

# **A theory of integrated gendered work evaluation (IGWE). A gender analysis of the unequal race for leadership through work evaluation of satisfaction and stress in Europe**

## **Abstract**

This paper proposes the theory of integrated gendered work evaluation in public relations (IGWE). It holds that gender inequalities in the workplace are intrinsically linked to work-related evaluations, specifically measured through levels of satisfaction and stress. We theoretically place our proposal in the Socio-Ecological Model for Understanding Gender in Public Relations (Aldoory & Toth, 2021) including a revisited integrative phase of feminist theory that acknowledges the holistic nature of workers' lives and their commitment to fulfil not only their worker or employer roles, but also their commitments to family and communities. The empirical contribution of this paper builds on the need for research to isolate factors that perpetuate gender discrimination. It explores factors of gender inequalities and conflicts that can affect the work-related evaluation of those people who make up the majority of the industry's employees: female public relations professionals. IGWE theory provides a new open door of identifying, contextualizing, theorizing and analyzing how gender discriminations affect work evaluations combining both work-place and private life experiences from an integrated gender perspective.

**Keyword:** women, feminist, leadership, public relations, workplace

## **Introduction**

On despite of the contested and motley interpretations of the fourth wave of feminism, it is acknowledging the integration of demands from the third wave (Khalil, 2021). In the field of public relations, the third wave of feminism underlined that woman were in a less favorable position than men due to patriarchy and the existence of social, political and economic inequalities relating to gender in organizations and society (Pompper, 2007). Although there are more professional women than men in public relations practice, their situation in the field in the XXI century is still unequal and is clearly ruled by gender (Andsager & Hust, 2005; Meng, 2021). The progression journey in their careers, and the race for leadership positions, are more difficult for women. Thus, the practice and assumption in the field of public relations should be considered as social constructions with a highlighted character of gender (Fitch, James & Motion, 2016).

We question in this paper if gender inequalities and discriminatory factors impact how female practitioners perform and self-evaluate their work. This study specifically explores factors of gender inequalities and conflicts that can affect the work evaluation of experiential satisfaction and stress at work of those people who make up the majority of the industry's employees in Europe: female public relations professionals.

The most recent meta-studies about gender in public relations confirm that gender inequalities and discrimination persist in the XXI century (Place & Wanderman-Winter, 2018; Topić et al., 2019). What is more, for women communicators, the gender discrimination leads to other negative consequences such as low job satisfaction and employment prospects (Place, 2011) and issues with work-life balance.

There is a gap in the literature for this framework approached in the paper. Diverse studies have been published mainly in the 90s and more scarcely in the first decade of

this century combining gender with work satisfaction and/or stress. In this paper we review the literature on gender issues related to satisfaction and stress, then discuss the three main reported problems of gender inequality in the public relations profession relating to these two factors – the glass ceiling, the salary pay gap and work-life conflicts.

The collection of this scarce specific literature will be organized in the following sections to feed hypothesis that can be empirically tested.

### **Overarching feminist roots of a proposal for an Integrated gendered work evaluation (IGWE) approach**

We place this paper in the new and comprehensive Socio-Ecological Model for Understanding Gender in Public Relations (Aldoory & Toth, 2021).

The organizational level of the socio-ecological model refers to the institutional forces of influencing gender constructions. Structures and policies become spaces in which power relationships are negotiated through a gendered lens. Organizational decision-makers create policies, structures and culture to define values, which get embedded in orientation programs, ongoing socialization, and messaging. When organizational policies and norms create preferences for employees because of gender or diverse intersectional identities, disparity and oppression result.

The Socio-ecological model acknowledges that organizational policies that limit women's advancement include those affecting work-life balance or integration, lack of accommodations for childbearing, child-care and elder care. Thus, the organizational level of the model brings again to the floor the perspective of the integrative phase of feminism.

The Integrated gendered work evaluation (IGWE) is theoretically placed on the roots of the integrative phase of feminist theory. This phase was introduced to public relations research by Larisa Grunig in the first decade of this century (Grunig, 2006), and still make complete sense given the reported gender issues persisting nowadays in the public relations industry (Tench & Topic, 2017; Adi and Ayme-Jahil, 2020; Meng, 2021).

