basis of this research was empirical, with my observations as a researcher playing a significant role in the adoption of an interpretive research approach. The research shone a light on what meaning and interpretation the

respondents attributed to certain behaviors and events, which assumes that reality is socially constructed. Thus, rather than focusing on facts, this research attempted to incorporate subjective, meaningful experiences and the meaning of social actions in the context in which people behave (Mohajan & Mohajan, 2018).

4.2 Research Method and Procedure

Data were collected using semi structured in-depth interviews (Longhurst, 2009). These are one-on-one conversations between the interviewer and interviewee, in which a specific topic is discussed in depth. This was an appropriate method for this research as it provided access to the personal, individual experiences of my respondents, who were women in higher management positions. I sought their voice and personal experiences to obtain meaningful information about e.g. the leaky pipeline and glass ceiling concepts. The goal was to learn more about what needs should be incorporated into the training as well as to identify whether and which obstacles occur when women want to achieve higher management positions.

To ensure that the respondents' answers were as rich and meaningful as possible, they were asked open-ended questions. In addition, they could have as much input as possible through being allowed to ask questions and speak on multiple topics. Moreover, at the end of the interviews, all respondents were asked whether they felt they had missed any essential topics to form as complete a picture of their situation as possible.

Semi structured in-depth interviews have two major advantages: First, they provide the opportunity to examine the problem from the perspective of the respondents, thus obtaining insights into the meaning and interpretation that respondents themselves attribute to their experiences (Busetto et al., 2020). Second, semi structured interviews may uncover unexpected answers, which might not have been obtained by merely examining existing literature or surveys (Busetto et al., 2020). Thus, the respondents can lead the interviews themselves and focus on what they consider essential.

Despite the advantages of semi structured in-depth interviews, limitations are also associated with them. These limitations were considered in the present study. First, a one-to-one interview provides no opportunity for feedback from others (Longhurst, 2009). The research

method thus does not provide insight into others' perceptions of how women leaders deal with stereotyping. In addition, Busetto et al. (2020) explained that it is important to maintain awareness that responses in the interview context are constructed, which implies that respondents might adapt their answers to the situation (e.g., research on gender inequality in leadership positions). Thus, the interpretive nature of the research must acknowledge the subjectivity of the respondents and the researcher (Longhurst, 2009). I had to have a critical eye on the data collected and remain aware how my own background and assumptions might affect the research process and influence the obtained data. In addition, the interview setting and interpersonal dynamics of the researcher and respondent could influence the knowledge development; therefore, I aimed to wear the same neutral outfit at each interview (i.e., basic black clothing).

4.3 Data Collection

4.3.1 Sampling and Participants

Judgmental sampling was used to select and recruit respondents. The selection criteria were women with a higher management position in Portugal. No distinction was made based on age or ethnicity. During the interviews, attention was paid to possible sociocultural variables and what possible effect these have on stereotypes about female leadership. Judgmental sampling entailed creating a list of women in management positions who sparked my interest due to previous appearances in debates on female leadership, who I then approached through LinkedIn. In addition, I used my network through my traineeship at Coca-Cola to gather suitable respondents. Through the women who agreed to this request, the snowball sampling method led to me contacting the rest of my respondents (Busetto et al., 2020).

Obtaining in-person interviews with prospective participants was often challenging due to their busy schedules and commitments. Recognizing the potential time constraints faced by individuals, especially those in leadership positions, I employed an alternative method to facilitate their participation. A Google Forms survey was designed and distributed to potential respondents, which provided a structured and user-friendly platform for them to share their insights. This approach offered a practical solution to engaging participants who might otherwise have been unable to dedicate a substantial amount of time to a traditional interview setting. The Google Forms survey was designed to capture key aspects of their

experiences and perspectives related to female leadership, thereby allowing participants to contribute meaningfully within a more flexible time frame. In total, eight female participants responded to the Google Forms survey and offered valuable qualitative data that enriched my overall understanding of the challenges, strategies, and visions of female leadership within the context of this study. Consequently, while only two individuals were engaged in traditional in-person interviews, the Google Forms survey extended the reach to a wider audience, resulting in a total of ten participants. This combined approach facilitated the collection of qualitative data that offered a comprehensive portrayal of the challenges, strategies, and forward-looking perspectives within the realm of female leadership, thus enriching the depth of the analysis within this study.

A limitation of this recruitment method was that my research group were already in higher management positions, which is a biased sample. It limits insights from an important group of women that are not in leadership positions, and therefore perhaps experienced more or different types of obstacles. Also, the group is a homogeneous group of highly educated people. Yet, my goal was not to generalize my results to the entire population but rather to map the dynamics and patterns of obstacles and challenges experienced by the group of respondents. Ultimately, I interviewed two people for the study; however, my intention was not to generalize the findings of this study given that this would not be possible from two interviews with women working in different business sectors. The aim of this study was to gain an enhanced understanding and outline the perceptions of women in (higher) management positions.

4.3.2 Fieldwork

Data collection was conducted from the beginning of May 2023 to the end of August 2023. The interviews were conducted at the respondents' workplace or online. Before the interviews began, I asked the respondents to fill out a consent form, which requested permission to record the interview and stated that the respondent could withdraw from the study at any time (see Appendix A for the consent form). Then, I conducted the interviews using my interview list, which I mostly used as a structure and to guide the interview if needed (see Appendix B).

As I noticed that it was difficult to get respondents to do a sit-down interview with me, I created a Google Form with the same questions as those on my interview list. Hence, I did not follow the interview list but only used it to guide myself on whether each topic had been discussed in sufficient detail. The oral interviews were recorded using my smartphone and transcribed to text. The other answers were obtained from Google Forms.

4.3.3 Ethical Concerns

Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents could withdraw at any time, although none of the participants did so. Each interview started with the same opening, where I explained the structure of the interview, the research method, and how the data would be analyzed.

Moreover, I asked the respondents to fill out a consent form where permission was again asked to record the interview and their anonymity was emphasized. This stated that the interview was anonymous, that the respondent could withdraw from the study at any time, and that participation was entirely voluntary. It was crucial to treat the respondents and the information they provided confidentially. Therefore, the answers of the respondents of the Google Forms were made anonymous by not mentioning the names of my respondents or the organization they worked.

4.3.4 Data Analysis

Theory was used as a guideline for the interview guide, but room also existed for the respondents' own input. The purpose of the data analysis was to discover regularities or patterns, for which the software program ATLAS.ti 8.0 (ATLAS.ti 22 Mac, 2022) and Otter (Otter.ai) was used. This program made it possible to obtain an overview of the transcripts, enabling patterns to be detected. The interview data were compared with the theory concerning existing obstacles to female leadership, which may lead to the emergence of new theories that are more suitable in the Portuguese context.

4.4 Mentorships, Traineeships, Training, and Support Programs

Drawing upon the literature review, this section offers insights into the key considerations for designing a successful training program. It begins by highlighting the relevance and importance of training in gender equality in leadership. Furthermore, the section reviews the variety in training, which include mentorships, traineeships, training, and support programs. Additionally, it provides practical guidelines for creating effective training programs and discusses the development of tailored curricula in a university setting. Finally, an action plan is presented to emphasize the necessity of these training efforts.

4.4.1 Relevance and Importance

Studies have demonstrated that mentorship, traineeships, training, and support programs can positively impact women's career development and help them to overcome the obstacles they face in achieving higher management positions (Washington, 2010). Support is crucial for women who seek to advance their careers which can come in many forms, including flexible work arrangements, access to childcare, and employee resource groups. Providing women with the support they need to balance their work and personal lives can help them to succeed in their careers (Woodbridge et al., 2021). In particular training programs, can provide women with a sense of community and support, which can be invaluable in helping them to overcome the obstacles they face in their careers. Thus, training is an essential tool for women who seek to advance their careers.

It is important to create initiatives in sustainable leadership education for women (Segovia-Pérez et al., 2019). This type of education focuses on developing skills, competencies, and tools for leadership while also increasing women's self-perception of their capabilities (Segovia-Pérez et al., 2019). By empowering women through education, they can overcome barriers and gain confidence in their leadership abilities. Furthermore, sponsorship programs can be effective at advancing women into leadership positions (Herzke et al., 2020). These programs provide support and mentorship from established leaders, which can help women to navigate the challenges and biases they may face in their career progression (Herzke et al., 2020).

In sum, mentorship, traineeships, training, and support programs are vital for women who seek to advance their careers and attain higher management positions. Organizations that invest in these programs will not only benefit from a more diverse and inclusive workforce but also from the increased talent and leadership potential that women bring to the table (Catalyst, 2019).

4.4.2 Different Types of Effective Programs

To establish an effective training program in gender equality to promote female leadership, several key factors should be considered. First, one must address and acknowledge the existing of prejudice toward female leaders, which suggests that “perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles leads to prejudice and negative attitudes toward female leaders” (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p.543). Therefore, the training program should aim to challenge and change these stereotypes and biases. One approach is to provide education and training on leadership abilities, skills, tools, and self-esteem specifically tailored for women (Segovia-Pérez et al., 2019). A study highlighted the lack of training in leadership for women, which creates barriers to them gaining leadership positions (Segovia-Pérez et al., 2019). Through training that addresses these deficiencies, women can acquire the skills and competencies necessary to succeed in leadership roles. Furthermore, through implementing well-designed sponsorship programs, universities can provide the necessary support for women to succeed in leadership roles.

Mentorship is an effective approach to provide women with guidance and support in their career development (Ehrich, 2008). Mentors can offer valuable advice, share their experiences, and provide constructive feedback to help women develop the skills and knowledge necessary for higher management positions. Studies have demonstrated that women who have had access to mentorship programs have better career outcomes, including increased promotions and higher salaries (Groves, 2021). In addition, mentorship can help women to build their networks and increase their visibility within their organizations, resulting in increased potential for advancing in one's career (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021).

Traineeships are another effective method for helping women to advance their careers (Groves, 2021; Washington, 2010). They allow women to develop new skills, gain practical

experience, and increase their knowledge of the industry they work in. Traineeships can be particularly beneficial for women who seek move into higher management positions in traditionally male-dominated industries. By allowing women to gain experience and build their networks, traineeships can help them to break down the barriers that often prevent them from advancing in their careers (Burke & McKeen, 1997). These programs can include leadership training, communication skills, and industry-specific training (Catalyst, 2019). By providing women with the knowledge and skills they require to succeed, training programs help them to overcome the barriers they face in their careers.

As a lack of mentors and role models is another obstacle faced by women in attaining higher management positions, mentors and role models can provide guidance, support, and networking opportunities. However, women may have fewer opportunities to develop relationships with mentors and role models, as men often hold most organizational leadership positions (Catalyst, 2021). The latter is a problem because networking and peer support are pivotal for leadership development. Therefore, the training program should include opportunities for participants to connect with mentors and fellow participants: According to Ibarra (1993), peer support networks enable women to counteract feelings of isolation and gain diverse perspectives on leadership challenges.

One last factor that can contribute to the enrichment of a training program is coaching. Incorporating coaching elements into a training program can enhance the transfer of learning to the workplace. The use of coaching as an instrument for training transfer has been found to be effective at driving behavioral skill development (Dixit & Sinha, 2023). Incorporating coaching and mentoring as core components. Coaching involves individualized guidance to enhance specific skills, while mentoring focuses on long-term professional development (Fagenson, 1989). According to Ragins and Cotton (1991), leveraging both coaching and mentoring elements can lead to increased leadership self-efficacy.

4.4.3 Guidelines for Establishing an Effective Training Program

Creating an effective training program requires the careful planning and consideration of various factors. The goal is to design a program that effectively transfers knowledge and skills to participants, enhances their performance, and ultimately contributes to the success

of the organization. This section discusses the key steps and considerations involved in setting up an effective training program, drawing on relevant references to support our discussion. A pressing need exists to address gender disparities in leadership positions, which has led to a growing interest in the development of training programs aimed at empowering women to assume leadership roles. The objective is to equip aspiring female leaders with the skills, confidence, and support they require to navigate the challenges associated with leadership roles.

The design and development phase involve creating the content and structure of the training program. This includes selecting appropriate instructional methods, materials, and activities that align with the learning objectives (Kumar et al., 2020). The training program should be interactive and engaging in promoting active learning and participant involvement (McCarthy & Milner, 2013) and also inform future training initiatives (Mayowski et al., 2022).

McKinsey (2022) stated that “a commitment to training in unconscious biases can foster a more diverse and inclusive environment” (p. 26). Key aims of managerial training should be the elimination of biases and the promotion of equal treatment for transforming the company culture and generating an inclusive work environment. Notably, 90% of the companies in the top quartile offer managerial training that involves recognizing employees for their hard work. Furthermore, 70% of these top-performing companies train managers in how to promote more inclusive environments in their teams and generate a sense of belonging. Moreover, among the top-performing companies, a remarkable 80% offer unambiguous guidance to managers on prioritizing the well-being and professional development of their teams as a means of fostering an inclusive workplace culture. In addition, an equally impressive 80% of these companies establish clear and objective criteria for their practices.

Research shows that it is crucial to conduct a needs assessment to identify the specific training needs of the target audience (Schyns et al., 2008). This can be done through surveys, interviews, or focus groups for gathering information about the knowledge, skills, and competencies that need to be developed (Schyns et al., 2008). The needs assessment should also consider organizational goals and objectives to ensure alignment between the training

program and the overall strategic direction of the organization (Pernick, 2001). Therefore, the current research conducted a needs assessment.

Once the training needs have been identified, Pernick (2001) asserted that clear and measurable objectives should be established for the training program. According to him, “they should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART)” (p.4). For example, if a training program aims to improve leadership skills, its objectives could be to enhance communication, decision making, and problem-solving skills among participants (Abu-Tineh et al., 2009).

When creating a curriculum or training program, it is important to consider the guidelines that were presented in a paper by Hall et al. (2022), which was titled “Ten Simple Rules for Establishing a Mentorship Programme.” The paper offered valuable insights into designing and establishing mentorship programs, which can be applied to the development of a curriculum or training program. First, it is crucial to recognize the significance of mentorship in the development of both mentors and mentees (Hall et al., 2022). Mentoring is a collaborative and interactive process that can contribute to the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Therefore, incorporating mentorship elements into the curriculum or training program can enhance its effectiveness. Second, it is important to consider the specific goals and objectives of the curriculum or training program. Clearly defining the intended outcomes and aligning them with the needs of the target audience are essential (Hall et al., 2022), as doing so will ensure that the program is tailored to the specific knowledge and skill gaps of the participants. Additionally, the paper emphasized the importance of establishing clear guidelines and expectations for both mentors and mentees (Hall et al., 2022). Providing a framework for the mentorship relationship will help to ensure that the program operates smoothly and that participants understand their roles and responsibilities.

Furthermore, the paper highlighted the value of diversity and inclusivity in mentorship programs (Hall et al., 2022). It is crucial to consider the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of the participants and to create an inclusive environment that fosters equal opportunities for all. Another key aspect is the evaluation and assessment of the curriculum or training program. Regularly monitoring and assessing the program’s effectiveness allows

for adjustments and improvements to be made (Treasure et al., 2022). This can be achieved through feedback mechanisms, surveys, or other evaluation methods for gathering insights from participants and stakeholders.

By incorporating mentorship elements, defining clear goals, establishing guidelines, promoting diversity and inclusivity, and implementing evaluation measures, a curriculum or training program can be designed to effectively meet the needs of participants and facilitate their growth and development (Treasure et al., 2022). An effective training program in gender equality for promoting female leadership should address stereotypes and biases, provide tailored education and training, develop initiatives in sustainable leadership education, implement sponsorship programs, and have its effectiveness evaluated. Thus, universities can create a supportive and empowering environment for women to thrive in leadership roles.

Lastly, it is vital to evaluate the effectiveness of a training program. Long-term assessments have demonstrated that leadership training can lead to positive behavioral change and institutional impact (Mayowski et al., 2022). These evaluations should consider the specific benefits for female participants, as research suggests that leadership training programs can help to eliminate gender-based disparities in leadership (Mayowski et al., 2022). Therefore, an effective training program should be continuously reviewed and improved based on feedback and evaluation results. This involves incorporating lessons learned from previous training programs, updating content to reflect changes in the industry or organizational needs, and adapting the delivery methods to meet the evolving needs of the participants (Mayowski et al., 2022). Regular communication with participants can also help to identify areas for improvement and ensure the ongoing relevance and effectiveness of the training program (Qin & Men, 2022).

4.4.5 Tailoring Curriculum in a University Setting

Crafting a carefully tailored curriculum plays a crucial role in designing a training program that addresses the unique needs, goals, and obstacles faced by female leaders. Eagly and Sczesny (2009) not only underscored the importance of inclusivity but also highlighted the significance of dismantling prevailing gender biases and stereotypes. An inclusive

curriculum acts as a potent instrument for challenging traditional gender stereotypes and creating an environment where female leaders can thrive. When developing such a curriculum, it becomes essential to explore a variety of leadership styles and stories. As noted by Lyness and Kropf (2007), women often lead in ways that differ from traditional masculine paradigms, encompassing collaborative, empathetic, and participatory approaches. Incorporating these diverse leadership styles within the curriculum acknowledges the multifaceted nature of leadership and resonates more closely with the experiences of aspiring female leaders.

Tailoring the curriculum to address the distinct challenges that female leaders encounter can empower participants with the strategies they require to navigate their leadership journeys effectively. Extensive research by Derks et al. (2016) revealed that women in leadership often face the “double-bind” dilemma, where demonstrating assertiveness can lead to a backlash. The curriculum can delve into such challenges, providing participants with insights into strategies for effectively managing these complex situations. In this way, the curriculum will provide women with the tools they need to navigate tough situations with confidence, all while staying true to themselves.

The success of the curriculum depends on its capacity to transform theoretical knowledge into practical knowledge. To achieve this, incorporating real-life case studies, role-playing activities, and engaging workshops will provide participants with hands-on experiences that closely resemble the real challenges and decisions they may face in leadership positions. O’Neil et al. (2016) highlighted the transformative potential of experiential learning in developing leadership competencies. By simulating real-world scenarios, the curriculum facilitates problem-solving skills, effective communication, and decision making—all of which are integral components of successful leadership.

Empowering aspiring female leaders with the confidence to tackle challenges head-on is a fundamental aspect of such a curriculum. Eagly and Karau (2002) emphasized the importance of building self-efficacy, particularly in the face of gender-related obstacles. Incorporating sessions on assertiveness training, and negotiation skills will equip participants with the tools to assert their value and competently advocate for themselves and

their teams. Thus, the development of a tailored curriculum represents a strategic approach to nurturing the growth of female leaders. An inclusive design, combined with a focus on addressing specific challenges and offering practical strategies, can empower participants to rise above gender-related barriers.

Conducting the training program in a university setting offers numerous advantages. Universities provide a conducive environment for learning, networking, and accessing academic resources. As noted by Konrad et al. (2012), universities can facilitate collaboration between aspiring female leaders and established professionals, fostering a supportive community.

The effectiveness of the training program should also be assessed through evaluation methods. Peer-reviewed studies by Eagly and Carli (2007) emphasized the importance of measuring outcomes such as increased self-confidence, leadership self-efficacy, and career advancement. The evaluation results inform participants about their progress.

In conclusion, crafting a training program for female leadership that integrates coaching and mentoring within a university setting requires a multidimensional approach. Peer-reviewed research highlights the importance of customizing content, utilizing coaching and mentoring elements, promoting peer support networks, and continually assessing program effectiveness. By adhering to these principles, training at the university can significantly contribute to empowering women with the skills and support needed to attain higher management positions.

Chapter 5: Results

In this chapter the results of the two in-depth interviews with Ana-Claudia (see Appendix C) and Isabel Canha (see appendix D) will be discussed, as well as the responses from the eight female respondents who filled in the Google Docs form. For readability, the citations will be in italics.

5.1 Gender stereotypes

Leadership has always been a topic of great interest and debate, with various perspectives and theories attempting to define what makes an effective leader. Ana-Claudia, drawing from her personal experiences, provides insightful perspectives on female leadership. She shares her observations on both the strengths and challenges faced by women in leadership positions, emphasizing the importance of individual qualities over gender stereotypes.