The integrative phase emerged in the feminist third wave under the demand 'the personal is politic'. In public relations research, the integrative perspective, acknowledges the holistic nature of public relations workers' lives and their commitment to fulfil not only their worker or employer roles, but also their commitments to family and communities. Although this perspective emerged in the feminist third wave continue to be an important claim of the fourth wave as this last vast wave have integrated and revisited many of the unachieved goals from precedent stages. (Khalil, 2021). In addition, the fourth wave incorporates dissent from the feminist margins that had not previously been taken up, such as racialized women and sexual diversity (Varela, 2019).

As long as private-life factors can still become breaks for the advancement of female careers in the industry, perpetuating gender discriminations in the field, the need for research to isolate those private factors substantiate a revisited view of the integrative phase, in the organizational level of the comprehensive socio-ecological model.

We understand that any closed and packed theory don't have any sense in the current discussions of the fourth feminist wave (or waves). Accordingly, the IGWE proposal aims to be an open door to dynamically and cooperatively introduce diverse gender approaches, issues as well as different work evaluations indicators besides satisfaction and stress.

In the following sections, we will focus in the literature on gender issues– the glass ceiling, the salary pay gap and work-life conflicts– related to the work evaluation indicators satisfaction and stress.

### ***Gender, satisfaction and stress***

Gender discrimination has implications for female practitioners in public relations, who face negative experiences in the workplace as well as low job satisfaction (Place, 2011).

Wide discrepancies are found in the literature regarding gender and job satisfaction in the last decades. Some of the first studies of the industry in the U.S. (Rentner & Bissland, 1990; 2001) didn't exhibit statistically different gender differences in overall satisfaction, but others proposed doubts (Jacobson and Tortorello, 1992) or found women more dissatisfied (Wright, Grunig, Springston & Toth, 1991) or that women had diverse priorities from men in their construction of job satisfaction (Serini, Toth, Wright, & Emig, 1997).

Most recent studies about the profession around the world also show discrepancies in their results on gender and job satisfaction. There are surprisingly no gender significant differences in some recent studies in the U.S. (Gallicano, Curtin & Matthews, 2012) or the Asia-Pacific (Macnamara, Lwin, Adi & Zerfass, 2015), but there were found in the latest findings in US (Meng, Reber, Berger, Gower & Zerfass, 2019), in Europe (Zerfass, Tench, Večič, Verhoeven & Moreno, 2014) Latin America (Moreno, Molleda, Athaydes & Suárez, 2015) regarding some specific factors, especially the status of women and their career opportunities. Moreover, a gender-centred study in Latin-America shows that the expected and realized responsibility for dependents affects the prospects of accepting career opportunities for female practitioners (Moreno, Tench, Khalil & Navarro, 2017).

Studies in social sciences establish a relationship between salary and satisfaction (Ahn & García, 2004; Rico, 2012). Similarly, in the public relations field, an improved salary has been found as an important factor in women's construction and perceptions of job satisfaction (Serini et al., 1997). Research by Dozier, Sha & Okura (2007) pointed to a conflict between the emotional cost of work-family balance and the level of satisfaction. Additionally, Shen & Jiang (2013) found that PRSA Generation Xers (male and female) are more stressed and those who need to care for an older adult experience significantly higher levels of time-based conflicts. Gallicano, Curtin & Mathews (2012) identify relationship stresses as an important factor in employee-organizational relationships. The invisible *isms* – describing discrimination that includes any ism like sexism – are included as forms of stress. Interestingly, the two major stress categories that emerged from the results are inadequate compensation and lack of work-life balance.

Indeed, job dissatisfaction has been directly linked to stress and exhaustion (Kang, 2010). If the new factors of work overload produced by the digital transformation increase then this may bring even more the work-life conflict for all workers (Shen & Jiang, 2013), and it is very probable that female practitioners can be more affected because the conflict affects them more. In Europe, there is already research confirming that women feel more daily work pressure because of the impact of new technologies (Zerfass et al., 2014).

A recent study about gender issues in the public relations profession in Europe shows that women with care responsibilities over dependents are more likely to spend more time engaging with non-remunerated work at home and less leisure time, affecting ultimately their levels of job satisfaction and stress (Moreno, Fuentes-Lara & Khalil, 2018).

Based on the previous review of literature, we propose the following hypotheses as they apply to public relations in Europe:

H1. Male and female practitioners perceive diverse levels and factors of satisfaction in their jobs.