Ana-Claudia begins by acknowledging her diverse encounters with female bosses. She has worked under both good and bad female leaders, encountering some whom she describes as cold and unsuitable for leadership roles. *"I've had both good and bad female bosses and some very cold female bosses she didn't want working for her."* These experiences highlight the fact that leadership competence is not solely determined by gender. *"I don't think I've had enough, to be fair, good experience with women to make the choice. I've had both. But I feel like more than I preferred my male bosses, but I'm not saying it's a gender thing."*

Here she acknowledges there may be gender differences in leadership style, but stresses it ultimately comes down to the individual qualities of the leader. Women, like men, can exhibit a wide range of leadership qualities, and their effectiveness as leaders is contingent upon their individual characteristics and skills. While Ana-Claudia admits that some of her most positive leadership experiences have been with male bosses, she refrains from attributing this solely to gender. One of Ana-Claudia's most salient points is her rejection of sweeping generalizations about how men and women lead. She emphasizes that leadership styles vary significantly among individuals and cannot be neatly categorized by gender. The effectiveness of a leader depends on their unique qualities, experiences, and approaches to leadership:

"I think it's hard to generalize that for sure. But if I had to generalize, I would say differently Now, having said that, I have met a lot of cold women lead. You really don't want them as bosses. No. And I've met a lot of really nice and warm guys that are very sensitive and yeah, I can see it."

She argues that leadership effectiveness is not inherently tied to one's sex but rather to a combination of qualities, experience, and leadership style. Ana-Claudia offers a thought-provoking insight into the challenges faced by women aspiring to leadership roles. She suggests that women leaders may feel more "bruised by life," implying that they might have encountered unique obstacles or societal expectations that could impact their leadership style: *"I think women are a bit bruised by life and it's it's hard for them to become leaders without overcompensating to seem very powerful."* This observation highlights the importance of recognizing and addressing these challenges to ensure equal opportunities for leadership.

In conclusion, Ana-Claudia's perspectives on female leadership provide valuable insights into the complexity of this topic. While she acknowledges that gender may play a role in leadership experiences, she firmly asserts that it is the individual qualities of leaders that genuinely matter. As we continue to strive for gender equality in leadership positions, Ana-Claudia's perspective reminds us to focus on assessing leaders based on their capabilities, skills, and personal attributes rather than making sweeping assumptions based on gender alone. In doing so, we create a more inclusive and equitable environment that recognizes and celebrates the diverse talents and potential of leaders, regardless of their gender.

Isabel's first point touches upon the potential harm of categorizing leadership traits based on gender. Such categorization, she believes, can be discriminatory and limiting: Isabel suggests that in literature, male leadership is often characterized by traits such as rationality, a competitive focus, an emphasis on authority and power, a task-oriented approach, a desire for obedience and order, assertiveness, self-confidence, and a results-oriented mindset. Isabel says:

"Men are often identified with a leadership that is more rational, more competition, more focused on authority and power. They are more focused also on the tasks and on the results. They seek obedience order, they are more assertive. Another one is vanity or self-confidence, worried about the results. This is typical of the male leadership."

Isabel suggests that in academic literature, female leadership is often depicted as having traits such as intuition, emotional intelligence, a focus on collaboration and teamwork, strong multitasking skills, prioritizing relationships over tasks, earning respect through persuasion rather than imposition, possessing soft power and empathy. There may also be mention of potential challenges faced by women leaders including issues related to self-confidence and concerns for the well-being of others.

"Female leadership typically identified with intuition, emotion, cooperation, teamwork, multitasking, oriented not to the task, but for the relationships that they tried to construct cohesive relationships with the team, they seek respect, by being persuasive and not by imposing. Instead of certifiy, they have a soft power has empathy will mean they are humble. They lack self confidence, and they are worried about the people."

Isabel, in her insights on female leadership traits, brings to light the need to move beyond rigid gender categories and stereotypes. She emphasizes the importance of recognizing individual qualities, challenging discriminatory practices, and ultimately promoting a more inclusive and effective leadership landscape.

"So, this is what the, in general, the literature says about women's and men's leadership, what I think about it... I think that this in itself might be a bit discriminatory, because women.. I've worked with the deputy directors, when I was a director, that was a man. And he was, I would recognize lots of traits from with women's leadership in in his behavior."

Stereotyping leadership qualities by gender not only oversimplifies the complexity of human behavior but also reinforces biases that hinder progress. It is essential to acknowledge that leadership traits are not confined to specific genders, and individuals can possess a unique blend of characteristics that contribute to their effectiveness as leaders.

Isabel underscores the significance of individuality in leadership. She has witnessed male leaders who exhibit traits traditionally associated with female leadership, highlighting the fluidity of these traits across genders. This observation reaffirms the idea that leadership capabilities depend more on the person's unique qualities and experiences than conforming to predefined gender roles.

Isabel's concern about the contradiction between what companies claim to value in leadership (e.g., collaboration and empathy) and the persistent gender disparities in promotions is crucial. Despite organizations expressing a commitment to promoting gender diversity, barriers persist for women in advancing to leadership roles.: *"It puzzles me that if companies are so they are valuing so much traits of personality of behavior that are associated with women's leadership, like intuition, teamwork, cooperation, compassion, and so on, why aren't women being promoted?"*. This incongruity underscores the urgency of addressing the gap between rhetoric and action in promoting gender-balanced leadership.

Isabel's vision of leadership aligns with the idea that the ideal leadership landscape combines a diverse array of qualities, whether traditionally attributed to men or women. Instead of focusing solely on promoting one set of traits, the emphasis should be on creating leadership teams that possess a complementary mix of skills and perspectives. This approach fosters innovation and adaptability within organizations. Isabel's perspective underscores the need to understand and nurture each person's unique qualities and strengths:

"We should care about the person in itself, study the person and act accordingly. And what are these these makes me think is that if typically, men are associated with these traits of leadership, and women are associated with the opposite traits of leadership, what what we should have is both combining in the, in the top management so that we have the best of them."

Leaders should be developed based on their individual potential rather than forcing them into predefined stereotypes. By doing so, organizations can harness the full spectrum of talent and create an environment where every individual can thrive.

Isabel brings forward that another significant hurdle faced by women relates to the varying expectations and behaviors accepted from men versus women. This includes the unfortunate perception that women's salaries are of lower importance, which can contribute to gender pay gaps:

"Some things are expected, or are more well accepted for a woman, then for men, for instance, I had bosses who considered that the the salary of the women is not as important as for men, because there's this misconception that men is the provider."

She points out that these expectations stem from deeply ingrained societal stereotypes and biases that persistently undermine women's contributions in the workplace. Addressing these

issues is crucial for achieving gender equality at all levels of leadership. Isabel rightly points out that traditional gender socialization plays a significant role in shaping women's behaviors and self-perceptions. Historical norms have often discouraged women from being confident, assertive, or vocal. Women were traditionally educated to be discreet and avoid behaviors that could be perceived as too forward. These deeply rooted societal norms can inhibit women's self-expression and limit their pursuit of leadership roles: *"Woman were educated to be discreet, not to make networking. They were dedicated to being not confident, not to speak loud, not to expose themselves."*

Ana-Claudia brings forward that traditional gender roles and societal expectations around childcare responsibilities can hinder women's career advancement:

"I do think that naturally, women tend to feel more responsible for the mental health and well being of the family. Yeah. Not only the kids, the family. So I do think it's not that men don't care about sacrifice so that they don't sacrifice as much because if they're not there, the woman will be. Yeah. I feel I'm very fortunate because my husband is there".

Unlike some of their male counterparts, women may find it challenging to entirely focus on their careers when they bear the brunt of caregiving responsibilities. This imbalance often results from deeply ingrained stereotypes that still persist in many cultures, placing an additional burden on women striving for higher management positions.

Exploring the perceived differences in leadership styles between genders and their impact on the workplace, the responses from participants offer a diverse range of perspectives. One participant believes that gender plays a role in shaping leadership styles, noting that men tend to exhibit more pragmatic, authoritative, and assertive qualities, while women are characterized as being more sociable, organized, and empathetic. This perspective suggests that gender-based traits may influence leadership approaches: *"Yes, I believe men are more pragmatic, authoritative, and assertive, and women more sociable, organized, and more empathetic."* Another participant emphasizes the caring nature often associated with women's leadership styles, suggesting that women tend to prioritize compassion and empathy in their leadership roles: *"Yes, women tend to be more caring."*

One participant provides a nuanced perspective by acknowledging that leadership styles can vary greatly among individuals regardless of gender. This viewpoint underscores that leadership is ultimately about inspiring others, regardless of whether one is a man or a woman: *"Yes, I think leadership differs, but the output is the same. The most important is to be a leader that inspires others, no matter if it's a man or a woman."*

Another participant concurs that leadership styles often differ but asserts that neither style is superior to the other. Instead, the effectiveness of a leadership style depends on the specific team and situation at hand: *"Yes, I do. Most of the times the styles are different. None is better, just different and more suitable for different teams and situations."*

However, it is important to note that not all participants believe that gender influences leadership styles. One participant firmly states *"No,"* suggesting that they do not perceive any significant gender-based differences in leadership styles. These responses collectively highlight the diversity of perspectives regarding whether leadership styles differ between genders and how these differences may impact the workplace. While some participants perceive distinct gender-related traits in leadership, others emphasize the importance of individual variation and the equal potential for effective leadership regardless of gender. These varying viewpoints underscore the complexity of the topic and the need for ongoing discussions and research on gender and leadership in the workplace.

5.2 Hiring and quota's

A substantial obstacle highlighted by Isabel is the tendency of men in power to perpetuate their influence by recruiting individuals who are similar to themselves, often other men. This practice, known as homophily, creates a self-reinforcing cycle where women find it challenging to break into male-dominated leadership networks. This not only limits diversity in leadership but also perpetuates gender inequalities: *"Men recruit men. men feel they feel they are in power. So they perpetuate their power, because they tend to recruit people that are similar to them."*

Ana-Claudia does not directly mention quotas in the interview. The closest she comes is talking about how it would be difficult to tell a man that he has to pay a woman more just because she's a woman, if their work is the same.

"It's tough to tell a man: You have to pay more expensive than you could? Because it's a woman. Our effort is the same? It doesn't matter if it's men or men. I mean, in theory, you should pay the same to a man or a woman if they can do the same job. But in reality, you're always trying to get the lower price. So what do you get?"

She says in theory pay should be equal for equal work, but in reality companies try to get the lower price, which can disadvantage women who do not negotiate as aggressively. However, she does not take a stance for or against quotas as a policy tool.

Isabel says she initially disagreed with quotas, but has changed her view. She now agrees with quotas and says quotas are necessary because without them there wouldn't be many women in politics or on company boards. Change is very slow without quotas, and it would take 100 years to achieve full equality. Moreover, quotas are an effective legislative mechanism to drive quicker real change in mentality and representation. Isabel says:

"Nowadays, if you ask, and we ask daily, those women about quotas. 99% of them will say I wouldn't agree very much, in the past I didn't agree. But I have to accept that if it weren't for the quotas, we wouldn't have women in politics, we wouldn't have women in boards in public companies and the change is so, so slow, the pace of change is so slow, that only from 100 years from now, we have total equality. So I am pro quota now nowadays."

5.3 Worklife balance

Isabel's insights shed light on the enduring challenge faced by women in balancing their careers with family responsibilities. She emphasizes the importance of providing women with role models and addressing the complexities in their minds regarding this delicate equilibrium. Isabel's perspective underscores that the pressure to juggle career and family life is a common experience for many women. As she states, *"a lot of women feel this pressure."* This sentiment echoes the societal expectation that women often bear the primary responsibility for family matters, even as men evolve in their roles within the family, sharing domestic and childcare tasks. As Isabel notes, *"Men nowadays share the same domestic and education of the children tasks and so on. But the responsibility, the main responsibility, it's*

still in the hands of women." This observation highlights the deeply ingrained societal expectations that continue to place a disproportionate burden on women in managing the home front.

Isabel's interview also unveils the unique challenges faced by women, particularly those in managerial roles that require frequent travel. These women often find themselves shouldering the additional worry of leaving everything organized at home when they are away. This concern encompasses essential tasks like planning meals and arranging childcare, reflecting the constant mental juggling that women in such environments experience. Isabel's perspective underscores that these additional burdens can make it significantly harder for women to thrive in their careers. As she states, *"And they tell with that when they travel, they try to leave everything organized, what is going to be the dinner, who is going to pick the children from school and so on."* This vividly illustrates the persistent challenges that women face in balancing their professional and personal lives. Furthermore, the questions posed by the mothers and mothers-in-law of these women regarding travel plans and childcare arrangements serve as a reminder of the societal pressure on women to maintain the stability of the family unit. These inquiries reflect the deeply ingrained cultural norms that continue to shape women's roles and responsibilities.

Ana-Claudia discusses work-life balance a few times. She notes that from experience she sees women leaders care more about work-life balance compared to men who care more about income. *"I think female leaders care more about work life balance, and men care more about their income, for example."* Ana-Claudia also mentions that when working long hours with global responsibilities, she felt her daughter wasn't getting enough time from her, which is why she took a break from work for 3 years: *"I did another global role.. same dynamic. I had to travel a lot. And that's why I said it didn't make a difference when I stopped to work. Yeah, I could see that my daughter was really not getting enough time of me."*

Furthermore, she talks about valuing flexibility and time with family over salary negotiations at times. She acknowledges women often feel more responsible for family well-being compared to men, which can impact career decisions: *"I think that naturally, and I'm not many men. But I do think that naturally, women tend to feel more responsible for the mental*

health and well-being of the family." Lastly, she says Portugal has done well with social structures that don't penalize children if parents work, unlike some countries where kids are left alone after school.

"What really makes a difference is the social structure. In Mexico, schools are from 8.00 - 14.00. So what you do with kids? You abandon them all afternoon. And when I was a kid, you could really tell who was the son/daughter of a woman that works. (...) But here in Portugal you don't. And that makes a huge, huge difference."

Thus, both Ana-Claudia and Isabel present that work-life balance is still a significant issue for women that they face as an obstacle. Isabel mentions that women feel pressure and worry about things like who will take care of the children if they have to travel for work. Even if companies try to support work-life balance equally for men and women, the primary responsibility still tends to fall on women. This makes advancing their careers harder for women.

The responses from the respondents of the Google Forms shed light on their strategies for managing the demanding task of balancing work and personal life, particularly in leadership positions. One respondent emphasized the importance of: *"I did some adjusting of my work hours, starting early and leaving early, while also relying on the assistance of grandparents and a housekeeper"*. Others highlighted the significance of effective organization, planning, and seeking external support for childcare which shows in their answers: *"Planning and getting support externally for kids"*, *"creating a good support at home, that allow me to work the hours I need without having a good balance for my son"* and *"focus, good planning and teamwork"*.

One respondent mentioned waiting until their daughters were older to fully invest in their career. Another emphasized the creation of a strong support system at home, which allowed them to dedicate the necessary hours to work, albeit with some challenges in achieving an ideal work-life balance for their son. Additional strategies included maintaining focus, meticulous planning, and collaborative teamwork. However, the journey to achieving this balance was not without sacrifices, as one respondent mentioned having to resign from certain positions due to the inherent challenges: *"Not easy. I had to quit some positions"*.

These responses collectively underscore the complexity of managing work-life balance, with individuals adopting a variety of approaches and facing both successes and obstacles in their leadership roles.

5.4 Social structure and organizational culture

Ana-Claudia says that awareness and support are essential, as well as formal "training." She thinks initiatives around awareness of different values and what makes people happy, as well as mentorship and support, would be helpful to than theoretical traditional diversity trainings. She brings up being a mentor herself through her company's program as an example of the kind of support that is needed.

"I think awareness plays a great role. And when I started hearing about this imposter syndrome, I'm like, so what is it? And then I started thinking, is it about the honesty? Is it about the values of not letting people's expectations down? So I think training that will make more sense around the awareness. About what makes you happy and how are you doing awareness and support. And that's, I think, where the Portuguese are really bad in support."

While not the central focus of her comments, Ana-Claudia's insights offer a window into the profound impact of organizational culture and societal norms on her career trajectory. These factors have influenced her experiences in different country contexts, influencing the way she navigates challenges, builds relationships, and approaches her professional journey. One of the main things that comes to light is that relocation often presents a formidable barrier for women aspiring to higher management positions.

"Eventually, I got a promotion with the Azure team to Miami and my husband came with me. So, I had a Portuguese husband because by then we were married. He came with me. And the person that was helping me to do all the commercial plan later became the head of Iberia, here in Portugal. In Spain."

She notes it was difficult to find a job in Portugal initially when she moved there for her husband. She also mentions having to commute internationally at one point between Portugal/Africa which was challenging. This suggests relocation difficulties created obstacles for her career advancement. Ana-Claudia's personal experience reflects this obstacle vividly, as she faced difficulties finding a job in Portugal when she moved there for her husband. She was forced to commute internationally at one point, underscoring the challenges of adapting to new environments and seeking career opportunities in unfamiliar

territories. This obstacle disproportionately affects women who may have to follow their spouse's career or face geographical limitations in their pursuit of leadership roles.

When exploring ways in which companies can better support women in leadership positions and promote gender diversity in higher management roles, the responses from the respondents of the Google Forms offer valuable insights. One respondent highlighted the importance of equal opportunities and a more accommodating timetable for women, emphasizing the need to assure women that assuming leadership roles and more responsibilities will not negatively affect their private lives. Their perspective aligns with the necessity for companies to create environments where women feel confident pursuing leadership positions while maintaining a healthy work-life balance: *"Giving the same opportunities to women as men and giving a better timetable and show to women that they can assume leadership positions and more responsibilities and that this will not affect their private life."*

Another respondent emphasized the significance of including women in the decision-making process regarding their careers. Rather than attempting to predict their capabilities or limitations, involving women directly allows for more tailored and effective career development: *"Include them in the decision-making process of their own career instead of trying to predict what they can or can't."*

Furthermore, respondents stressed the importance of focusing on results and holding both men and women to the same standards. This approach ensures that promotions and opportunities are based on merit rather than gender: *"Look more to results and ask the same for men and women."*

One respondent expressed support for quota systems as a means to address the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, acknowledging that there is still a long road ahead to establish female leadership firmly. This perspective recognizes the need for intentional measures to achieve gender diversity: *"I am in favor of the quota system. Until female leadership is deeply rooted, there is still a path to be followed."*

Additional recommendations included providing better flexible work hours, a focus on results rather than rigid working conditions, and greater flexibility in terms of the physical location for performing duties. These suggestions collectively underline the importance of adapting workplace practices to accommodate the diverse needs and preferences of women in leadership roles: *"Giving better flexible work hours," "Focus on results," and "Being flexible, including with the place to perform the duties."*

In sum, these responses offer a comprehensive view of how companies can enhance their support for women in leadership positions and foster gender diversity in higher management roles by focusing on equal opportunities, inclusivity, results-driven approaches, flexibility, and affirmative measures when necessary.

5.5 Other initiatives

Isabel mentions another training initiative, and provides the following details about the training program "One Step Ahead, women leadership" that she runs in partnership with ISCTE Business School. First, it is an executive program for women leadership. They have invited speakers from companies to inspire the women and share their experiences. The goal of their training is to help address issues like imposter syndrome that women face: *"We have a course an executive program, in partnership with is Business School, which is called One Step Ahead, women leadership. And we also have these these invited speakers from companies to inspire the women."* When asked about the bootcamp program, she provides more details and says: *"It's an intensive program to accelerate your career, it's one day, and it's a lot of topics that are relevant for for women like impostor syndrome, how to gain confidence, networking, those types of subjects specifically designed for women."*

Isabel also mentions PWN, which is an initiative I have not mentioned in my literature review. The PWN Lisbon network, which is a professional women's network based in Lisbon, Portugal. The network aims to empower and support women in their professional and personal development, with a focus on leadership and career advancement. The network provides various resources, events, and opportunities for networking, mentoring, and learning. It also promotes gender equality and diversity in the workplace. The network is part of the PWN Global organization, which is a global network of professional women's

networks (Nandal & Krishnan, 2000). The PWN Lisbon network aligns with the broader movement towards promoting gender equality and women's leadership in various fields. Research has shown that gender diversity and women's leadership can have positive impacts on organizational performance and outcomes. Studies have found that women leaders tend to exhibit transformational leadership behaviors, which are associated with positive employee outcomes and organizational performance (Bono & Judge, 2004; Eagly et al., 2003). Additionally, diverse workforces, including gender diversity, have been found to be beneficial for businesses in terms of corporate profits and earnings (Herring, 2009). Overall, the network aligns with the broader movement towards promoting gender equality and women's leadership. Leadership development programs, addressing gender biases, and implementing inclusive practices are essential steps towards achieving gender equality in leadership roles.

Ana-Claudia does not explicitly mention any other specific initiatives or training programs besides the mentorship program she participated in through her company. When discussing potential training, she focuses more on the importance of awareness, support and understanding different values, rather than formal diversity programs. She does not provide any other examples of initiatives beyond her comments about the value of mentorship.

Most of the respondents of the Google Forms all responded they did not know of any other initiatives, which is remarkable. The question was whether they knew about some specific training programs that they believe would help improve gender diversity in leadership and it was answered mostly with: *“No, I am not aware of any of these types of programs”*. One respondent says: *“I have always tried to go for all the trainings and seminars I could and that helps to open your mind”*, and another respondent says: *“I have heard of an emotional intelligence program but I don't remember the name”*. This shows that initiatives could use much more visibility and marketing, because the way it is been marketed now does not seem to reach the audience.

5.6 Double standard

One prominent challenge that Isabel addresses is the need for women to surpass exceptional standards to receive the same recognition as their male colleagues. This phenomenon stems

from paternalism, a belief that women require special protection and guidance, which often translates into a lack of equal consideration in the workplace. This unjust disparity places a heavier burden on women to continually prove their worth and can lead to an unequal distribution of opportunities. She says: *“There is always some paternalism for men. Less consideration for men, so you have to be to be really good in order to get the same the same recognition recognition is a colleague that that is a man.”*

Ana-Claudia says that there is a double standard where successful women are often labeled as "bitches" for the same behaviors that successful men are seen as confident for. She also mentions that women leaders are often expected to be either very powerful or not too much of a bitch, whereas that standard is not placed on men. She thinks it's unfair that the same behaviors get different labels depending on the gender.

"I remember once a friend of mine told me, I was so excited. You're a bitch. I'm like, why am I the bitch? Yeah, you're the boss as in *The Devil Wears Prada*. I'm like, Are you kidding me? Just because I'm a woman and I'm a boss, I have to be a bitch? Are you insane? There, I do get a bit of the chip on the shoulder side, because why do successful women have to be like that. And successful men are just confident. The same behavior gets different labels."

Specifically, she talks about how a friend of hers once told her that as the boss, she had to be *"the bitch"* (meaning aggressive/cold). Ana-Claudia says she responded that she did not want to be a bitch just because she's a female leader. She then says successful women have to be labeled as either very powerful or not too much of a bitch, whereas successful men are just seen as confident for the same behaviors. Isabel says that there is a double standard where the same behavior from a man is praised but the same behavior from a woman is criticized:

"That is the dual evaluation that we make for the same behaviour. Exactly, that is exactly what I meant. And apart from this there is always the obstacles that the world outside puts on the women's way. Men recruit men. Men feel they feel they are in power so they perpetuate their power because they tend to recruit people that are similar to them. I don't say this is men against women and that they do it on purpose. no, it's subtle, it's mental mechanisms that are difficult to break and expose."

She gives the example that if a man leaves everything behind for travel, it would be seen as ambitious and work-driven, but if a woman does the same thing it could be seen as selfish or not taking good care of her family:

“And we have a lot of female managers that we ask who travel a lot and so on. And they tell with that when they travel, they try to hit to leave everything organized, what is going to be the dinner, who is going to pick the children from school and so on. So this is always worry that women have in all these environments makes it harder for women.”

5.7 *Imposter syndrome*

Both women Ana-Claudia and Isabel mention imposter syndrome as a significant obstacle for women. Ana-Claudia highlights the issue of imposter syndrome and a lack of confidence as factors that can hold women back from negotiating aggressively or pursuing specific career opportunities. These self-doubts can be particularly detrimental, as they undermine a woman's belief in her own abilities and potential:

“There is something I think I've seen women much more than men that maybe training would be interesting is imposter syndrome. I think that one, and it's part of the bluffing that we're seeing right now, I do think that women are much more honest.”

She notes imposter syndrome may be related to women being more honest than men and not wanting to let people down with their expectations. This suggests imposter syndrome can undermine women's confidence and willingness to negotiate aggressively or pursue specific opportunities.

Isabel does not explicitly talk about skills women need. However, when discussing the bootcamp training program Executiva runs, she mentions it covers topics like gaining confidence, networking and imposter syndrome. This implies these are some skills/topics she sees as crucial for women to develop.

"It's an intensive program to accelerate your career, it's one day, and it's a lot of topics that are relevant for for women like impostor syndrome, how to gain confidence, networking, those types of subjects specifically designed for women."

Ana-Claudia mentions that she thinks imposter syndrome is something that women experience more than men, and that it may be related to women being more honest than men. She says when she started hearing about imposter syndrome, she thought about whether it was connected to women's honesty and values of not wanting to let people down with their expectations. Notably, she says something that might be imposter syndrome of herself: *“When I got here, I barely spoke the language. I didn't have any credibility with the team. It was very tough. Of course, I got the she got the job because she's a woman. Of course. I*

did.”. This is to show that it is hard to identify and be aware of it, and overcoming imposter syndrome and building confidence are crucial steps in empowering women to seize leadership roles.

Isabel mentions imposter syndrome when talking about the training program "One Step Ahead" that she runs in partnership with ISCTE Business School. She says they have *"invited speakers from companies to inspire the women"* who participate in the program. Later, when discussing the bootcamp program that Executiva runs, she lists "impostor syndrome" as one of the topics addressed explicitly for women in that training.

5.8 Networking and Mentoring

As a Mexican leader in Portugal, Ana-Claudia mentions language barriers and the perception of being "foreign" can create disadvantages for women trying to build networks and establish credibility in specific contexts. Ana-Claudia's experience in Portugal serves as a stark example of this obstacle. She talks about how when she first moved to Portugal it was challenging to find a job because *"it's a tight network society"* and *"people do prefer Portuguese."* She says as a foreigner *"it's very tight"* and *"you very rarely see foreigners"* in leadership roles. Later she acknowledges that as a foreigner in Portugal, *"no matter what I do. I will always have an accent. I will not understand the jokes."* This suggests being an outsider made it challenging for her to build connections and credibility initially in Portugal's business environment as a woman. When women are seen as outsiders, it can be more challenging for them to navigate professional circles, build relationships, and gain trust within their industries. This suggests she faced obstacles in Portugal as a "foreigner" without the local network and credibility, which her boss recognized she could help address with her global experience and connections. She says that in particular traditional and close-knit business environments, there exists a favoritism towards promoting locals over outsiders:

“It was tough, I think, or overall, it's a tight network society. And people do prefer Portuguese. And I do notice that you go to Central America and everything. You see women, but you very rarely see foreigners. So it's very tight, it's it's very tight. Eventually, I did get a job, but it was for consulting in Africa”.

This suggests traditional, tight-knit markets like Portugal tend to prefer promoting locals over outsiders, which can disadvantage foreign women trying to enter those networks and achieve leadership roles. This practice disproportionately affects women trying to penetrate

these networks. Ana-Claudia's experience highlights how such environments can hinder women from accessing opportunities and advancing in their careers.

Isabel says that cultural factors play a role in the obstacles women face. When asked if there are specific cultural things in Portugal, she says that issues like discrimination and obstacles for women are seen worldwide, and some countries/cultures are worse than others:

"I think that some countries are much worse, of course, some countries from Islamic tradition, Japan, India, those kinds of countries that they are much worse than in Europe, or in the United States, where these these methods are always discussed, they are on the agenda, and people are aware. So it's, it's easier to have these these controlled. But I would say that this is everywhere in the world, being a woman is much harder than being a man. Even in in industrialized democracies, and countries and economic spaces like Europe."

So, she notes that even in developed countries and economies like Europe, it is generally much harder to be a woman. The culture and way women are educated to be more discreet and less confident makes advancing their careers more difficult.

When I ask the respondents whether they can tell me about any mentoring or sponsorship relationships that have been important to your success, most of the respondents have gotten a mentor. The real estate developer states *"I had a peer relationship with a male colleague who always supported me and helped my credibility"* and *"Three relevant senior managers were strong supporters of my career. One man and three woman"*. The founder at a law firm also says: *"Yes, the senior lawyers helped me a lot to grow and obtain my achievements"*. Notably, only half of the respondents had a positive answer to this question. The rest of the women responded saying they did not have mentorship relationships, including most women between 45-65 from who you would expect a long career and thus some mentorships.

On the question about whether a training in female leadership would be helpful, one respondent says: *"Training to avoid stereotypes is certainly something that all companies should ensure."* and *"training to acknowledge the differences between individuals and to understand the extra power of a diverse team should add value to companies"*.

Furthermore, the Google Forms respondents shared insights on how they successfully established and nurtured their professional networks while forging invaluable industry connections. One approach highlighted was the proactive sharing of expertise through writing articles on specific legal issues, conducting webinars and podcasts, and actively engaging with peers and colleagues. As one respondent stated, *"Writing articles about specific legal issues in certain areas of expertise, conducting webinars and podcasts, traveling to attend international events, visiting foreign law firms, and providing excellent services to our clients so that they want to recommend my services to other people"* played a crucial role. Others emphasized the significance of active participation in industry-related events and programs, as well as shared training sessions. Attendees found these occasions instrumental in expanding their networks and staying updated on industry developments: *"Attending events and programs"* and *"Participating in events and shared training sessions."*

In addition to professional activities, respondents emphasized the importance of personal qualities such as being friendly, humble, and respectful. They stressed the need to maintain integrity and never let success negatively influence their interactions: *"Being friendly, humble, and never mistreating anyone. I didn't let success negatively influence me."* Furthermore, qualities like transparency and respect for others were cited as fundamental to fostering meaningful connections: *"Being transparent and respecting others."*

Lastly, the respondents acknowledged the value of maintaining relationships with a wide spectrum of individuals, including friends, classmates, family, partners, and clients. These personal connections played an integral role in building and expanding their professional networks.

Respondents shared their strategies to navigate challenges and overcome barriers in their careers provide valuable insights into their experiences. One respondent underscores the importance of working diligently and efficiently while meticulously coordinating and organizing their family life to maintain productivity at work. They emphasize the significance of delivering excellent results for the company, regardless of how they manage their personal life. Additionally, they strived to demonstrate characteristics traditionally

valued in male leaders, such as assertiveness and authority, to overcome personal challenges and advance in their career:

"Working hard and trying to be as efficient as possible and coordinating and organizing family life well in order not to affect productivity at work. I tried to get good results for the company regardless of how I organized my personal life and overcame personal challenges, and I always tried to demonstrate that I also had characteristics that are normally valued in leading men - assertiveness and authority."

Another participant's strategy involved taking on tasks even when others doubted their ability and seeking help when needed. This approach highlights their determination to tackle challenges head-on and their willingness to seek support when necessary: *"Did the job even if they thought I couldn't and asked for help"*. For some participants, the key to overcoming career challenges was a steadfast commitment to hard work and consistently delivering results. Their dedication to excellence played a pivotal role in their career advancement: *"Working hard and delivering"*. Another participant attributes their success to qualities like dedication, persistence, and leadership skills. These attributes were pivotal in overcoming obstacles and achieving their career goals: *"Dedication, persistence and leadership ability."*

Remaining true to oneself and staying authentic emerged as a recurring theme. Some participants emphasized the importance of being authentic and not altering their identity or values to conform to societal expectations. This approach allowed them to navigate challenges without compromising their authenticity: *"I always be myself and never change just because it could limit me"*. Maintaining a focus on work quality and maintaining straightforward, uncomplicated relationships with colleagues was another strategy employed by some participants. This approach facilitated their progress in their careers: *"Just to have the work well done and never complicate relations."*

Lastly, being true to one's values and maintaining personal integrity was emphasized by another participant. This commitment to ethical principles and personal values played a pivotal role in their career journey: *"Be true to myself and my values"*. These diverse strategies collectively reflect the resilience and resourcefulness of individuals in overcoming career challenges. They underscore the importance of authenticity, dedication, and the willingness to seek support when needed. But it also shows that neither of the respondents

thinks of a training program as support. The unique approaches taken by each participant highlight the multifaceted nature of career advancement and the different paths to success.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Following the obstacles to female leadership specified in the literature review chapter (Section 2.2), this chapter brings together the literature, interviews, and elements of what EquiLead should include as a training program.

6.1 Stereotyping

In line with the literature review (Jonsen et al., 2010; Agars, 2004), the interviews revealed that stereotyping very much exists. My research highlighted the existence of gender stereotypes and how they are transmitted through various socialization processes, including media, education, and social interactions, which the interviews seemed to back up. These stereotypes contribute to gender prejudice and discrimination (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). Gender-stereotypic perceptions of leadership roles continue to be cited as barriers for women in positions of power (Dodd, 2012). This was not only found in the discussed literature but also in the responses of my respondents. Therefore, Equilead must have a module that includes learning about stereotyping.

6.2 Bias in Recruitment and Promotion

Research indicates that part of the bias in recruitment and promotion, appears to lie in external hiring practices. There is substantial accumulated evidence that women face discrimination when attempting to access higher-prestige jobs and/or those traditionally dominated by men. For instance, experimental results in a study by (González & Rodríguez-Menés, 2019) indicated that, with all else being equal, women have a lower probability (30%) of being invited to interviews and receiving job offers. This demonstrates that women experience greater difficulty in being hired, which might lead them to hesitate when applying for higher positions. This recent study indicates that women facing more discrimination and rejection when applying for lower positions within an organization subsequently diminishes their willingness to apply for higher positions within the same organization.

Moreover, part of the explanation for the infrequent rise of women to the role of CEO lies in the unjust setbacks they experience in their career progression. A recent study concluded that women have a lower likelihood of being promoted compared with men with identical

performance and qualifications (Cook & Glass, 2014). The fact that this discrimination occurs even at the lower rungs of the career ladder means that, when the selection for a new CEO takes place, there are fewer available and qualified women for the position.

This topic of hiring discrimination and promotion bias has been more prominent in the literature, but it was not mentioned in either of the interviews. While this is surprising, it also makes sense because the interviewees had already achieved a higher position, and perhaps they had not encountered hiring discrimination. Nevertheless, because it has been prevalent in the literature, EquiLead should include training on salary negotiation and other skills related to getting hired or being promoted. This will be most effective through the examination of case studies.

6.3 Organizational Structure

The literature indicates that the organizational structure in companies is often not sufficient. The presence of a gender-based social status belief system ingrained within the organizational structure and culture contributes to the limited representation of women in high-level leadership positions. Barriers such as a relatively low number of women in the organization and gender-stereotypic perceptions of leadership roles can hinder women's advancement to leadership positions. However, increasing their representation in these positions is crucial for achieving gender equality and improving organizational performance. However, "few managerial guidelines address the relationship of gender, leadership, and culture – how organizations should deal with gender diversity when it comes to structures, policies, and processes, let alone with the complexity of a particular cultural or societal context" (Jonsen et al., 2010, p. 6). This was also reflected in the interviews where the women indicated that much more support is required at their organizations. As present, women are often dependent on their own safety net of family members who are willing to babysit.

Legislative measures that mandate a certain percentage of women on the boards of major corporations (as already implemented in, for instance, Germany, France, and Spain) can contribute to a significant reduction in this issue over the medium and long term. Until such measures are implemented in Portugal, it is the responsibility upon everyone (individually

and collectively) to play an active role in ensuring that the organizations they interact with promote fairly, allocate work appropriately, and do not discriminate during hiring. Only through these means can we ensure that women ascend to the upper echelons of major corporations. Thus, Equilead should provide participants with more knowledge about the possibilities, and networking can help with this.

Moreover, creating a supportive organizational culture is essential for promoting a work–family balance for women in higher management positions. Organizations can foster such a culture by encouraging open communication, acknowledging the importance of family responsibilities, and providing support networks. A culture that values work–life balance can reduce the stigma associated with flexible arrangements and ensure that women feel comfortable seeking the assistance they need without the fear of negative consequences.

Lastly, access to quality childcare and eldercare services can significantly alleviate the work–family conflict faced by women in higher management positions. Employers can support their employees by offering on-site childcare facilities, subsidies, or partnerships with local childcare providers. This support will allow women to focus on their professional responsibilities, safe in the knowledge that their loved ones are well taken care of.

6.4 Work–Life Balance – Relocating for Work and Career Opportunities

The interviews were in line with the study of Cahyati et al. (2021), who also found that “women avoid top jobs because they do not want to sacrifice their family life, are less aggressive than their male counterparts and care less about work status than men” (p.3). Many respondents spoke about this work–family balance as a struggle.

Moreover, an interesting finding that might be cultural is that many of my respondents spoke about relocating for work and career opportunities. Perhaps it is more common in Portugal to go elsewhere for better opportunities and higher salaries. In particular, women presently struggle with requests to relocate for work. While relocating may be a good opportunity for them, it also requires sacrifices to be made, especially when there are children involved.

EquiLead could help with this by hosting lectures at which women hear stories of other women who have relocated to share the struggle and perhaps get inspired by role models.

They may hear that it is not always about “sacrificing family life” or a career, but that it is rather possible to have both.

Achieving a work–family balance is crucial for the success and well-being of women in higher management positions. By implementing strategies such as flexible work arrangements, cultivating a supportive organizational culture, promoting an equal distribution of family responsibilities, investing in career development, and providing access to childcare and eldercare, organizations can create an environment that enables women to thrive in both their professional and personal lives. As workplaces become more inclusive and family-friendly, women’s representation in leadership positions will continue to grow, contributing to a more diverse and balanced workforce.

One of the most effective strategies for achieving a work–family balance is the implementation of flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting, flexible hours, and compressed workweeks. Such arrangements provide women in higher management positions with the flexibility to manage their professional responsibilities while still attending to family needs. Flexible work options enable women to better manage their time, reduce commute-related stress, and maintain a healthier work–life balance.

Obviously, promoting an equal distribution of family responsibilities between partners is vital for women’s work–family balance. Organizations can encourage and model shared responsibilities by offering family-friendly policies, such as parental leave and flexible work options, to both men and women. When both partners share responsibilities at home, women are more likely to have the time and energy required to succeed in their leadership roles.

EquiLead could benefit from incorporating case studies, where participants can see practical implications and examples of creating a healthy work-life balance. Case studies are used in training modules for several reasons. First, they provide a practical and real-world context for learners to apply their knowledge and skills. By presenting learners with specific scenarios or situations, case studies allow them to analyze and solve problems in a realistic setting (Baxter & Jack, 2015). This helps learners to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills that will be essential in their professional roles.

Second, case studies allow learners to explore different perspectives and consider multiple factors that may influence decision making. By examining a specific case, learners can consider various variables that may impact the outcome, such as social, cultural, and ethical factors (Baxter & Jack, 2015). This helps them to develop a holistic understanding of complex issues and enhances their ability to make informed decisions.

Third, case studies provide learners with opportunities to practice and apply their knowledge in a safe and controlled environment. Through analyzing and discussing case studies, learners can test their understanding of theoretical concepts and principles and gain practical experience in applying them (Irawan et al., 2019). This helps to bridge the gap between theory and practice and prepares learners for real-world challenges. In addition, case studies promote active learning and engagement as learners are actively involved in analyzing and discussing the case, which enhances their motivation and interest in the topic (Zandbergs et al., 2021). This active engagement improves knowledge retention and understanding (Milham et al., 2004). Moreover, case studies encourage collaboration and teamwork, as learners often work together to analyze and solve the case (Al-Nabae & Sammani, 2019). This fosters communication and interpersonal skills, which are crucial in professional settings.

Case studies also provide a rich source of examples and illustrations. By presenting real-life examples, learners can see how theoretical concepts are applied in practice and gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Stalp, 2008). This helps to make the learning experience more relatable and meaningful. Furthermore, case studies can be used to evaluate and assess learners' knowledge and skills. By analyzing and solving a case, learners can demonstrate their understanding and application of the concepts covered in the training module (Otte et al., 2020), which allows trainers to assess learners' competency and identify areas for improvement. In sum, case studies are a valuable tool for EquiLead as they provide learners with practical real-world examples, promote active learning and engagement, foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and facilitate the assessment and evaluation of learners' knowledge and skills.

6.5 Lack of Professional Support

The literature review revealed the importance of mentorship, role models, and professional support. Nonetheless, the interviewees did not know of any mentorship program in Portugal. Investing in career development and mentorship programs specifically tailored for women in higher management positions can help them to navigate the challenges of balancing work and family. Providing access to leadership training, skill development workshops, and mentorship opportunities can empower women to effectively manage their roles and make informed decisions about their career paths.

Furthermore, training and education are foundational tools for women's professional development. Equipping women with relevant skills and knowledge not only enhances their performance in their current roles but also prepares them for future leadership positions. Ongoing training allows women to stay updated with industry trends and technological advancements, empowering them to contribute effectively and drive innovation within their organizations. Moreover, positive role models play a vital role in inspiring and motivating women to pursue their professional aspirations. Witnessing women who have successfully navigated challenges and achieved career milestones can instill a sense of possibility and confidence. Role models offer real-world examples of what women can accomplish, breaking down barriers and fostering a culture of achievement.

Additionally, mentoring provides a personalized form of support that is invaluable for women's professional growth. Establishing mentoring relationships allows women to receive guidance, advice, and insights from experienced professionals. Mentors offer a safe space for women to discuss their goals, challenges, and aspirations, helping them to navigate career choices and make informed decisions. Moreover, networking offers women the opportunity to expand their professional connections and build relationships within their industry. Engaging in networking events, conferences, and forums enables women to exchange ideas, share experiences, and learn from peers and experts. Building a strong professional network enhances visibility, opens doors to new opportunities, and fosters collaboration.