H2. Male and female practitioners perceive diverse levels and factors of stress in their jobs.

### ***Glass ceiling, satisfaction and stress***

The public relations sector is one of the industries where even though women outnumber men, the top positions are not held by them (e.g. Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Choi & Hon, 2002; Grunig et al., 2001; Gower, 2001; O'Neil, 2003; Tench, Topić & Moreno, 2017). This is despite the knowledge that more women are engaged in formal education (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995) and men in top positions have got more possibilities to be promoted (Janus, 2008). Most recent research also find there are no significant gender difference when it comes to leadership skills (Tench et al., 2017), but still women are under-represented in in top positions in organizations (Place & Vanderman-Winter, 2017; Topić et al., 2020; Meng, 2021).

In Europe, the most up-to-date research on the profession (Zerfass et al., 2021) shows that the distribution by gender is achieving today some balance. Although in the lower positions there are twice as many women than men (69,7% versus 30,3%) as well as in the middle ranking roles (59,9% versus 40,1%) men continue to dominate in the top positions (52,8% versus 47,2%).

A group of factors have been identified which contribute to the persistence of the glass ceiling in public relations that point to the influence of organizational and social cultures (Wrigley, 2002). Other studies looking for an explanation for the glass ceiling relating to leadership competences do not find support or show consistent reasons why they should exist nowadays (Tench, Topić & Moreno, 2017). According to Place (2011), those are

myths and stereotypes which block the access for women to top positions and which enables the discrimination to continue.

Focusing on public relations in Europe we propose the following hypothesis:

H3. There are strong relationships between gender, position, satisfaction and stress.

### ***Pay gap, gender and satisfaction***

A majority of female professionals in the field of public relations have not escaped the reality of the the pay gap (Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Choi & Hon, 2002; Wrigley, 2002; Tench, Topić & Moreno, 2017; Moreno, Fuentes-Lara & Khalil, 2018; Topić, 2020). As identified by Aldoory and Toth (2002) research on income and gender has been mostly theoretical. After more than ten years we still can validate the assertion of Dozier, Sha & Okura (2007): “To date, no satisfactory rival theory has been posited to explain the differences in income between men and women practitioners. Gender discrimination remains the most compelling explanation” (p. 12).

From a broader social science perspective, there are many factors to explain the pay gap: socioeconomic, specific work-sector, psychological/cognitive, and sociocultural factors (CEOE, 2019). Nevertheless, the most updated meta-studies report that psychological and cognitive differences are inconclusive and explain their origin in educational, social and cultural factors (CEOE, 2019; Mazei et al. 2005).

In the field of public relations in the U.S., Dozier & Broom (1995) tested a path model and didn't find gender differences of income, but their results suggested evidence of the glass ceiling with restrictions because of the small sample size. The study by Aldoory & Toth (2002) with a considerably larger sample, found gender differences after controlling for professional experience. Dozier, Sha & Shen (2013) established the cost of gender discrimination including the factors: years of professional experience, manager role



enactment, participation in management decision-making, income-suppressing career interruptions, and career specialization. Dozier, Sha & Okura (2007) also collected factors referred to in the previous literature including the mid-career interruption to have children and to establishing the penalty of time off with having a baby in mid-career. They pointed to a wide variety of factors that could affect women's economic wellbeing over the course of their careers due to increased family responsibilities.

Meeting sociocultural factors, maternity is considered as one of the principal employments gaps. The birth of a child affects the professional situation and work conditions mainly of women, who reduce their working days or even interrupt their careers. The effects of maternity on the gender gap are produced because of the choice of professional careers compatible with their family life and the increasing commitment to children and unpaid work. Both aspects affect the final salary that professional women may get, once they reduce the availability to lengthen the working day and increase variable salary according to time worked (CEOE, 2019). That last factor takes us directly to the "work-private life conflict".

In the public relations industry in Europe as previously identified are collected in twice the number to men in the lowest wage groups, while their proportion goes down in the highest wage groups. Moreover, the pay gap lingers in all the levels of the hierarchy, including those with the top positions and with director responsibility (Zerfass, Tench, Verhoeven, Verčič, & Moreno, 2018). In other words, women who reach and get past the glass ceiling in spite of all the structural and socialization barriers, once they get to the top positions, they still find themselves up against the wall of a pay gap.