Professional support mechanisms contribute significantly to women's confidence and empowerment. Training, education, role models, mentoring, and networking collectively

boost women's self-assurance, enabling them to take on challenges and seize opportunities. As women gain the skills and connections required to excel, they are more likely to break through barriers and succeed in their careers. The literature has demonstrated that organizations also benefit from supporting women through training, education, role models, mentoring, and networking. A diverse workforce enriched by women's perspectives fosters creativity, innovation, and problem-solving. The enhanced representation of women in leadership positions contributes to more comprehensive decision making and a more inclusive workplace culture.

Thus, EquiLead providing professional support mechanisms, including training, education, role models, mentoring, and networking, are essential components of promoting women's career development and gender equality. These tools collectively empower women, equipping them with the skills, knowledge, and confidence they require to thrive in their professional journeys. Equilead can foster an environment where participants can access the guidance, resources, and connections they need.

6.6 Empowerment and Activism

The state of the art revealed that while the current situation is unequal, it is going in the direction of greater equality. In Portugal, women's representation in leadership positions remains disproportionately low compared with that of their male counterparts. Women are underrepresented in key sectors, such as politics, business, academia, and public administration. According to Eurostat data, in 2021, women comprised approximately 30% of members of boards of directors and approximately 34% of senior management roles in Portuguese companies. Nevertheless, the presence of a glass ceiling is evident in Portugal, where women face invisible barriers that hinder their upward mobility into top leadership roles. The respondents named stereotypes, biases, and societal norms that often limit women's access to leadership positions. Gender-based discrimination and unequal access to professional opportunities persist, hindering women's career progression and potential contribution to organizational success. My interviewees indicated the need for empowerment, especially for women. Moreover, men are more at ease with the idea of having equal gender leadership opportunities. Simply hearing that research is being done on female leadership sparked their interest.

EquiLead should not be a solely activism-based initiative, but elements of feminist activism can be used to motivate it, such as having a guest speaker with a feminist-activism background.

6.7 Negotiation skills and imposter syndrome

Effective communication is also essential for leadership success and thus it is important to include practical classes in EquiLead on this. Participants will receive training in public speaking, presentation skills, and interpersonal communication to help them build their confidence and influence. Furthermore, negotiation skills are essential for advancing in any industry. Participants will learn how to negotiate effectively, including strategies for preparing, building rapport, and closing deals. Moreover, strategic planning is critical for success in leadership roles. Participants will learn how to develop and implement effective strategies, including how to assess risks, evaluate options, and measure results.

6.8 Mentorship

In addition, participants will have access to personalized mentoring and coaching to help them achieve their professional goals. They will work with experienced mentors to develop individual plans and receive feedback on their progress. I wish to include coaching sessions that are based on a holistic evaluation completed by participants before and after the course. Participants will create an individual development plan aligned with their personal goals in these sessions.

I also want to include cross-mentoring sessions to pair each participant with a senior executive from a different company, thus promoting learning and growth through collaboration with mentors from other organizations. Mentorship is crucial to professional development, especially for women who aspire to enter top management positions. The program should establish a mentorship initiative that pairs them with experienced mentors in their industry. It should also be structured to provide regular feedback, support, and guidance as participants work toward achieving their professional goals. This mentorship program aims to provide women with the necessary skills, knowledge, and support to become successful leaders in their industries.

Mentorship is crucial in training programs aimed at improving gender equality in leadership positions. Mentorship provides guidance and support to individuals who aspire to such positions. Research has demonstrated that women face unique challenges and barriers in their career progression, including gender biases and stereotypes (Galsanjigmed & Sekiguchi, 2023). Mentorship can help women to navigate these challenges by providing them with advice, encouragement, and strategies for overcoming obstacles. Mentors can share their own experiences and provide insights into the skills and competencies required for leadership roles (Sims et al., 2021), thereby helping women to develop the confidence and self-efficacy necessary to pursue leadership positions.

Equilead will benefit from having mentorship, which can also help women to develop the necessary skills and competencies for leadership roles. Leadership is a complex and multifaceted concept, and individuals may benefit from guidance and feedback as they develop their leadership abilities. Mentors can provide constructive feedback, help individuals to identify their strengths and areas for improvement, and offer guidance on how to develop specific leadership skills (Sims et al., 2020). This can be particularly valuable for women who may face additional barriers to accessing leadership development opportunities. By providing targeted support and guidance, mentors can help women to build the skills and competencies needed to succeed in higher management positions.

Furthermore, mentorship can help women to build networks and connections that are essential for career advancement. A study demonstrated that women often have limited access to informal networks and mentorship opportunities, which can hinder their career progression (Groves, 2021). Mentors can introduce mentees to their professional networks, provide them with opportunities for visibility and recognition, and advocate for their advancement (Sims et al., 2020). By connecting women with influential individuals and providing them with access to resources and opportunities, mentors can help women to overcome the barriers they may face in accessing leadership positions (Smith & Sinkford, 2022).

In addition, mentorship can help to address the lack of representation of women in leadership positions. Research has consistently demonstrated that women are underrepresented in leadership roles across various sectors and industries (Kirsch, 2018). Mentorship programs can help to increase women's visibility and representation in leadership positions by providing them with the support and guidance required to advance their careers (Eagly & Carli, 2003). By pairing women with mentors who have achieved success in their respective fields, mentorship programs can help challenge gender stereotypes and biases that may hinder women's career progression (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Moreover, mentorship can contribute to the development of inclusive and diverse leadership styles. Research demonstrated that women tend to exhibit more transformational leadership behaviors than men (Eagly et al., 2003). Transformational leadership is characterized by inspiring and motivating followers, fostering positive relationships, and promoting individual development (Grant, 2012). By providing women with mentorship opportunities, organizations can help to cultivate and promote these transformational leadership behaviors, which have been associated with positive outcomes, such as increased employee engagement and performance (Wang & Hsieh, 2013). Mentorship can also help women to develop their authentic leadership style, which is characterized by self-awareness, transparency, and ethical behavior (Walumbwa et al., 2008). By supporting women in developing unique leadership styles, mentorship programs can contribute to more inclusive and diverse leadership practices.

Mentorship provides guidance, support, and skill-development opportunities for women aspiring to leadership roles. It will help participants navigate the unique challenges they may face, develop the necessary skills and competencies, build networks and connections, and challenge gender stereotypes and biases. By incorporating mentorship into EquiLead, organizations can contribute to the advancement of women in leadership positions and promote more inclusive and diverse leadership practices.

6.9 Coaching seminars

Besides mentorship, Equilead will benefit from having coaching seminars, which are beneficial for the development of knowledge among students in several ways. Groh (2016) studied peer coaching to empower women as professionals and demonstrated that it

contributes to empowering women in the field of engineering by providing them with skills to navigate their experiences in the engineering workforce. It helps them to make decisions, outline action items, and hold themselves accountable. Peer coaching also helps women to gain new perspectives and recognize the potential impact of coaching in various aspects of their personal and professional lives. It equips them for the transition to the workforce and addresses retention issues for women in engineering (Groh, 2016, p.3).

In line with this, Aydogdu and Winder (2022) reported that seminars provide students with the opportunity to learn from experts in their respective fields. By attending seminars, students can gain insights and knowledge from experienced professionals who share their expertise and experiences. This exposure to experts in the field enhances students' understanding and deepens their knowledge. Moreover, coaching seminars offer a platform for students to engage in interactive learning and discussions (Bouwmeester et al., 2016). Seminars often involve group activities, case studies, and discussions that encourage active participation and critical thinking. Through these interactive sessions, students can exchange ideas, share perspectives, and learn from their peers. This collaborative learning environment promotes the development of knowledge through the exploration of different viewpoints and the synthesis of diverse ideas. Furthermore, coaching seminars provide students with access to the latest research and evidence-based practices (Aydogdu & Winder, 2022).

Seminars often feature presentations and discussions on cutting-edge research and advancements in the field (Aydogdu & Winder, 2022). This exposure to current research helps students to stay up to date with the latest knowledge and developments in their area of study. It also enables them to critically evaluate and apply evidence-based practices in their own work. Moreover, coaching seminars offer students the chance to cultivate crucial skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving, and communication (Bouwmeester et al., 2016). Through engaging in discussions, analyzing case studies, and presenting their ideas, students can enhance their analytical and communication skills. These skills are crucial for the development of knowledge as they enable students to effectively articulate their ideas, evaluate information, and engage in intellectual discourse. Additionally, coaching seminars provide a platform for students to receive feedback and guidance from experts and peers (Dixon et al., 2022). During seminars, students can present their work, ask questions, and

receive constructive feedback from both facilitators and fellow participants (Dixon et al., 2022). This feedback helps students to refine their ideas, identify areas for improvement, and deepen their understanding of the subject matter (Dixon et al., 2022). Furthermore, coaching seminars foster a sense of motivation and enthusiasm for learning. The interactive and engaging nature of seminars, combined with the opportunity to learn from experts, can inspire students of EquiLead to further explore and pursue knowledge in their field of interest (Groh, 2016). This motivation plays a crucial role in the development of students' knowledge and their commitment to lifelong learning. In summary, coaching seminars are valuable for the development of knowledge for students. They provide opportunities to learn from experts, engage in interactive learning and discussions, access the latest research, develop essential skills, receive feedback and guidance, and foster motivation for learning (Aydogdu & Winder, 2022). By participating in coaching seminars, learners of EquiLead can enhance their knowledge, skills, and intellectual growth in their chosen field of study.

6.10 Networking

Networking is a crucial element for EquiLead, which is aimed at improving gender equality in leadership positions for several reasons. Networking provides opportunities for individuals to connect with others who share similar goals and interests. In the context of gender equality in leadership, networking will allow participants to build relationships with like-minded individuals who are also passionate about promoting gender equality (Gilmartin et al., 2020). These connections can lead to collaborations, support systems, and the exchange of ideas and resources, all of which are crucial for driving change and advancing gender equality in higher management positions.

Second, networking provides access to valuable knowledge and information. Participants can engage in conversations, attend seminars or workshops, and gain insights from experts and experienced professionals in the field (Yount et al., 2019). This exposure to diverse perspectives and expertise will enhance their understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to gender equality in leadership. It will also enable them to stay up to date on the latest research, best practices, and strategies for promoting gender equality in leadership positions. Furthermore, networking facilitates mentorship and guidance (Gilmartin et al., 2020). By connecting with established leaders and role models, participants

in the training program can benefit from their wisdom, advice, and support (Gilmartin et al., 2020). Mentors can provide guidance on navigating the challenges and barriers that women often face in leadership positions. They can also offer insights into effective leadership strategies and help participants to develop the skills and confidence they need to succeed in leadership roles (Gilmartin et al., 2020).

Moreover, networking creates opportunities for visibility and recognition (Fjendbo et al., 2021). By actively participating in networking events, conferences, or professional associations, participants can raise their profile and build a reputation as advocates for gender equality in leadership (Fjendbo et al., 2021). This visibility can lead to increased opportunities for leadership positions as well as invitations to speak at conferences or contribute to relevant initiatives. Networking will also allow participants to showcase their skills, expertise, and accomplishments, which can help to break down gender biases and stereotypes that may hinder women's advancement in leadership positions (Fjendbo et al., 2021). Additionally, networking provides a platform for collaboration and collective action. By connecting with other individuals and organizations that are working toward gender equality in leadership, participants can join forces, share resources, and amplify their impact. Networking enables the formation of alliances, partnerships, and coalitions that can advocate for policy changes, influence organizational practices, and drive systemic change to promote gender equality in leadership positions.

Through networking, individuals can build relationships, form alliances, and collectively work toward promoting gender equality in leadership positions. Building a solid professional network is essential for success in any industry. Participants will have opportunities to connect with industry leaders, attend networking events, and build relationships with other program participants. EquiLead will include network activities, such as professional meetings and events in Lisbon, which will allow participants to engage with senior executives in different environments and ecosystems, fostering professional relationships and networking.

Part II – Project Outline and Practicalities

Part II of this project introduces and proposes EquiLead as an Advanced Training Program at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa (UCP). To know what to include in this training, the results of not only the literature review but also the interviews from part I.

Chapter 7: EquiLead: A Gender Equality Leadership Development Program

After looking at components of training programs in 4.4, together with the findings that are in chapter 5, this chapter introduces EquiLead as an Advanced Training Program at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa (UCP). Hence, this chapter is devoted to propose EquiLead as an Advanced Training Program, outlining the program structure and elaborating on the practicalities.

7.1 Structure

Currently, UCP does not have any offerings in female leadership or gender equality in leadership. I not only believe that there is a market for such offerings but also that they are necessary for further empowering women. The aim is to develop a program that will actually be implemented. FCH postgraduate school of UCP has two course modalities which is the “Advanced Training Program”, consisting of up to 90 hours, which is approved by the Directive Board of FCH. Then there is the “Postgraduate course”, consisting of between 90 and 180 hours, which is approved by the Scientific Council of FCH.

I chose EquiLead to fall under the Advanced Training Program because it is a good starting point. Later, it can always flourish into an actual Post-Graduate Program. After consulting with Professor Patrícia Dias, she advised that eventually students value a Post-Graduate Program more, since they believe it looks even better on their CV. In the past, Advanced Training Programs did flourish into Post-Graduate Programs, so this could definitely be a future step for EquiLead.

The name EquiLead combines “equity” and “leadership” to symbolize the goals of achieving gender diversity and equality in leadership positions. It emphasizes the importance of equal

opportunities and empowerment for all individuals, regardless of gender, to foster a more inclusive and balanced leadership landscape. I want to organize networking events that unite participants with industry experts, successful leaders, and other influential figures. These events would provide valuable opportunities for participants to build their professional networks and learn from successful industry leaders. Furthermore, I consider it important to develop and implement a communications plan to raise awareness about the importance of gender balance in top management positions. This can include social media campaigns, events, and thought leadership pieces in relevant media outlets. Ultimately, a comprehensive program evaluation plan should be in place to assess the program's effectiveness in the form of interviews with participants and their employers, thus determining the program's impact on their career development and advancement.

The program should be designed to provide participants with the necessary skills, knowledge, and support to become successful leaders in their industries. It achieves this through case studies, theoretical classes, roleplay, debates, guest lectures from speakers from the industry and personal leadership style assessment. This includes training in areas such as leadership development, communication skills, negotiation, and strategic planning, as well as a mentorship program that pairs participants with experienced mentors in their industry. The mentorship program should be structured to provide participants with regular feedback, support, and guidance as they work toward achieving their professional goals.

7.2 Goals and Objectives of the Program

The objective of the program is to provide women with the necessary skills, knowledge, and support to become successful industry leaders. It aims to recognize and nurture women who may become leaders to enhance their opportunities to reach high-level management positions. By doing so, the project seeks to address the persisting gender inequality in leadership roles and remove barriers that hinder women's access to such positions. The programs specific objectives are as follows:

- To enable participants, and especially women, to move into higher management positions in their organizations;

- To provide targeted support and guidance which can help women to build the skills and competencies needed to succeed in leadership positions.
- To create awareness about the advantages of gender equality in higher management positions;
- To discuss and share personal experiences that can help to identify obstacles for women to achieve higher management positions;
- To enhance the different skills necessary to attain higher management positions;
- To establish a network that connects participants with experts, guest speakers, and each other;
- To offer mentoring that provides individualized plans for achieving predetermined professional objectives.
- To overcome cultural obstacles that prevent women from competing equally for higher management positions.

The program is part of a broader effort to increase the number of women in leadership positions in Portugal, which has been challenging due to cultural barriers.

7.3 Participants

The course is mostly aimed at women and men who aspire to pursue higher management positions and seek solid training, mentoring, and coaching, whether they are recent graduates or already working in the different professional areas. However, as presented throughout the literature review, research suggested that gender diversity in leadership positions can positively impact firm performance (Smith et al., 2006). Therefore, it is important to consider gender diversity and ensure equal opportunities for both men and women to participate in the training program. Participation is open to all who meet the following requirements:

- University degree or equivalent level of study;
- Two years of work experience;
- Knowledge of the English language (minimum of B2 level);

7.4 Professors

Courses must always be coordinated by a PhD professor working full-time at FCH. My supervisor, Professor Carla Ganito, works on gender issues in her research. I got informed that because I do not hold a PhD degree and do not work full-time at FCH, consequently I cannot be the scientific coordinator so that would have to be Prof. Carla Ganito. Personally, I aspire to be the executive coordinator and work closely together with her.

Table 4 presents short bios of the professors who would potentially be a match to teach the modules of the program:

Table 3

Short Bios of Professors

<i>Professors</i>	<i>Short Bio</i>
Dr. Prof. Carla Ganito	FCH-UCP
Dr. Prof. João Simao	FCH-UCP
Dr. Prof. Nelson Ribeiro	FCH-UCP
Dr. Prof. Mariana Victorino	FCH-UCP
Dr. Prof. Fernando Ilharco	FCH-UCP
Dr. Prof. Nuno Brandão	FCH-UCP
Dr. Prof. Naíde Müller	FCH-UCP

I have reached out to some of the professors mentioned: Professor Fernando Ilharco, Professor Nuno Brandão, Professor Carla Ganito, Professor João Simão, Professor Mariana Victorino and Professor Nelson Ribeiro. They have been supportive of the project for they agree there is a demand, and not yet an offer at UCP. I am thankful that all of them have been accessible in that they agreed I could share and present the proposal. These coming months I will continue to have meetings with them to further discuss thoughts and ideas about their participation in the Advanced Training Program.

7.5 Modules

Table 5 presents an overview of the course modules. In the table, please note that “T” stands for “Theoretical” and thus something that does not require individual work time, while “TP” stands for “Theoretical-Practical,” meaning that the classes have an expository component

but also practical exercises. Furthermore, the modules require individual work time dedicated to research, reading, solving of cases and exercises, and preparation of topics for debate in class. Lastly, “P” stands for “Practice,” which corresponds to practical work in the classroom accompanied by the teacher in conjunction with a more significant component of individual work outside the classroom by the student. Moreover, Table 5 lists the modules and the professors whose expertise and career background are suitable for each module. However, it is important to note that this allocation is yet to be confirmed in cooperation with each professor.

Table 4

Overview of the Course Modules

<i>Module</i>	<i>Professor</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>ECTs</i>	<i>Hours of lecture</i>	<i>Hours of Individual Work</i>
Module 1: State of the Art - Gender Leadership Insights	Prof. ^a Doutora Mariana Victorino	<i>TP</i>	2.5	15	45h
Module 2: Effective Communication	Prof. Nelson Ribeiro	<i>TP</i>	2.5	15	45h
Module 3: Inclusive Visionary Leadership	Prof. Fernando Ilharco	<i>TP</i>	2.5	14	45h
Module 4: Empowering Gender-Diverse Teams	Prof. Carla Ganito	<i>TP</i>	2.5	14	45h
Module 5: Diversity-Driven Ethics	Prof. Naíde Müller	<i>TP</i>	2.5	14	45h
Module 6: Gender-Positive Change Leadership	Prof. João Simão	<i>TP</i>	2.5	15	45h

Presenting the final work	Prof. ^a Carla Ganito	TP	2.5	3	45h
			Total	90 h	315 h

Note: Adapted from previous Advanced Training Programs proposals.

EquiLead aims to provide anyone who would like to the necessary tools to reach leadership positions in companies. The program is composed of six comprehensive modules that consist of mentoring programs with directors of companies that operate Portugal as well as networking opportunities. Participants will receive training in leadership skills, including goal setting, decision making, conflict resolution, and team management. They will also have access to leadership assessments and coaching to help them identify their strengths and areas for improvement. The program consists of six modules and spans 90 hours in total, all conducted in English. Each module is designed to empower people by focusing on various aspects of leadership development. Table 4 presents descriptions of each module's contents:

Table 5

Modules and Descriptions of their Content

Module Name	Hours per Module	Module Content
Module 1: State of the Art – Gender Leadership Insights	15	<p>This module offers a comprehensive and in-depth overview of the current landscape of female leadership. It highlights the historical context of women's leadership roles, the challenges they faced, and the advancements they have achieved. The module explores how women have fought for equal opportunities and equal rights in the workplace, and how they have shattered the glass ceiling to take up leadership roles in various industries.</p> <p>Participants in this module will delve into the research and case studies that showcase the unique qualities that women bring to leadership roles. They will learn how women's leadership styles differ from men's, and how they have been successful in leading teams and organizations.</p>

		<p>The module also includes discussions on the strategies for overcoming gender biases and leveraging gender-diverse leadership for organizational success. Participants will learn how to identify and mitigate unconscious biases and how to create a more inclusive workplace where everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed.</p> <p>This module provides a comprehensive and informative overview of female leadership, highlighting the progress made so far and the work that still needs to be done to achieve true gender equality in the workplace.</p>
<p>Module 2:</p> <p>Effective Communication</p>	15	<p>Effective communication plays a vital role in the success of any organization or team. Clear and impactful communication helps to build trust and understanding between team members, facilitates problem-solving, and fosters a positive work environment. As such, it is an essential skill for any leader to possess.</p> <p>In this module, participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of the principles of effective communication. They will learn how to communicate clearly and persuasively, how to actively listen to others, and how to be assertive in their communication style without being aggressive. They will also learn how to adapt their communication strategies to different situations and audiences.</p> <p>Through interactive exercises, role-playing, and case studies, participants will have the opportunity to practice their communication skills in a safe and supportive environment. They will learn how to build rapport and trust with others, how to handle difficult conversations, and how to ensure that their communication is gender-balanced and inclusive.</p> <p>By the end of this module, participants will have developed a more nuanced understanding of effective communication and will have gained valuable skills that they can apply in their personal and professional lives.</p>
Module 3:	14	<p>In this module, participants will learn how to develop a leadership style that is both inspiring and visionary. They will begin by exploring the</p>

<p>Inclusive Visionary Leadership</p>		<p>techniques used by successful visionary leaders to set ambitious goals, inspire innovation and lead with clarity. They will e.g. review the leadership styles mentioned in the literature review: transactional leadership, transformational leadership, authentic leadership and servant leadership. Participants will then be encouraged to apply these techniques to their own leadership style, developing a clear vision for their teams and inspiring them to work collaboratively towards a shared goal.</p> <p>The course will also delve into the importance of leadership narratives in visionary thinking. Participants will learn how to craft compelling narratives that inspire their teams, build trust and engagement, and help them achieve their goals. They will explore the journeys of successful visionary leaders, including women who have successfully navigated the leadership landscape, and learn from their experiences.</p> <p>Throughout the module, participants will have the opportunity to engage in discussions and activities designed to help them develop their own leadership skills. They will learn how to communicate their vision effectively, build strong teams, and navigate challenges along the way. By the end of the course, they will have developed a toolkit of strategies and techniques to help them become more effective, visionary leaders in their own right.</p>
<p>Module 4: Empowering Gender-Diverse Teams</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>Empowering teams with gender-diverse leadership is crucial as it brings diverse perspectives, which can lead to better decision-making, creativity, and innovation. However, managing a gender-diverse team can be challenging, and it requires a unique set of skills to ensure that everyone's strengths are utilized, and everyone feels valued and included.</p> <p>The program is designed to provide participants with the skills and knowledge they need to successfully lead gender-diverse teams. Through case studies and interactive discussions, participants will learn how to identify and address unique team dynamics that can arise from gender diversity, such as communication styles, work preferences, and decision-making processes.</p>

		<p>Furthermore, the program will focus on how to cultivate an inclusive team culture that values and respects individual differences, which can help to reduce conflicts that often arise from diverse viewpoints.</p> <p>Participants will also learn how to motivate team members inclusively, recognizing that different people respond to different motivators. The program will provide insights into how to delegate responsibilities while valuing individual strengths, which can lead to better team performance.</p> <p>In summary, this program is an excellent opportunity for participants to develop the skills they need to manage gender-diverse teams successfully. By understanding unique team dynamics and cultivating an inclusive team culture, leaders can harness the power of gender diversity to drive better decision-making, creativity, and innovation.</p>
<p>Module 5:</p> <p>Diversity-Driven Ethics</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>Gender-inclusive leadership is the act of promoting diversity and inclusivity within an organization. Ethical decision-making is an essential element of gender-inclusive leadership. It involves identifying and addressing diversity challenges and applying appropriate ethical frameworks to real-world dilemmas. Ethical frameworks are sets of principles and guidelines that are used to make decisions about what is right or wrong in a given situation.</p> <p>In the program, participants will explore various ethical frameworks and learn how to apply them in different contexts. The program will also focus on the importance of diversity and inclusion and how it relates to ethical decision-making. Participants will be exposed to case studies that illustrate ethical situations influenced by gender dynamics. They will learn how to recognize and address these situations in a way that promotes diversity and inclusivity.</p> <p>Participants will also develop strategies for ethical leadership that promote diversity. These strategies may include creating a diverse and inclusive workplace culture, developing policies and procedures that promote diversity, and ensuring that diversity is reflected in organizational goals and objectives. By the end of the program,</p>

		participants will be equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to be effective ethical leaders in a gender-inclusive environment.
Module 6: Gender-Positive Change Leadership	15	<p>Organizational change is a constant reality. However, change initiatives often fail due to a lack of effective leadership. Therefore, understanding how to lead change effectively is crucial. This module provides a gender-sensitive lens to the topic, highlighting the importance of gender-specific traits in change leadership success.</p> <p>Participants will learn about the different gender traits that contribute to effective change management such as emotional intelligence, communication skills, and resilience. Additionally, they will examine how gender dynamics play a role in the change process, including the different ways in which men and women experience change and how gender biases can impact decision-making during change initiatives.</p> <p>They will also explore strategies for navigating change while considering gender dynamics. For instance, discussing how to create a culture of inclusivity that fosters trust, collaboration, and innovation. Moreover, there should be a focus on examining how to engage diverse stakeholders, including women, in the change process to ensure that their perspectives are heard and incorporated into the decision-making process.</p>

Note: Adapted from previous proposals for Advanced Training Programs.

Overall, this training program combines theoretical knowledge, practical exercises, case studies, and interactive discussions to empower participants with the skills and insights they require for successful leadership roles. By addressing key areas such as communication, vision, team empowerment, ethics, and change leadership, participants will be better prepared to navigate the challenges and opportunities that arise in leadership positions.

EquiLead should incorporate exercises that fit each module, as well as concrete tips and checklists. This allows participants to connect with their personal values on a deeper level, reflect on their vision of leadership on a weekly basis.

Moreover, incorporating guest lectures into the EquiLead program would be a strategic and beneficial move for several reasons. Professor Mariana Victorino, Isabel Gil (the rector of UCP), and interviewee Isabel Canha are great examples of women who can bring fresh perspectives and real-world insights from accomplished individuals in various industries. These external voices can provide a broader spectrum of knowledge, experiences, and expertise that enriches the learning environment for program participants. Secondly, guest speakers can serve as powerful role models and mentors, offering invaluable guidance and inspiration to aspiring women leaders. They can share their personal journeys, challenges, and successes, making the path to leadership more tangible and relatable. Thirdly, by connecting EquiLead participants with a diverse array of guest speakers, the program can foster a broader network of professional connections and opportunities, helping women in the program establish vital contacts for their future careers. Ultimately, incorporating guest lectures not only enhances the quality of education but also reinforces EquiLead's commitment to empowering women with the knowledge and support needed to excel as industry leaders.

EquiLead will provide a comprehensive and holistic approach to developing female talent with leadership potential. By providing participants with the necessary skills, knowledge, and support, this initiative can help to break down barriers and reduce the gender equality gap in accessing top management positions. Lastly, it is crucial to evaluate the program. The program's success will be evaluated through participant feedback, mentor feedback, and post-program evaluations. This feedback will be used to continually improve the program and ensure that it meets the needs of participants.

7.6 Guidelines Following Universidade Católica Portuguesa

This section is inspired from and structured as earlier proposals for Advanced Training Programs at UCP. The aim of this section is to provide practical information on EquiLead.

7.6.1 Methodology, Evaluation, and Assignment of European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)

The pedagogical model of the classes of EquiLead is theoretical-practical, generally including expository moments by the teachers, moments of reading and analysis of support texts and case studies, and moments of debate in groups and in plenary. Student participation

will be valued and encouraged. Assessment will be continuous and face-to-face, requiring attendance in two-thirds of the sessions and positive participation by students in the various exercises proposed in class. Each curricular unit requires the completion of at least one element of assessment by the students (two may be requested in the case of a group; the existence of an individual assessment element is mandatory), which may vary in their character, covering, for example, scientific research, practical exercises, simulators, and case solving. The number of ECTs assigned to each curricular unit was calculated based on the number of contact hours (classes and assessment) as well as on an estimate of the number of hours of study required, on average, for the successful completion of each curricular unit.

The coordinator of the School of Post-Graduate and Advanced Training, Professor Nuno Brandão, is trying to ensure that every course implements presenting a final work so that evaluation is fair and equal. Hence is why this is incorporated after all the modules have been completed.

7.6.2 Calendar and Schedule

The course will run from January to May 2024, following the breaks provided for in the FCH academic calendar for 2024–25. The course will be given after working hours, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Classes will take place preferably on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and the dates initially planned may be changed if necessary. The course has a total of 30 sessions of 3 hours each.

7.6.3 Certification

A certificate of accomplishment will be awarded to students who complete the course successfully in all of the curricular units and in the final work.

7.6.4 Applications, Selection, and Number of Participants

To apply, potential participants will be required to complete a form and submit a CV (in person, by mail, or electronically). The selection will be made through an evaluation of the candidates' CVs and, if necessary, an interview. There will be a minimum of eight and a maximum of thirty places available.

7.6.5 Finances

From taking previous Advanced Training Programs proposals as an example, together with information Professor Patricia Dias has given me, regarding teaching staff, approximately 50% of the course teachers are required work at FCH, while the remaining 50% can come from the market and have different profiles. However, including too many teachers from competing universities (e.g., Nova) does not make much sense since Nova already offers a program in female leadership. In these proposals, there is a budget: Teachers are paid €55/hour, and usually the courses make a profit with eight students; therefore, that will be the minimum number required for the course to open.

The costs for participants required are listed as follows:

Application: €75 (at the time of application)

Enrollment Fee: €330

Monthly Tuition: €255 per month (total of 5 months)

Course certification (completion certificate): €80

7.7 Limitations and Conclusion

As part of my research, I asked for advice with Professor Patrícia Dias. From her experience in coordinating these types of courses, most students, especially when they are quite young, value the Post-Graduate Program. It is something that has a stronger weight on their CV which they can showcase to the market. However, she also says that sometimes, UCP tries out their offer to the market as an Advanced Training Program first, and if it has success, it gets expanded to a Post-Graduate Program. Which could be the case for EquiLead. However, thinking about the target audience of EquiLead with a requirement of minimum 2 years of work-experience, a Post-Graduate Program could be more attractive for younger people, because they are trying to enrich their curriculum. From Patrícia her experiences, prospect students value the Post-Graduate Program certificate more than the Advanced Training Program.

Also, when I present my proposal to the scientific board, there will probably be concerns about this course not overlapping with the Master in Strategic Communication & Leadership. Therefore, it is crucial to thoroughly see where the overlap is, and what differentiates EquiLead from the Master's program.

Conclusion

In today's rapidly evolving world, the call for gender equality and women's leadership has never been louder. Despite significant progress in recent years, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions across various sectors. To address this disparity, it is crucial to implement comprehensive training programs that empower women to take on leadership roles while promoting gender equality.

However, a main finding of mine is that a training should not be just for women. The research shows the benefits of having gender equality in leadership positions, so why would I want to create something that could potentially be even more polarizing? A key aspect of gender equality training is its ability to promote inclusivity and diversity in the workplace. In my opinion, a training in female leadership only, is not inclusive. Hence is why after reviewing the literature and state of the art, EquiLead went from the initial idea of a “female leadership training” into a more inclusive direction that I believe it is now. Such training emphasizes the importance of creating an environment that values individuals regardless of gender, race, or background. When organizations prioritize inclusivity, they benefit from a richer exchange of ideas, increased employee engagement, and enhanced team dynamics, leading to improved performance.

The interviews did show that the focus of EquiLead should be on women though, because eventually that is still what is lacking behind; The research has demonstrated that it is women who often face a confidence gap that hinders their pursuit of leadership roles. Training in gender equality not only equips women with the skills required for successful leadership but also fosters an environment where diverse perspectives are valued. By exploring the unique experiences and viewpoints that women bring to the table, organizations can drive more comprehensive decision-making and sustainable growth. I aspire EquiLead to help women to build self-confidence, assertiveness, and effective communication skills, which are essential for leadership success.

However, I also learned that organizations should take the responsibility to help build a pipeline of competent and confident female leaders by empowering women to believe in

their abilities and value their contributions. From my analysis of the McKinsey & Company reports on the state of the art and my personal experience at the traineeship at Coca-Cola I have learned that this topic is luckily already on their agendas, but there is still lots of room for improvement.

In the section of motivation and purpose, I wrote I noticed academic research on female leadership in the academic field in Portugal being scarce. A comprehensive review of the existing literature indeed reveals a scarcity of research specifically addressing female leadership in Portugal. Academic databases such as EBSCO, Web of Science, and Google Scholar yield few results when searching for studies on this topic. This lack of research is concerning, as it hinders our understanding of the barriers and opportunities for women in academic leadership positions.

Notably, journalism sources provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by women in academic leadership positions. Newspapers, magazines, and online platforms often feature articles and opinion pieces that shed light on women's experiences in leadership. These sources offer anecdotal evidence, personal narratives, and expert opinions, which can help identify patterns and trends in female leadership. Journalism sources also play a crucial role in raising awareness about gender disparities in academic leadership. By highlighting individual stories and systemic issues, journalists contribute to the public discourse on gender equality in academia. However, it is important to note that journalism sources may lack the methodological approach of academic research, and, therefore should be interpreted with caution.

In addition to journalism sources, consultant reports and studies provide valuable insights into the state of female leadership in the academic field in Portugal. I have noticed that consulting firms such as McKinsey & Company often conduct research and surveys to assess the gender diversity and inclusion practices within organizations, including universities and research institutions. These reports offer good quality data-driven analysis and recommendations for improving gender equality in leadership. I do believe consultant sources can provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges faced by women in leadership positions, including barriers to career progression, gender biases, and the impact

of organizational culture. Especially because these reports often include case studies, best practices, and actionable strategies for promoting gender equality in academia. However, it is essential to consider consultant sources' potential biases and limitations, as they may have their own agendas or focus on specific aspects of the issue. Hence the importance of also having academic research on this topic.

Regarding future steps, I will have a meeting with the Research Centre on People and Cultures which I am curious to learn more about because the limited academic research on female leadership in Portugal is a significant gap in our understanding of gender disparities. While academic databases yield few results, journalism and consultant sources offer alternative perspectives and valuable insights into the challenges faced by women in academic leadership positions. It is crucial to bridge the gap between academic research and these alternative sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of the barriers and opportunities for women in higher management positions in Portugal. Contextual and cultural factors very much influence this theme, future research should focus on addressing the leadership gap and exploring strategies to promote gender equality in leadership in Portugal.

When it comes to future research, I would like to propose two different ideas. First, it would be interesting to gain insights from male leaders as well on the topic of gender equality. In my current project, participants were all female, while in fact, men make up for the other 50% of the Portuguese workforce.

Second, future research could extend gender equity in leadership positions in the context of digital transformation. A report of the UN (2022) that got published recently, emphasizes the need to address stereotypes and promote women's participation and leadership in innovation processes. The UN (2022) discusses the importance of innovation, technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls. It highlights the potential benefits and challenges of digitalization, particularly in relation to the gender digital divide. However, addressing the gender digital divide, their report recommends to encourage disruptive shifts within technology companies, such as eliminating discrimination and gender pay gaps, promoting diversity and inclusion,

and ensuring that digitalization supports women's salary, job security, and career advancement (p. 77). In addition, respect, moral awareness and ethical thinking are relevant values that guide action. Continuous attention to strategic choices, organizational culture and the development of leadership and professional knowledge are important qualities. The ability to self-reflect, learn from mistakes and want to share experiences are essential qualities.

One of the next steps for EquiLead is to create a communication and marketing plan to promote this training. After a conversation with Patrícia Dias, she elaborated that the marketing department at UCP has been relatively small thus far, suggesting that it could potentially benefit from additional insights. EquiLead can start of as an Advanced Training Program, and later flourish into a Post-Graduate Degree. Another next step is to present this project as a proposal to the scientific board in the next few months to make EquiLead definite. I will be looking forward to keep investing in it, and I aspire to work closely together with the professor on this training.

In my internship in Coca-Cola Portugal, there is a focus on gender equality in leadership positions and empowering women is a topic on their agenda. Specifically working closely together with the Public Affairs Communications and Sustainability (PACS) team, one initiative that kept coming up is "Bora Mulheres". Bora Mulheres is a Coca-Cola initiative focused on empowering and supporting women in various aspects of their lives, including entrepreneurship, leadership, and personal development. It aims to create opportunities and promote gender equality and women's advancement. I have noticed that women and men in Portugal are open for discussion regarding this theme. However, after having conversations with my manager in PACS, he said even though we see an increase of women in the company, when it comes to higher management positions, it is still male-dominated.

After I have handed this project in, I will continue to put effort. I recently also came across HeForShe hub at UCP, and will have a conversation with Sofia, the president of the initiative, in these coming weeks. Furthermore, I have an interview planned with Sandra Gil Mateus from Microsoft on the 9th of October, which I am happy to elaborate on in the final presentation. On the 19th of October, there will be a Grand Conference in Female Leadership

by Executiva, where Coca-Cola gave me the opportunity to attend the various “round the table discussions” that will take place. Here, I will meet Isabel Canha in person, together with many other female leaders. I plan to introduce myself, ask questions, enter in discussions, but most of all, listen carefully to all the interesting conversations that will take place, so that I can learn from it and reinforce or perhaps edit the ideas regarding EquiLead.

However, gender equality and women's leadership training extend beyond the workplace, influencing societal norms and expectations. When women are empowered to lead and excel, they serve as role models and inspire others to challenge stereotypes and strive for gender equality. This ripple effect can contribute to broader social change, leading to a more equal society.

With incorporating an Advanced Training Program in the curriculum of UCP there will most probably be an increase of future academic research on the topic of leadership and gender as well. Younger higher educated people will participate in this Advanced Training Program, and be motivated to choose this topic of leadership and gender as their research field. Hence, by incorporating this program into the curriculum of UCP, there will naturally be more awareness and knowledge drawn towards it.

The interviews made me realize that there are still so many prejudices when it comes to what a leader should look like, how they should behave – especially for female leaders. Training could help gaining insights on how organizations can create an environment where there is room for authenticity in leadership and how female leaders can embrace being themselves instead of trying to fit into a stereotype.

One motivation of mine to choose the topic of my project, was that I do not have many female role models. I can confidently say that working on this project, and interviewing female leaders has definitely helped me in my personal and professional experience. The corporate world has made a big impact on me and the women I interviewed inspired me. I have had some work experience as waitressing in the past, but the traineeship I currently have at Coca-Cola is my first office job in a corporate environment. Seeing women in higher management positions has in combination with working on this project was the perfect

combination where I could start seeing the real-life implications of what I wrote about mentorship, coaching and having valuable professional relationships.

Furthermore, I am slowly discovering my own leadership style. Who am I as a woman in the workforce, and how am I going to make sure I go up in a higher management position. Speaking with women who all admit it is challenging to combine family, kids and a leadership position also made me question a lot whether I want to have children. And really, I have genuinely noticed how society needs gender equality. I have noticed that male colleagues are much more secure about their own skills and performance, while women underestimate theirs. Including me. Imposter syndrome was mentioned a couple of times in the interviews, and I completely empathized with feeling like I do not deserve my achievement. From all the women I interviewed for this project, I learned one thing: If you do not believe in yourself, no one will.

The urgency for training in female leadership and gender equality cannot be overstated. Women who have reached leadership positions are not an exceptional species and it should also not be the case that women who aspire to become leaders should adopt more “masculine” characteristics. We should acknowledge there are differences between men and women and genders have different needs. It is not discriminating to define gender; it is only discriminating if the organizational structure and culture creates a gender hierarchy where some attributes in one specific gender is valued more or less than the other. Acknowledging that the nature of people is different, helps to cater for specific needs of those people. By actively supporting and nurturing women to become industry leaders, EquiLead embodies the idea that true progress is achieved when every individual, regardless of gender, is given an equal opportunity to thrive. It reminds us that, in the pursuit of a brighter and more equitable future, we must not only break barriers but also provide the tools and mentorship necessary for women to rise to their full potential. EquiLead is a step in the direction towards gender equality and diverse leadership. Investing in gender equality training is an investment in a brighter future where men and women can drive progress and bring about positive change.

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Appendix A – Participant Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Experiences in Gender Equality Leadership

Introduction:

Thank you for considering participating in this study. Before we proceed, it is important that you understand the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and your rights as a participant. Please take the time to read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate.

Study Purpose:

The purpose of this study, conducted as part of my Master's project at Universidade Católica Portuguesa, is to explore the experiences and perspectives of female leaders. The information gathered will be used to develop a training program aimed at promoting gender diversity in leadership positions.

Procedures:

As part of this study, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview. The interview will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy in capturing your responses. The interview is estimated to last approximately 1 hour, and will take place at a mutually convenient time and location.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:

All information collected during the interview will be kept strictly confidential. To ensure anonymity, all identifiable information, such as your name, contact details, and any specific details that could identify you or your organization, will be removed or altered in the final report. The audio recording will be transcribed, and the transcription will be securely stored on password-protected devices accessible only to the research team. Only the researcher will have access to the data, and the findings will be reported in an aggregated and anonymized manner.

Voluntary Participation and the Right to Withdraw:

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without providing a reason. If you choose to withdraw, any data collected up to that point will be excluded from the study. Additionally, you may choose to exclude any specific information or questions from the interview that you are uncomfortable answering.

Data Protection:

The data collected during this study will be handled in accordance with relevant data protection laws and regulations. Your personal information will be securely stored and will not be shared with any third parties without your explicit consent.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study, please feel free to contact the Principal Investigator, Eline de Weerd, at s-eweerd@ucp.pt. If you have any concerns

regarding your rights as a participant, you may also contact the Ethics Committee at the Universidade Catolica Portuguesa.

Consent:

By agreeing to participate in this study, you confirm that you have read and understood the information provided in this consent form. You voluntarily agree to participate and acknowledge that you can withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. You consent to the audio recording of the interview and the use of anonymized data for research purposes.

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix B – Semi-Structured Interview Questions/Google Forms Questions

Before we begin, please tell me about your journey to becoming a *current position* at *company name*.

1. What were some of the challenges or obstacles you faced as a woman in a leadership position?
2. Can you tell me about a time when you felt that your gender was a barrier to your success?
3. What strategies did you use to overcome these challenges and succeed in your career?
4. How did you build your network and establish relationships within the industry?
5. Can you talk about any mentoring or sponsorship relationships that have been important to your success?
6. How have you maintained a work-life balance in your role as a leader?
7. What advice would you give to other women who aspire to leadership roles within the industry?
8. How can companies better support women in leadership positions and promote gender diversity in higher management positions?
9. Can you suggest any specific training or development programs that you think would be helpful in promoting gender diversity in leadership positions?
10. Do you think men and women are different in leading? Would a training be suitable for men and women? Or only women?
11. How do you see the future of gender diversity and leadership evolving within the industry?

Is there anything else you would like to add that we still need to discuss?

Thank you for sharing your insights and experiences with me. Your perspective is incredibly valuable in helping us promote gender diversity in leadership positions.

Appendix C - Transcription Ana-Claudia Ruiz

Tue, May 05, 2023 2:51PM • 48:40

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

portugal, women, work, kids, men, thinking, portuguese, husband, living, hard, clever, miami, boss, talk, foreigner, years, mexico, travel, job, bluffing

SPEAKERS

Eline de Weerd, Ana Claudia

Eline de Weerd 00:00

Okay, great. Um, so before we begin, can you tell me why and how you became a general manager here in Portugal? What was the journey to come here?

Ana Claudia 00:19

So I was living and working in Mexico, I went to do an MBA because I was in banking, and I wanted to change careers. And I thought an MBA would be the best way to do it. Yeah, I moved to London. And afterwards, I just wanted to work in an industry I ended up working for Diageo, which is a beverage company. I did several roles sorting finance. Eventually, when I went to m&a, mergers and acquisitions, which is what I had done before in banking. And while I had a Portuguese boyfriend, I was living back then a woman in the UK and traveling a lot doing a lot of countries elsewhere. Okay, so I had a Portuguese boyfriend. Eventually, we got married, I couldn't find a job here. So I did try to find for like a year or so. And there was nothing. It was really hard, I think, or overall, it's a tight network society. And people do prefer Portuguese. And I do notice that you go to Central America and everything. You see women, but you very rarely see foreigners. Yeah, it's it's very tight. Yeah. Eventually, I did get a job. But it was produced for doing consulting in Africa. And at that point, I thought, You know what, I'm not going to be living in Lisbon traveling to Africa. No, when I can be living in London traveling to Lisbon, like, it just feels like a nice your commute is when the Lisbon Africa. So. So we didn't move to Portugal. I couldn't find a job. Eventually, I got a promotion with the Azure team to Miami and my husband came with me, by then we were married. He came with me and I started working for a Brazilian brand. And the person that was helping me to do all the commercial plan later became the head of Iberia, here in Portugal. In Spain. So he had met me. And he had seen how, because I was doing mergers and acquisitions right now, I had never sold a case. I was not the general manager. But I was coordinating a multidisciplinary team. Very big team. Yeah. Where I had to talk about taxes, sales, Legal marketing people. Everything that you cover as a GM. So he basically offered me the job. He said, I think you could do it. I'm like, but I've never sold the case. And I never had a direct report. But he told me, No, I think you can do it. I've seen you and I think you can do it. So he gave me a job. Okay, so I became a general manager in Portugal. So that was my first job in Portugal. I see a lot the lay of the ladder here.

Eline de Weerd 02:50

But you first doubted yourself. You thought it's not the position for me. And then he said he encouraged you are not really.

Ana Claudia 02:58

Yes. But more than anything, it didn't make sense. Give that role to me. Because it's like this amazing. My husband would always tell me like, why don't you pitch for the GM here? And I was like, I'll never give it to me. i They basically took commercial director and I've never done sales. No. So yeah, I didn't. I didn't think I had the ball. It was tough. I must say, yeah. When I got here, I barely spoke the language. I didn't have any credibility with the team. It was very tough. Of course, I got the she got the job because she's a woman. Of course. I did.

Eline de Weerd 03:34

You think so? You know, so?

Ana Claudia 03:38

I know. So and both from the team and from the world, the people in maybe routine that were competing for this job, man also, and they were more experienced in there, or they have has a general. Okay. Okay. At the end of the day, I think I understand why this person chose me. And I think the team in Portugal, and he did tell me this, but at the beginning, I really thought he was calling me for me to give a recommendation because I had a Portuguese husband. I thought he was trying to call me back for when I kind of said my husband back the story. And he's like, I told him like, actually, it sounds like he was asking me if I want... And my husband was like, of course. And i just did not understand, I was like.. Why?

Eline de Weerd 04:22

Yeah, I see. I see.

Ana Claudia 04:25

Anyway, what I had seen what I have, which is a capacity to lead, basically. And if you need say there's a team Portugal was very robust. They had a lot of experience. And this happens a lot in Portugal, because the market is so small, there's so few opportunities that people tend to rotate a lot between different roles. It's not like other countries, that you've got massive organizations, that people go up in sales, and they can go up and up and up and up. Here No, you're eventually after two moves, you're already up and they all need to move sideways. And that makes people that really understand the business really well. I know the markets. On the other hand, it's a particular market interesting in the sense that because it's small, I always hear them saying, Oh, but we're boardroom over. They never take care of us. Oh, yeah. So these guys have got to hire me in some way. He saw one that I that I have the network. So that was fundamental for me being here. I knew all the Diageo people molded the engine, but I was for 14 years or so I knew how to go around the system and who to talk to and how to get advice and how to pitch things and who was important and what was the right way to do a meeting?

Eline de Weerd 05:38

Yeah. But here in Portugal, did you have a network in Portugal? In Miami?

Ana Claudia 05:42

In Azure? Yeah. And the Azure I had lived in Spain, in Russia in LA everywhere. Yeah. Okay. Okay. So I see. And I have done projects all over the world, I think Indonesia, but other than Asia? Yeah, I did a bit of Africa, a bit of Latin America and a lot of Europe. And

also, knowing who is almost as important as knowing what, yeah. So we see and know how and all their different stakeholders, and you need to understand what are they want to hear? And how do you make things? Yeah, yeah. So he saw that I had a skill in how do I make things happen, that I had the network, and that what I didn't have was all the sales experience was actually very covered by my team. Okay, any recommendation? I mean, it was tough. It did take me like probably a year to turn around people. Yeah. But, but eventually, it worked. And I did bring a lot of opportunities here, because suddenly, they could see that I could talk to the finance director of Europe, because I know I knew anymore. I went to London and everybody on the court in the corridors, I would find out about five different projects. Why don't we try here? Why don't we do this? You know, so they started seeing the benefit of having somebody not expert on the field, but a doer or a can do attitude? Yeah. And how that would balance?

Eline de Weerd 06:59

Do you think it's more difficult for women to create this network than for men? Because you say the network is really important. Do you think there there is? Maybe this exclusion sometimes?

Ana Claudia 07:14

I don't think so, but I'm a very cheerful woman. I don't want to be pitied of like "it's hard for women and it's narrow there."

Eline de Weerd 07:33

And yeah, maybe not so much empowering words. Maybe?

Ana Claudia 07:57

And I don't want to judge because I think I've been fortunate. And maybe at the beginning of my career, I didn't care where I was naive, or I just accepted it, because I did start in investment banking. And there I mean, I had a boss that would say, "why don't you wear more miniskirts?" "You're going to be here till you get married right?" "Afterwards you don't really care about this." Like, I heard all of them in a very male dominated industry. I always thought I had a niche because I was different. You know, and yeah. And whatever I spoke, people would remember and would notice it. So. So yes, in some ways, for example, here when I when I joined here, I could see some customers looking at me like, "Oh, who's this little girl? Really?" And even worse, because I'm nice and nice. Smiley. Yeah. So yeah. You know, like, they would all think that they could just do whatever they want. So ... maybe at first, they don't take you as seriously as I would think. They don't. I think you need to prove that you're there.

Eline de Weerd 09:02

Although you've already proven yourself, but not to that, but not to them. Yeah.

Ana Claudia 09:06

I just know there's a new world. Yeah. Yeah, that's it. Yeah. Because a really funny story, because I used to work with Filipe. And that we went to, I don't know if it was Intermache, but one of those French companies. And I was very pregnant. And it was really tough for me, because I was I had just moved here. I got pregnant, I barely spoke the language. It was really tough. First of all, the guys would speak in French between them, assuming we didn't

speak French. both Philip and I are fluent in French, so it was kind of... but that was just being snapped because it doesn't matter. Right? Yeah, it's nothing to do with women. And at some point we were talking about, we were readjusting the terms in which we would sell. So we will take away from here we would give here. The whole impact would be that they would be 200 euros worse off. So the guy was really, really tough and had been really annoying and really patronizing to me. At some point, I said, like, it's 200 euros. Are we really gonna fight over this? And he said, Okay, then right to the check, and I turn around. I said, No. And Filipe says that he almost died: "You're kidding me? Like, why not? I'm gonna write a check?" But, no, I'm not here to subsidize your sales, we're changing the sales. It doesn't matter if it's two euros. Or if it's 3000 euros. Take it or leave it. I'm not. And the guy was completely shocked. He didn't expect it. He wasn't expecting that somebody would stand up to him even less than this little girl. Because let's be honest, even my size matters. I do think that there's a difference when you have a tall woman. It's much more poses. And recently, I just had an amazing, amazing, amazing coach in Coca-Cola. When I saw her, it was shocking, because she's like, super small super thing. She has a really small voice. And then I would hear her talk. And it's like, it's so amazing that this person is so clever. And it's horrible. We start with those things. And even prejudice. Even the size matters. I have bad knees. I don't wear high heels. I know that if I were wore high heels, you project much more power. Silly things like that matter. And that's why I'm saying I don't think that is not relevant at all being men or women. Of course, it is. But there are different rules of the game. And there are also some benefits there. So yeah, it's harder. It's harder. But I, I've been lucky, I've been in good companies. I don't feel bruised by life, because I'm a woman and I have found myself. I laugh when I have things like this.

Eline de Weerd 11:52

But have you noticed that working environments with diversity works better than or were you ever in an environment with like 80% men and 20%? Women? For example, we could you see the benefits of more women?

Ana Claudia 12:08

I can't. Not really. But it was banking. And it was in Mexico. Or it's very macro. So

Eline de Weerd 12:15

Because how do you feel here in Portugal, is it? Because I know that in Mexico, it can be a little bit macho, sometimes. In Portugal, how do you experience that? Do you feel like traditional gender roles here are more or less strong?

Ana Claudia 12:31

Here in Portugal, definitely less strong. But I think what really makes a difference is the social structure. So I think I've told you this in Mexico schools are from 8.00 - 14.00. So what you do with kids? You abandon them all afternoon. And when I was a kid, you could really tell the son of the daughter of a woman that works. And the one that does she he would always have that or I'll be free in the afternoons or being with chauffeurs or I don't know, you could really it has an impact on your kids, whether you work or not in Mexico. Or at least my first 10 to 15 years of career change? I think not, I've been away for too long. But here you don't. And that makes a huge, huge difference. So I think more than anything, what Portugal has really done well, is this, for example, I think it's in Switzerland. Kids go back home for lunch, So how do you how do you work? What do you do with the kids?

Eline de Weerd 13:42

Well, a lot of schools, for example, provide these sitters, basically. So then it's the school's responsibility to say, Okay, this kid has working parents, this kid cannot go home.

Ana Claudia 13:55

Yeah, but then it's not nice. No, because he can't sit on the end up eating the cold lasagna. Yeah. Which my kids eat at lunch. It's horrible. But they are not discriminated. Or they're not separated. Or they don't have that. "Oh, my father works. My mother doesn't work." And you know, that's just lovely. Like, literally, I stopped working for three years. And my kids, really, but they didn't care at the beginning, because it was very busy. But for now, they don't see a difference. They see me as many hours as they saw me before. Okay, so non issue for them. Okay, whether I work or not, and it doesn't impact their education or their lifestyle or their bonding with the mother. I travel a bit more, but they get it you I? Yeah. Yeah. So that's what Portugal has really great. My friends in Switzerland. They do struggle. But like what do I do with the kids? Or somebody then what do you

Eline de Weerd 14:47

Yeah, I understand. Yeah. But then you stopped working for three years? Yes. Was that because of your pregnancy?

Ana Claudia 14:55

No, no. Because so I was three years General Manager at Diageo, three great years. And then they want to restructure Europe. And they call me for that role. And it's one of those that if I stay, I'm not going to like my new job. If I go, I don't really like the new job, but I can't really stay. I was a level higher in Miami and I had to move back a level to become a GM here. And the new role they offered me was already a higher level. To be honest, it didn't make much of a difference. I got a better car and whatever, because they didn't touch my salary. So it didn't make money, but it was a career progression. And the job here was only going to get smaller. So I decided to take it, but I didn't really like it. It was one of those about cost cutting, and I'm a people's person. And I was always in zoom. I was the only one in zoom which was pre-pandemic. Then I did another global role.. same dynamic. I had to travel a lot. And that's why I said it didn't make a difference when I stopped to work. Yeah, I could see that my daughter was really not getting enough time of me. And I had crazy hours because my team was global. So I would start at 7am calls. My husband has a very flexible job. And he's a sweetheart. He really, really, really supports me. Yeah. And he's also very thankful that I left Mexico while Mexico because I was living in London. Yeah, but he's very thankful that I moved here. And, and he's aware that professionally, I am sacrificing for living in Portugal. Yeah. So He supports me as much as he can. Yeah. So that I can grow. He once went to Miami for me. Because he does real estate. Yeah. So when we went to Miami, it was when the crisis was here in 2010/2011. Yeah. So he told me like, because he just got a promotion. Nothing is happening in Portugal. Now. I'll go with you. Going back then. We have already been married for like a year and a half. Yeah. And we're still commuting. Yeah, I couldn't find a job here. And I would say like, there's an awkward, we're gonna go quick. There's nothing happening virtual right now if there's a crisis. And then at that point, I got a promotion. And he said, let's go with you. So he came to me to Miami.

Eline de Weerd 17:19

Okay. Because I think relocating is one of the main obstacles, sometimes for women to advance in their career. And that's where

Ana Claudia 17:31

I'm sitting right now that I reflect on my career. Yeah. I have no doubt. Yeah. And it's not only that, like, I, you limit yourself. And I remember when I moved from Miami to Portugal, I did ask the head of Latin America, who was a really nice and clever guy, some word of advice, whatever. And he kind of said something like, make sure that don't think you're gonna save Portugal. Because as soon as you did happen, as soon as you say, I am not moving anywhere, you are completely off the spotlight. And I don't know if I think men are much better at than us bluffing. I'd say and then I'll decide. Yeah, we are too honest. Yeah. I don't have the face and tell to my boss: "No, in two years, I'll move now. And then.." I can't like I really cannot do that. No, but... but that limits me. And even now I can go back and see it. If I went straight on. I said, Where am I going? In two years? I would be in a different path. But it's, it's my choice.

Eline de Weerd 18:39

Yeah, I see. Do you think that because you say that maybe women are more honest than men are men are much better at bluffing. Do you think that men and women lead in the same way? Or do you think they are different in their leadership?

Ana Claudia 18:58

I think it's hard to generalize that for sure. But if I had to generalize, I would say different. Now having said that, I made a lot of cold blog women lead you really don't want them as bosses. No. And I've met a lot of really nice and warm guys that are very sensitive and yeah, I can see it. Yeah. I don't know. I don't think I've had enough to be fair, good experience with women to make the choice. I've had both. But I feel like more that I preferred my male bosses, but I'm not saying it's a gender thing. No, no, no, I'm just saying Yeah. If I if my best boss is there, man. Yeah. And I had one that's a really really really clever woman and she's a nice that still there was sometimes I feel women are a bit bruised by life and it's it's hard for them to become

Eline de Weerd 20:01

See more human? Yeah, I don't know, the ones that are they're overcompensating because they want to be seen as very powerful. So they create this character, and maybe it doesn't feel honest. Or, you know, I don't know, it could be. Yeah. But for example, there's many trainings already out there. But most of them are only for women. And I was thinking maybe it would be, that is also not good, because men also have a great impact. And well, maybe I would say men and women are not necessarily the same, and couldn't be the same and shouldn't be the same. But they're both part of this. And they should both. They both have a say in this. So do you think do you agree with that? Do you think training should be given for men and women?

Ana Claudia 20:54

I don't know if the word is training or it's not awareness. Because for example, there's something I think I've seen women much more than men that maybe training would be interesting is imposter syndrome.

Eline de Weerd 21:13

Oh, yeah. Imposter syndrome.

Ana Claudia 21:15

I think that one, and it's part of the bluffing that we're seeing right now, I do think that women are much more honest. They don't like pretending and yeah, and I can see them and I just got it's amazing. Yeah, you see them like, actually, yes, I was having a conversation around woman salaries. The wage gap. And, and I was actually playing a little bit devil's advocate. But I was just telling people, like, if you're a small company, because a big pump company has policies, yeah. Here's more company, you want to hire the best you can as cheap as you can. And it's kind of.. you go into a market and trying to buy something, right. You're gonna try to get the best fruit you can at the lowest price. If you want a space to negotiate, you are gonna negotiate down. And you want your money to invest in your company to have more people to? It's not gonna make you a bad person. No, you just one more cash. But what happens? Women don't negotiate. And I was just saying, like, think about it. I did try to negotiate in my last one but I didn't negotiate them as well. Overall, the things that women value the most are: Do I have free time? Can I work from home? Can I go to my kids? ... Salary.. Yeah. Festival, whatever it is? Those are the things that you value more than money. So is it the company's fault? Or the world's fault? Or is the woman that's valuing something else? It's very hard to tell a man: You have to buy more expensive than you could? Because it's a woman. Our effort is the same? It doesn't matter if it's men or men. I mean, in theory, you should pay the same to a man or a woman if they can do the same job. But in reality, you're always trying to get the lower price. So what do you get? So that's what I'm saying? Like, it's, it's complicated, because I think the gap comes from values from values, basically, because even the honesty and the bluffing is a value.

Eline de Weerd 23:23

Yeah. And have you ever had a coach, for example, that would maybe help you with negotiating, like improving, negotiating and negotiating skills?

Ana Claudia 23:34

I've taken negotiating trainings, okay. Not in the context of my salary. That has been very good. But overall, all of these things in overall, it's one of those things that either you have, or you don't have, you know, and you can have the theory, but you're gonna forget about it, you really have done it, like even even when you're in negotiations, you might do it the first two or three times, and maybe one or two concepts, six or so go back to your nature. It's very hard. But I think awareness plays a great role. Yeah. And when I started hearing about this imposter syndrome, I'm like, so what is it? And then I started thinking, like, is it about the honesty? Is it about the values of not letting people's expectations down?

Eline de Weerd 24:15

Maybe confidence in yourself? Feel like men are more confident sometimes? No, I think. I don't think that we think that's, I think, yeah, that could be very true.

Ana Claudia 24:29

Guys, since they're in school, they're supposed to appear strong. Yeah. And if they're not strong, you show them how to hit because that will make them look strong and feel strong, even if they never use it. Yeah. They're completely wired towards. I don't think that that does

it. But it appears and I think my prefer and it was was actually really interesting for me because my husband is really vocal, and he's very clever. And when I started dating him and I will talk about things at work. I could see his the point of view for men was different completely. You know, like, this guy is just like, he's insane. He really doesn't care. He doesn't know okay, that he would just point all the things, insecurities or what was a problem? And he would like send an email, copy the boss and sell it. And I'm like, I don't care. Declare war. It's okay. No, no, no. But if you don't do it, now, you're not marking your territory, and you need to go and you didn't read under that. You know, different way of thinking. I never heard I never did what he wanted. But I think eventually, I started getting it. And I started seeing how other people would see me not declaring the war. Yeah, you see an end it was kind of interesting. Yeah, cuz, basically, I got a lot more into how men think. And you realize that sometimes he's a bit too aggressive. And I won't do it, and I will not do it. And he has his trademark and I have mine. And I'm about work together. We have to better places. Yeah. I hate like, I remember once a friend of mine told me, I was so excited. You're at the beach. I'm like, why am I the beach? Yeah, you're the boss. Like, The Devil Wears Prada. I'm like, Are you kidding? Just because I'm a woman. I'm a boss. I have to be a bitch. Are you insane? Yeah, that's, that's kind of. Yeah. And, and there, I do get a bit of in the chip on the shoulder side, where... Why are successful women have to be like that. And successful men are just confidence. The same behavior gets different labels. It's amazing. I was starting to watch a series right now called the diplomatic metrics, diplomat. If you haven't seen it, just watch the project. It's really just the first step. The first episode is all about a woman that goes to the UK to be the diplomat, but she wasn't expecting it. Something happens. And she just goes, and she has all these things that they want to do a photo shooting with her in vogue in the house. And she's like, why? I'm not Cinderella. I'm an ambassador. Yeah, you know, they wouldn't do that with with men. Never!! You know. And she is like, why why do we need to think there's, she does like a monologue. I don't remember exactly the words, but it was all about this. She should be a bitch or not too much of a bitch, or she is not enough or she's too aggressive. Whereas he's confident that she's he she. And she starts putting it all out. And you're like, yeah, in that sense..

Eline de Weerd 27:39

So you could recognize that.

Ana Claudia 27:40

I can recognize it.

Eline de Weerd 27:42

Do you think that was ever a barrier for you? Do you think it has influenced your career the way people looked at you?

Ana Claudia 27:54

I think that being too nice might have influenced. I think there's some consensus building. But that's normal, right? In some cases, it works in others. It doesn't. I tried to dial it down. Yeah, well, I don't have a doubt. That's me. I tried to become a bit more punchy, but it really tired me. I become really, really tired when I have to do this aggressive in defense mode. Yeah. So naturally, I tried to position myself in circumstances where I can just work as a team, and not have to be confrontational.

Eline de Weerdt 28:28

Yeah. And maybe Portugal is a better has a better work culture. To do that than Mexico, for example. To have a more horizontal structure.

Ana Claudia 28:40

Meixco is not confrontational at all. Portugal is much more confrontational. What you what way? Like, they basically don't like conflict. The Mexicans want to have a good time, every meeting has a joke. You know, Not to your feedback and something that's very hard for Mexicans and Mexican life to live with. In general. Now, obviously, there are exceptions. And obviously everybody has an exception. So not only people but circumstances. But overall, it is all about

Eline de Weerdt 29:16

because I feel like Portuguese people are pretty reserved, and not super open about their emotions, but then in working culture, it's different. Do you think?

Ana Claudia 29:26

Now they're thinking of other emotions?

Eline de Weerdt 29:28

Are they are they outspoken in what they want? For example?

Ana Claudia 29:35

No, no, you're right there. That's what I was saying. Like the Portuguese feel sometimes: We're small. And, they complain. Yeah, there's a difference between complaining and doing. Yeah, they complain. And then what I found I don't want to generalize Of course, my experience is reserved Few environments. They don't do. They take the no for granted. They take the I won't even have it. That's it. And they don't go for this for a while. And and I think it's a huge, huge mistake because they're really good. Yeah. It's not necessary. I think they're amazing.

Eline de Weerdt 30:18

It's not a gender thing.

Ana Claudia 30:20

Gender? No, it's not the gender. But for example, I had my last boss, India, Israel, he was American. And I could feel he had a problem with me. But I wouldn't know if it was because I'm Mexican. And there's a lot of racism against Mexicans there. Because I'm a woman, there was another woman, but she was Canadian. And she was like, 180. Yeah. And so perfect. English. Language is another one.

Eline de Weerdt 30:46

Language. Yeah, languages. But that's,

Ana Claudia 30:48

that's why it's really hard for me to come into Portugal. Because I'm a foreigner. No matter what I do. I will always have an accent. I will not understand the jokes. Well, sometimes. Yeah.

Eline de Weerd 31:01

takes time. Also,

Ana Claudia 31:02

I've been 10 years. Oh, so

Eline de Weerd 31:06

sometimes it doesn't take time haha. Yeah, I see.

Ana Claudia 31:10

I am a foreigner. And I don't think ever, no, that will go away. So my perception is they're discriminatory to me, because I'm a woman is bias is not it doesn't really work. I think it's more because I'm a foreigner. But it might be because I'm a woman. But I think it's more because that makes

Eline de Weerd 31:27

it very difficult also to create. And one training for everyone. Because it might be very different. If you're black, or if you have a different sexuality, or all those little things they play, I think, a big factor.

Ana Claudia 31:42

So at the end of the day, I do think there's a correlation between not always but chip on your shoulder and success. The bigger your chip on your shoulder, the harder you will work. If you give up your work, and give up you don't, you're not gonna get there. The harder you will work to prove your point. Yeah. So I love with my husband, and sometimes because like, we just need to traumatize our kids, so they become really great persons. We don't need to try to be happy. We don't want to be successful. I was joking, of course. Yeah. But yeah, so I think the chips on the shoulders are very different depending on where you come from, and where you are. Yeah. And I don't have a chip on the shoulder for being a woman because I've worked in really nice places. And when I didn't, I was in a society that was like that, and I just took it for granted. Yeah. Where am I miniskirts? Yeah, right. And I continued, I was never offended. I never went to anyone say my boss is telling me to wear mores, miniskirts? No drama. Okay, maybe now I would. Yeah. But back then I didn't.

Eline de Weerd 32:49

And I can imagine that the situation would be different for if you have children or not. In which stage of the career you are in? Like maybe you would said something now, but not then. So that's that's really tricky. I think the main problem is how much are you willing to give up to sacrifice? Yeah. And I think but it's easier. What are men to sacrifice anything? No.

Ana Claudia 33:16

I was gonna say that's where I think life is unfair. Because, naturally, and I'm not many men. But I do think that naturally, women tend to feel more responsible for the mental health and well being of the family. Yeah. Not only the kids, the family.

Eline de Weerd 33:32

Yeah. Yeah. So yeah, also, because at some point, you may have to take care of your parents, for example, then you don't only have your kids, but also your parents. And then it's most often the women.

Ana Claudia 33:43

And it's not fun. Yeah. So I do think it's not that men don't care about sacrifice so that they don't sacrifice as much because if they're not there, the woman will be. Yeah. I feel I'm very fortunate because my husband is there. Yeah. And he chips in and he really complements although I can move countries. So I don't think the sacrifice that much. But I was actually thinking the other day. And cook especially you see a lot of Latins that are doing really well. And you see a lot of us that are really good as well. Just thinking. I think the big difference is, since the wives don't work, they can just fully focus on their career. Yeah. And they can go and live in different countries and, you know, makes a big difference.

Eline de Weerd 34:33

They say that behind every successful man stands a successful woman, but in the difference, most often unpaid work in that in that sense. Yeah.

Ana Claudia 34:44

Yes. But in the sense, I mean, if it's a good marriage, it's absolutely fair. Yes. You know, like, it's fine. Yeah. I have a very, very clever friend who stopped working eventually. And she now says she has five jobs and one of her five jobs is being the wife, and she just takes it as a job and she's fine and she's happy and that she has other things that she works in museums. Yeah, everything she wants. She's below money, and she works for the family business. But she takes it as a job. And she's fine. And, and that's the point like we need to stop judging whether we need to start thinking that not working is not being. It's not being ambitious or not being successful or Yeah. And I need if I'm talking to myself, because I stopped working for three years. When I came back to work. I'm like, I love this. Yeah, I'm like, Why? Why do I think this is where I need to change my mindset? Yeah. Anyway. So yeah, I think the problem is the values and how much we're willing to sacrifice. And it's different for men and women. So in my mind training that will make more sense around the awareness. Yeah. And what makes you happy? And how are you doing awareness and support? And that's, I think, where the Portuguese

Eline de Weerd 35:53

are really bad in support. They don't help each other. Only the parents I saw on your LinkedIn that you were coach this. So you were the support to someone specific

Ana Claudia 36:06

I am was on every year I have a different person.

Eline de Weerd 36:10

Okay. Okay. So, you think there's not enough initiatives like that?

Ana Claudia 36:14

No, no, no, I'm trying. I'm talking about the day to day. So for example, once I went it's, it's silly. No, but I travel with my husband. My kids stayed my mother last date with my kids. But she doesn't like to wake up early. So there was a problem with school. And I have this

amazing friend Venezuela, but as well as our on the other extreme, like Mexicans are nice many Venezuelans are something from another world. That she said, I'll take your kids. Can I borrow your car? She didn't have a car. Can I borrow your car? I'm like, Yeah, I'll take them school. Like, are you kidding me? Like, you're gonna wake up every day at 7am to go to my house because my kids are high school. She like, of course, I mean, I woke up early anyway, and I go to the gym, and then I just need to think if I need the car in your car, your house or if I don't, then I'm gonna know you can keep a car like she did that for a week.

Eline de Weerd 37:06

That is support. That is important. That helps a lot.

Ana Claudia 37:09

More than anything. And this time, it was holiday. Right? But Yesterday, for example, I was, I went for dinner with some of the Diageo friends. And one of them was saying that he got an Uber he bought a car with a friend, an Uber, because he was traveling, and the wife was a nurse. So she would have and he needed someone to go pick up the kids sometimes. So he he basically bought a chauffeur. chauffeur, but yeah, so that he could support so that he could travel, you know, but But if those things you can rely on the neighbor. So do you and you don't have it here? Portuguese are very, I my my own business and my good citizens. But you have your life I have my life. They don't talk about work. They don't talk about success, because it's rude to talk about success. But all these conversations actually make you human and make you think: Can you help? Yeah. And that's the support that women need. Yeah. Being able to earlier your neighbor, I have a meeting. Can you keep my kid till nine? Can you give them dinner? I'll pick him up when I come back.

Eline de Weerd 38:16

Yeah, and I think also companies, though, have the responsibility to, for example, provides off to a child. How do you say like, childcare for after doing work? That's 11

Ana Claudia 38:33

I'm not sure not enough. I'm not sure because that discriminates again, the kid. Remember what I don't want? Is that is that my kid has to be alone somewhere, because the mother is always working. But it's actually fun if he's at the neighbor's house playing and having dinner and meeting other families and being social and but

Eline de Weerd 38:54

that's super interesting, because McKinsey in a in a report showed that even when the the company provides it, many women don't take it. So it could be one of the reasons why women do not opt for that. You don't want your child to be alone.

Ana Claudia 39:14

And I have a very, I wouldn't say complex, but rich and colorful story because I come from one extreme where my mother never worked. And I went to a school that taught me how to be a housewife. And and I live in another world where my husband actually does a lot of the housework, not the housework, but the kids. Yeah. So I have very contrasting experience, but being in Mexico, like you didn't want your mother to work, because you didn't want to be the kid that was left out.

Eline de Weerd 39:41

But who was your role model then for you to think, Okay, I'm, I'm at this household school, but I want to go to business school, for example. That was just you.

Ana Claudia 39:52

Well, my mother is, is a bit French. So she's a bit more liberal than the classic Mexican. She never taught me how or cook? Or how to set the table? I mean, she did but more like, general culture. Yeah. Not one of those things like, you need to learn it because it's your only life. Yeah. You know, so I didn't have that much education. My father, my father is a very successful and he was always a workaholic a diesel was about doing better and doing more and doing whatever. Yeah. And but they never really pushed me to work. No, I mean, my father would say, Well, so what are you going to do? Right? Where are you going to work? Can I help you? Yeah. But I think it was one example. And

Eline de Weerd 40:32

yeah, yeah, it's yeah. It's maybe not about the parents pushing. But to have that as an example, seeing how

Ana Claudia 40:40

but neither my mother, any other woman, I think I know, two, three women, from my generation when as a kid that were working, no one else. There was nothing. Which is also why for the heart, and and that's why I keep saying like, it's very easy to judge men and say, it's all their fault. Yeah. But it's human. Yeah, you go to a workforce where there's only men, none of them have kids, well, they have kids without them taking care of the kids. None of them understands that I need to go back for dinner, and then I'll log in later. Because they don't have to know the Wi Fi is there. Yeah. So that's not really either. If you're hiring again, to the whole thing about the salary example. Yeah, if you have to hire and then you know that you can count a lot on somebody. But someone's going to the middle of a night, say, I'm out, see you tomorrow and leave you hanging. You can prefer the one that you're not going to leave hanging. I don't care if it's man or woman.

Eline de Weerd 41:34

Yeah. You know, like, yeah, no, that's true.

Ana Claudia 41:37

So it's hard. And when my first kid was born in Miami, I was I was doing still m&a thing got my first deal was in Jamaica, which was really close to Miami so I can kind of do more or less. And I have my husband that back then he was full time home. He was working. He was working in Portugal, but he didn't have an office. Yeah, he will travel I don't know, once every two, three months in Portugal. So he was there. Yeah, I could rely on him. I had we had a live in nanny. So

Eline de Weerd 42:04

how much time did you take off after you got the kids?

Ana Claudia 42:08

At 33? six and five months.

Eline de Weerd 42:13

And your husband, or he works himself? So it's different. Okay.

Ana Claudia 42:18

So in the UK, when I was in Miami, I was an expert. And I had I could take up to a year. But I wasn't experts. And I know fields. Yeah, yeah. Well, first of all, I I arrived in like six months later, I had the baby.

Eline de Weerd 42:32

Yeah, but you hear it a lot that, for example, in Sweden, I think they have a very long period as well. But also for men, actually, for dads, but they just feel guilty, because then their colleague is maybe not taking the full term. And then they want to show that they're passionate that they still want to go to work. Yeah, it's hard. And it's also because

Ana Claudia 42:55

we like work. No. So yeah, I have two maternity leaves. And the first one there was somebody that I knew was very clever. He was from my team before when I was in strategy. And he really wanted to stay in the US. He was very clever. He was very good. He loved the job, but there was not a space for him. So he covered my maternity leave. And he was horrible. Because I was because there's a direct comparison. There's somebody there because I literally hand over like in your so these are the five things we need to continue. And this is how I deal with the team. And this is you know, like I literally handed off the baby and say, Yeah, you take care of him for six months. Yeah. And you do feel very,

Eline de Weerd 43:36

yeah. We reached when you came back. How was that? It was okay. I

Ana Claudia 43:42

think the deal had finished because I was we were just about to finish the deal. Basically, okay. Yeah. And I knew we weren't very different. He was very British. It was extremely clever. speak Spanish and didn't have the network. So I knew we were different proposition. And there was nothing that was gonna happen. I was gonna have my job back. It doesn't make you feel secure. Yeah. To have somebody that. Yeah. And also frustrating. No, I mean, it was it was a good thing. I had a baby coming up, because otherwise, I don't know if I would have like, how am I going to? I'd be working on this deal for a year and a half. And now suddenly, he's gonna finish it. And he's gonna take the credit. Maybe? No, he did it. We booked it, but That's okay.

Eline de Weerd 44:32

Did he make the same decision as that you would have made?

Ana Claudia 44:35

I have no idea. I completely disconnected. Okay, maybe that's the best, otherwise you stress too much. No, no, no, this has a life on its own. Because then you start going like two week negotiations when you're with lawyers. Are they in an office? Yeah. There's no way you can't be a little bit in your Europe. Now. The second one, I was here as a GM and my finance person kind of covered for me Then, that was much nicer for me because she's really good, really capable. She said to me, I do not want to be a general manager. I'm only doing this for

you. Because I had to do a plan. Right? That was another interesting one when I went to my boss, and I told him he's like, alright, so. So what do you want to do during your maternity leave? Yeah. And then I spoke with another way you went to him? I told him I was pregnant. Okay. And then he asked, he said, What do you want to do? And then I was talking to another woman that was so incredibly clever in Diageo. Very bitchy. She looked at me like, it gets so wrong, that it's his problem, not yours. You're having a baby. If it doesn't work, it's his problem. Not yours. It's your baby, you have a right to go. You don't need to take any responsibility on the business while you're away. You're on maternity leave.

Eline de Weerdt 45:53

But did she have a good? Yes. So she could speak from good? Oh, great. No. And she became a CFO somewhere else. Like she was really, really very clever. And very, she could do things very quickly, you learn that? You either become quickly or you don't.

Ana Claudia 46:09

So she supported you, you think in that in that situation? Or did it make you feel insecure? She supported me. Okay. Of course I did not do it. I went back to this and say, well, it's your decision. This is the plan I can think it could work and I would be willing to do, but it's your decision, you know. And basically, financial director stayed. And we will talk once or twice a week, and I would coach. And I would say "for these things yes, for these things no". Maybe I did a few calls when needed. There were a few moments where they needed me and I went. For me it worked, it was fine.

Eline de Weerdt 46:18

Okay. So you're saying awareness is very important support, also from other women, I would suppose but also for men, just to boards and society from society.

Ana Claudia 47:01

And that includes already the structure of the one works the best. Is the social structure fact that you do not discriminate your kids or do not in their life quality or style? Because you work? Because that's when you start feeling guilt?

Eline de Weerdt 47:16

It's it shows as well that in a survey that women, female leaders care more about work life balance, and men care more about their income, for example. So yeah, what you said it's also a value thing.

Ana Claudia 47:36

Of what do you value more? And how what do you think it's the right thing to do in life?

Eline de Weerdt 47:40

I see. Very clear story. Very clear. I understand the experience. Yeah, I will transcribe it later. I'm going to do qualitative analysis. And then I don't know if you want to read it if it's done, but it's going to be done in September,

Ana Claudia 47:59

I think. Absolutely. I would love to Absolutely. Do a follow up, please. By all means. Yes. Thank you so much. Whatever you need to let you know about this.

Eline de Weerd 48:09
Okay great. Thank you!

Appendix D - Transcription Isabel Canha

Tue, Sep 05, 2023 1:36PM • 42:15

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

women, company, men, portugal, quotas, journalism, leadership, magazine, work, launched, decided, promoted, topics, programs, role models, study, career, law, impreza, executiva

SPEAKERS

Isabel Canha, Eline de Weerd

Eline de Weerd 00:53

So first, what is your current position? And Can you guide me through your, your career as an entrepreneur?

Isabel Canha 01:02

I am an entrepreneur. So, Maria Serina and I have founded this company called Red Cherry, which is a content producer. And it was launched in order to have this website and this project on female leadership called Executiva. So we I am the founder and the editor in chief of executive

Eline de Weerd 01:36

and how did you how did you start this? Like, how did you come here? What was in advance? What did you study?

Isabel Canha 01:48

I studied law, at The University of Lisbon. And I always wanted to be a journalist. When I studied law back in 1980, when I finished my my course 1989. The graduations in journalism were still very, very recent, were not well established. And all great journalists in Portugal were what had a law background. So I decided that my mother is from law. My uncle is from law. So are they are lawyers. So I decided to study law. And afterwards, with always in mind to become a journalist. So I started working when I was at university, second year of university. The graduation was five years back then, on the second year of university, I started to work in newspaper in the economics section of the newspaper. And I decided, this is really what I want to do in the future. So I finished my graduation in law, but I always wanted to work in in newspapers and magazines, and so on. So I was invited to become part of the team that launched in Portugal isn't magazine. Afterwards, I made a career in business journalism. At some point, I was invited to become the editor in chief of Cosmopolitan. So I made a small detour to the women, business, women's magazines, and all these these experiencing in economic and business journalism and female journalism resulted in the launch of is cultiva, which was an item that I have worked for when I was in Impreza great communication group in Portugal. So when I was in executive digest, we launched is diva is

a paper magazine. And afterwards, the company decided not to discontinue the this idea. And some years afterwards, me and Maria that always had this idea. This is the magazine, we would like to have a magazine that is directed to women, but it expresses their concerns and reflects their concerns on the career topics on the south. We decided this is a gap. There's a gap in Portugal in this in these above magazine, so we decided to launch it ourselves. And that's why after the 30 years of economic In business journalism, we decided to become intrapreneurs. And to invest in our in our own company, in our title, and we have no investors, it's just us that decided to launch this project it was eight years ago and we have done a lot of things: The website, which is on a daily basis, we publish new articles. Then we have events like the Grande Conferencia de Lideranca Feminina, which is a huge event on the first year that we launched this event. We had 400 women to be part of the event. And it's always like that. And so we have the website, we have events, awards, we give the awards of the most influential women in Portugal, that when it's a study we do via by a journalist, and we have these awards, and also have books, we write a lot of books on on role models, on business women role models to inspire the new generation, and to give them references, role models, that it's possible that there are women leaders, what it's like, important. Yeah, very, very important. Yeah, our activity is based in this buzzword role models within world models, whether it's in the website, in the books, or in the events, we give stage to these women, we give them visibility we and we give to the others role models. So that's

Eline de Weerd 06:57

what I was planning on in the training, for example, having guest lectures of women. That could be role models. I think the training that I will have, I will incorporate guest lectures so that women can also come and speak about their experiences because of role modeling being so important.

Isabel Canha 07:26

by the way, we have a course an executive program, in partnership with is Business School, which is called One Step Ahead, women leadership. And we also have these these invited speakers from companies to inspire the women. So

Eline de Weerd 07:51

it's interesting, I will I will read a little bit more on that later. Okay. And for you personally, what were some of the obstacles that you faced, as a woman in a leadership position?

Isabel Canha 08:05

Well, I on on my 30s, I became the editor in chief of Cosmopolitan. And afterwards, I was the editor in chief of the most prestigious business magazine in Portugal, which is ism. And when, when I was invited, someone told me, do you see that you are the only woman in the whole world that is the editor in chief of the business magazine? No, I didn't. I didn't realize that. I have to say, I was recognized by the company I worked for. I was hired when I was seven months pregnant to be to enter to re enter the this company which is Impreza. So, I

would say from seeing from the outside on the surface, I was recognized, I think people respected and admired my work the results I have. So I would say our there was no discrimination, no added difficulties just for the fact of my brain, but I also have to say that in face of the the studies that we might, on on these gender issues on female leadership, on the the interviews we had with a lot of women seeing backwards, I have to say that the the career and the obstacles for the women are much worse than for the men A foreign men, whatever, just because of the fact of being a woman, and this is met this what materializes this, what does this express these difficulties, I would say that there is always some paternalism for men. Less consideration for men, so you have to be to be really good in order to get the same the same recognition recognition is a colleague that that is a man. Some things are expected, or are more well accepted for a woman, then for men, for instance, I had bosses who considered that the the salary of the women is not as important as for men, because there's this misconception that men is the provider. And women, it's just for purses and bags, and the bat was always very, very present. So I would say in, in small, in small, subtle, daily behaviors, these these prejudices, and this discrimination appears, it's not, of course, I decided not to promote it, it's not direct, it's not assumed It's settled, it's small things you might not notice. And when you notice, you think, Oh, it's just a small thing, I'm not going to make a big mess about this. So but I think the all this all this environment, makes it harder for women to be recognized and that their merit is recognized by the by the company.

Eline de Weerd 12:15

You say that you interviewed many women on this? Are there specific cultural things that you saw specifically for Portugal, and maybe not as much in other countries?

Isabel Canha 12:31

I think that this is worldwide. I think, really, I think that some countries are much worse, of course, some countries from Islamic tradition, Japan, India, those kinds of countries that they are much worse than in Europe, or in the United States, where these these methods are always discussed, they are on the agenda, and people are aware. So it's, it's easier to have these these controlled. But I would say that this is everywhere in the world, being a woman is much harder than being a man. Even in in industrialized democracies, and countries and economic spaces like Europe. It's always much harder to be a woman and it really shouldn't be. We are not the minority. But we are being treated as if we weren't a minority. Of course, there are scandalous, atrocious, atrocious, atrocious situations in some countries. Well, luckily, we don't have these in Europe, in the United States and so on. But baby, baby life is harder for women than for men everywhere. But sometimes women, they are educated in this environment, they are accustomed to it. And sometimes they don't even notice. I think that a lot of women when we ask them, Do you felt discriminated against? Oh, no, never. And more and more, we continue to talk and sometimes afterwards, they give one example. And we but that's discrimination. That's a subtle stimulation, but That's discrimination. So they are they are I think that they they accept it. They it's cultural, they they were educated like this. They were accustomed like this, so they they accept it.

Eline de Weerd 14:47

Yeah. Do you think there is a difference between expertises for example, your experience is more in journalism, maybe even though it was a magazine in business. Would that be one of the maybe reasons why you personally you didn't really felt like your gender was a barrier to success. Maybe someone in a technology field in STEM, for example, would have different experiences. I don't know if you've spoken to women in different fields.

Isabel Canha 15:22

Yes, I've spoken to women in different fields, women in in industries, and as you said, in in technologies, they feel very uncomfortable in such a male dominated environment. And even though companies wanted to recruit and to attract more women to these areas, the fact is that they don't feel they don't fit. There are some studies that show that they don't feel welcome, they don't feel nurtured, they don't feel respected. So they left even even when they enter these, these, these areas. They abandoned these areas, because they don't feel they are being heard that their contribution is valued and so on, which is a contradiction with because companies need this talent very much. And they make a huge effort to attract them. But some studies show that women don't feel don't feel welcomed in the in these areas. Journalism is an area that is very, I wouldn't, I wouldn't say female dominated but there are like in law, like in the law, professions were very masculine. And suddenly in Portugal, women started to go to universities and law, journalism, there are some professions that are very, very women are very well represented. And in large numbers. So in journalism, women are in large numbers. It's not it's not uncommon, not at all to have a women working on newspaper or magazine. It's very, very common, perhaps the the majority, perhaps I'm not sure, but but when we talk about managers, editors in chief boards of this company, as in other areas, it's a male dominant environment. And only because these companies were public went public. And there's the quota legislation in Portugal, they had to put some women's in the board, some women in the board, but because it was all masculine.

Eline de Weerd 17:52

What do you think of quota?

Isabel Canha 17:53

Yeah, I have to say that I agree with quotas. And let me share that for 30 years interviewing, there was a time this the subject were not discussed, but with a lot of interviews for the site, for the magazines, for the books, and so on: When we asked women do you agree with quota? Every, in the past when we started executive eight years ago, every every woman would say, "oh, no, I think it should be my merit. This is a meritocracy. I don't want to be on a board just because I'm a woman," and so on. Nowadays, if you ask, and we ask daily, those women about quotas. 99% of them will say I wouldn't agree very much, in the past I didn't agree. But I have to accept that if it weren't for the quotas, we wouldn't have women in politics, we wouldn't have women in boards in public companies and the change is so, so

slow, the pace of change is so slow, that only from 100 years from now, we have total equality. So I am pro quota now nowadays. I always was pro quota because I think and I studied a bit about it. And I think the the law is a very powerful mechanism to make changes. If you expect people to this mentality entity creation and our son wheel the wheel to transform the world. That takes a long time. When when you want to see real change and quick change, you have to legislate it you have to impose. So, as one Secretary of State said about quotas, "it's like the brackets, you put on your teeth, expressing story. It's not beautiful, but it's practical. And it works."

Eline de Weerd 20:30

Yeah. Yeah. Oh, that's a really nice metaphor. Yeah. It's like braces. Okay. So, you say that if it weren't for quotas, there wouldn't be as many women, but we still see that it's not equal. So quotas help, but not as much as we would want? What could be another reason for women to, to not want to achieve higher positions?

Isabel Canha 21:06

That's a complex question. Because it's not only one aspect that we can identify. It's all this culture, the way they were educated. Woman were educated to be discreet, not to make networking. They were dedicated to being not confident, not to speak loud, not to expose themselves. All this is in the heads of men and women. It's expected that women behave like that. And when a woman doesn't behave like that, she feels she's not as much liked, as other women. She feels that the same behaviour a man is praised for, a women is being criticized for. It is not the objective behaviour, but the person who does it. These are all prejudice that can make it difficult for women to advance in their career. But that is not only it. There is also the question of career and family. Here at Executiva we have discussed internally, whether we should ask the question to women when we interview them, about their family, because when we were journalist and interview a CEO men, we wouldn't ask him: "How did you manage to have a career and a family!" And.. when we ask women executives, it might be discriminotry in its nature. But after reflecting, we have decided to ask. Because every time we make an event or have a woman talking as a role model at a university for the younger generation, always that is what people want to hear: "how did you manage to do it". So if this is difficult for women, we have to give them rolemodels and support them in this area so we have decided to ask. So we make the dual evaluation that we make for the same behavior. Exactly. That's exactly what what what I was mentioning. So if it's difficult, if this is difficult for women, we have to give them role models. And we have to do this complicated this area in their minds. So we decided we are going to ask because it's useful for people this to say that career and family, a lot of women feel this pressure. Men are changing also, of course, the role of the man is also in great change. Men nowadays share the same domestic and education of the children tasks and so on. But the responsibility, the the main responsibility, it's still in the hands of women. And we have a lot of of managers that we ask, and they have to travel a lot and so on. And they tell with that when they travel, they try to hit to leave everything organized, what is going to be the dinner, who is going to pick the

children from school and so on. So this is always worry that women have in all these environments makes it harder for women. This is one aspect that's what insights their minds and the minds of men have. The mothers of their mothers in law, always ask how you are going to travel who is going to take care of Joao..

Eline de Weerd 25:09

So if a man would leave for travel, leaving everything behind his ambitious and work driven, but if a woman does that it's selfish or not taking good care of their family.

Isabel Canha 25:26

That is the dual evaluation that we make for the same behaviour. Exactly, that is exactly what I meant. And apart from this there is always the obstacles that the world outside puts on the women's way. Men recruit men. Men feel they feel they are in power so they perpetuate their power because they tend to recruit people that are similar to them. I don't say this is men against women and that they do it on purpose. No, it's subtle, it's mental mechanisms that are difficult to break and expose. So people should be prepared on unconscious bias and gender issues. I think that would be very helpful to help women and to help the organizations to have more women ascending to top positions. And apart from this, there's always the obstacles. That world outside puts on the women's why men recruit men, men feel they are in power. So they they perpetuate their power, because they tend to recruit people that are similar to them. Other than that, I don't say that this is men against women, and I don't say that they do it on purpose. It's subtle, it's its mental mechanisms that are very difficult to, to break, and to expose. So people should be prepared in unconscious bias in gender issues. I think that that would be very helpful to help women and to help the organizations to have more women. Ascending sending to top positions.

Eline de Weerd 26:35

What advice? Would you give companies to better support women in it who are already in leadership positions?

Isabel Canha 26:44

Who are already?

Eline de Weerd 26:45

Yes.

Isabel Canha 26:46

Okay. I think that these these kind of have programs, internal programs that bring these these issues on that put these issues on the agenda of the of the company, and are very useful because they change mentalities. So well to be top down. But everybody in the company should be prepared to identify, oh, I'm thinking, and this is an unconscious bias, that's the first step to combat these, this type of thinking. Also, of course, some politics that that helps

men and women to, to have a balanced life. And to that the fact that the woman has a family, it's not a burden, that she's the only one to sacrifice and to, to be slower or less promoted because of their responsibilities. It should be distributed equally between men and women. And so the company must also have a role in these areas, if it promotes maybe for men and women the same the maternity leave, for example. To promote that both men and women have the same the same rights and responsibilities. So the company should issue the question, why doesn't the men take them? The paternity leave? I think that that would be great.

Eline de Weerd 28:43

Okay. Very interesting. And do you think men and women are different in their leadership. It is a short but very...

Isabel Canha 29:03

...complex, complex question. I've read a lot of articles on this subject. And by the way, I am writing a book, The glory of women. And I have a scheme that I made based on the literature, men identified identified with a leadership that is more rational, more competition, more focused on authority and power. They are more focused also on the tasks and on the results. They seek obedience order, they are assertive. Another point is vanity, self confidence, worried about the results. This is typical of the male Leadership. Women's Leadership typically are identified with intuition, emotion, cooperation, teamwork, multitasking, oriented not to the task, but for the relationships that they tried to construct cohesive relationships with the team, they seek respect, by being persuasive and not by imposing. Instead of certifiy, they have a soft power has empathy will mean they are humble. They lack self confidence, and they are worried about the people. So, this is what the, in general, the literature says about women's and men's leadership, What I think about it... I think that this in itself might be a bit discriminatory, because women, I've, I've worked with the deputy directors, when I was a director, that was a man. And he was, I would recognize lots of traits from with women's leadership in in his behavior. So it depends, it depends. Sometimes within a group, the difference between one person that's in this group, she's more similar with the other group, then in the group that she's she's part of. So what I would like very much is that we look at the person in itself, we take the care to get the person in itself, and to know the person and to help them develop, if she lacks confidence, let's give them confidence. And if she's very authority, authority, and let's work on make, making her more cooperative with the team, and so on, we should care about the person in itself, study the person and act accordingly. And what are these these makes me think is that if typically, men are associated with these traits of leadership, and women are associated with the opposite traits of leadership, what what we should have is both combining in the, in the top management so that we have the best of them. And on the other hand, It puzzles me that if companies are so they are valuing so much traits of personality of behavior that are associated with women's leadership, like intuition, teamwork, cooperation, compassion, and so on, why aren't women being promoted? So this, there's, if this is a stereotype, it's a stereotype that it's not working for women, because this these traits are being valued by

companies. When we read the business literature, companies nowadays seek different type of leadership, the leadership associated with the men's leadership, it's making central leadership. So if the women represent are associated with these strikes, it might be discriminatory. I don't believe this at all. But why aren't they being promoted?

Eline de Weerd 33:40

It's necessary. Yeah, that's exactly the bottleneck. And the book you are writing what is the name of it?

Isabel Canha 33:54

From trainee to CEO: the success of Portuguese women?

Eline de Weerd 34:04

Amazing, amazing. Because you, you say that you're, you're already involved in a training program one step ahead. Yes. For how long have you been? How long has this training been launched?

Isabel Canha 34:23

We have launched shipped during the pandemic, during the pandemic, pandemic. It was made online it was all prepared to be launched. When but when to come to conference, so we decided to launch it in studio in is so it's, it's digital, it's by zoom. And nowadays we are doing it with Sunday's present in physical presence at the school, and the mornings that are are working to give my information better online. So it's since 2020. We have a small group and it's it closes after a certain amount. So it's not it's not growing. But it's, it's it's steady, every year we make one or two programs a year.

Eline de Weerd 35:34

And is it only for women?

Isabel Canha 35:38

Only for women. On the other hand, we have also, this is a program that's only made and designed by us by Executiva, which is the bootcamp: It's an intensive program to accelerate your career, it's one day, and it's a lot of topics that are relevant for for women like impostor syndrome, how to gain confidence, networking, those types of subjects specifically designed for women. And we have made we make one or two every year these bootcamps.

Eline de Weerd 36:19

Amazing, looking from some interviews I have done, I asked could you suggest any specific training and most of the times women, they don't know, they they say no, I've not heard of any. But then if we dig deeper, there are initiatives, right?

Isabel Canha 36:37

Yes, yeah. NOVA university has also a program.

Eline de Weerd 36:41

Yeah. I think that is Project Promova

Isabel Canha 36:47

Yeah. And PWN has a lot of programs also. Yeah, or those are more mentorships, but there are programs also. Yeah.

Eline de Weerd 36:55

Yeah, that's good. Okay. Is there anything else that you would like to add, because I don't want to take too much of your your time.

Isabel Canha 37:07

Just just as a final remark. We take a look at these at these topics is a men and women issue. It's a company issue, we, we have a professional eye on this, and we don't want to we are not a feminist platform movement, a blog, we are other say, a media and media that is registered as media, with the ethics of journalism, we have done all those things that that we have to comply with. And as stated in our editorial statement, we are pro equality. But we don't want a type of approach that is men against women, that it's many case that men are bad women are both. That's not the way that we regard these topics. So out like if anything that I said might be less understood, please bear in mind that this is our, our way of seeing things. And I wouldn't like anything that that goes against the spirit to it. If it's not well understood what I said this, this concept might might make it clear. So for instance, when he talked about with the women's leadership, I think that sometimes that men are not bad leaders and women are good leaders. Now, what I said is that literature, literature, on business and on leadership, says that these are the characteristics and those are the characteristics. I don't believe that at all, okay.

Eline de Weerd 39:13

Yeah, no, but that is often that's very good that you that you say that because often I feel like this topic of female leadership is being seen as a very activist topic against men. And that also breaks the discourse because then of course, if people feel attacked, if men feel attracted companies, then no one is going to enter in a discourse. So I think it should be very open and be like, Okay, let's acknowledge the problems that are there. And let's further investigate what could be of help what could improve and what could equalize, but not not necessarily more women than men? No. And the literature shows right how important it is to have diversity to have gender equality. Exactly what you say you Do you want the combination of the one with the other? Because that's how humans work the best in collaboration. So it's also not my idea to have a very not activism is good, but I don't want to create this this exactly. women against men or anything. No. It should rather be more. More also

commercial, it should be very approachable and and for everyone. So, yeah, yeah, no, we're on the we're on the same the same page with that. Okay.

Isabel Canha 40:41

Young women like yourself, we young women are interested in these topics. It's very much that.

Eline de Weerd 40:50

Thank you. And ever since I was little, I thought, okay, I would like to have my own business one day. And I do notice that as longer as I continue in the career, this topic of inequality has been more and more being aware of. So as a woman, I also feel more and more confident you I can become a CEO as a woman as well. Thanks to initiatives like yours.

Isabel Canha 41:47

Yeah. Thank you so much for your interest and congratulations. And I hope it might, yes, to be useful. And have a great, great on this project.

Eline de Weerd 42:00

Thank you. Thank you and I will send you the transcription for you. Thank you so much. Bye. Bye.

Appendix 3 – Response in writing (anonymized, part of Google Forms respondents)

To start off, could you shortly guide me through your career journey?

1. What were some of the challenges or obstacles you faced as a woman in a leadership position? Did you experience any stereotyping during your career?
 - I was pregnant 3 times with extra strong nausea for three months, not being able to keep food on my stomach, constantly vomiting. It was difficult to remove this image from my colleagues
 - Working in telco closely with IT and network teams – first they kind of ignored specific questions but actually being a woman who can make questions on their area gave me a positive edge, they were “surprised” that the “marketing girl” stereotype could understand technical stuff and pose questions on a perspective they were not used to take.
 - Women are typically our own main enemies, it’s common to have more gossiping amongst women and more personal incompatibilities.
2. Can you tell me about a time when you felt that your gender was a barrier to your success?
 - I was pregnant and had a baby at home and I was discriminated by my senior managers (3 women) as I was compared with other colleagues from the marketing department who were out dating and having fun. Still very good friend with all these colleagues. The truth is the senior managers were quite young.
 - Not sure if it’s gender or being a mother. But because I had a family I was always the first one to leave the office (at 7pm sharp) and that made me different from the others. Despite being the first to arrive in the morning.
3. What strategies did you use to overcome these challenges and succeed in your career?
 - Investing in having a good relationship with male colleagues
 - Avoid looking futile
 - Changed job after being pregnant
 - Finally I decided to become self-employed. Not sure if it had something to do with being a woman or not
4. How did you build your network and establish relationships within the industry?
 - Being reliable
 - Creating personal relationships with both male and female colleagues
 - Avoiding being part of small talk and gossiping
5. Can you talk about any mentoring or sponsorship relationships that have been important to your success?

- I had a peer relationship with a male colleague who always supported me and helped my credibility
 - Three relevant senior managers were strong supporters of my career. One man and three women
6. How have you maintained a work-life balance in your role as a leader?
- Not really. In 10 years I picked my daughters from school once
7. What advice would you give to other women who aspire to leadership roles within the industry?
- Study engineering
 - Avoid futile comments, notepads, pens, etc
 - Schedule lunches with male colleagues, that's one of the major differences I've noticed between man and woman. Men schedule lunches days in advance.
8. How can companies better support women in leadership positions and promote gender diversity in higher management positions?
- Maturity
 - Positive discrimination
 - Create rules to determine who is performing minor tasks that are commonly delegated in the woman in the team: taking notes, scheduling room, fetching coffee.
9. Can you suggest any specific training or development programs that you think would be helpful in promoting gender diversity in leadership positions?
- Not really
10. Do you think men and women are different in leading?
- I believe women and men have different correlations to certain skills. Not male or female difference, some skills are statistically more common in men and others in women. But individuals are not statistical averages.
11. Do you think a training in female leadership would be suitable for men and women? Or only women?
- I believe discrimination is wider, gender, sexual orientation, race, weight, height, beauty, introverts/extroverts, social class...
 - Training to avoid stereotypes is certainly something that all companies should ensure
 - Training to acknowledge the differences between individuals and to understand the extra power of a diverse team should add value to companies
12. How do you see the future of gender diversity and leadership evolving within the industry?

- I'm optimistic. It's quite different in my generation than it was in my mother's generation and I expect to be better in this generation. Society education plays an important role.

12. Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't discussed yet?

Thank you for sharing your insights and experiences with me. Your perspective is incredibly valuable in helping us promote gender diversity in leadership positions. Let me know if you have any questions.

I will transcribe and analyze the data gathered. You are more than welcome to read the finished work!