Based on the previous review of literature, we anticipate the positive relationship between salary and satisfaction for female practitioners:

H4. There are significant relationships between gender, salary and job satisfaction.

### ***Work-Life conflicts, gender, satisfaction and stress***

The term "work-life" is used to talk about the problem of finding a balance between the obligations derived from individual work and responsibilities from life out of work (Friedman, Christensen, & De Groot, 2000). Some studies in social sciences underline that the massive incorporation of woman in the world of work has not brought substantial changes in the unequal time distribution dedicated for housekeeping and summarize that the principal cause of unequal time dedication on care responsibilities is the existence of children in a family (Ajenjo & García, 2014). Looking after dependents, mainly children and elderly people, have limited women's careers as they are expected to dedicate more time than men to their families and housekeeping tasks (Duke, 1992). Keene & Reynolds (2005) study underlined that women were twice as likely as men to report that family demands negatively affect their job performance. Being in charge of dependent persons also affects work-based promotions as it causes stressful situations which may produce the obligation to choose between focusing on their professional career or family (Purcell & Baldwin, 2003). Thus, the relationship between care responsibilities on dependents and promotion at work seem to be closely related to the glass ceiling and pay gap (Iversen & McCall-Rosenbluth, 2011). The OECD underlines that inequality between gender in unpaid care work is a lost link in the analysis of gender inequality in labor results because it is women who typically dedicate disproportionately more time than men to unpaid care work (Ferrant, Pesando, & Nowacka, 2014).

There is a deficit of information about the restrictions of work priorities against family duties (Grünig, Toth & Hon, 2001) and different aspects of the work-life conflict in the public relations sector (Shen & Jian, 2013; Shen, Jiang, Jin, & Sha, 2015). Work-life balance, work-family balance and work-family conflict are the terms that are used in public relations to describe the effort made by workers to fulfil their diverse personal,

housekeeping and work duties (Aldoory, Jiang, Toth & Sha, 2008). Shen & Jia (2013) define it as the incompatibility between expectations to perform one role versus another, that can be categorized as time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based.

The public relations profession is considered one of the most stressful and less favorable when it comes to work-life balance (Sha & Toth, 2005; Aldoory et al., 2008). It is important to consider studies that explore the factors facing women in work to understand the work-private life conflict and the choices made to face the situation. Shen & Jiang's (2013) study reveals that professionals (male and female) who needed to care for an older adult experienced significantly higher levels of time-based conflict. However, those who have to usually re-arrange their schedules to accommodate family needs to meet work-based duties and responsibilities are the female practitioners (Place & Vanderman-Winter, 2017). Women socialize the way they are expected to in order to find a balance between work and family (Hon, 1995; Grunig, Toth & Hon, 2001; Place, 2011; Shen & Jiang, 2013), as these kinds of responsibilities are traditionally considered a women's thing (Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Aldoory et al., 2008). The struggle with work and family duties affects their opportunities for internal promotion, which can lead to more senior leadership positions (Sha & Toth, 2005; VanSlyke Turk, 2016).

Based on the previous review of literature, we propose the following hypothesis as it applies to public relations:

H5. There are strong significant relationships between gender, satisfaction, stress and non-working time distribution.

H6. There are strong significant relationships between gender, family care, non-paid work time and leisure time.

## **Method**

To test the hypothesis, we ran a quantitative survey among public relations professionals working in organizations and consultancies in 48 European countries. An online English comprehensive questionnaire was constructed and pre-tested with 70 public relations professionals. Amendments were made where appropriate and the final questionnaire was activated for five weeks in February/March 2018. More than 40,000 professionals were invited with personal e-mails through a database provided by the European Association of Communication Directors (EACD). Additional invitations were sent via research collaborators and professional associations. Additional invitations were sent via research collaborators and professional associations. Every five days they were sent automatic reminders to start the questionnaire or, if they had done it, to finish it. The evaluation is based on 3,096 complete responses, once cases that did not meet quality standards were eliminated. The data for this study were cleaned by following Morrow and Skolits (2014) process to bolster data quality. Such is the case of questionnaires less than two minutes long, those that continuously check the same response category or those who do not fit the sample profile (students and/or academics). Qualtrics software was used for data collection.

Demographics show that 58,1% (n= 1,795) are female and 41,9% male (n= 1,296). 36,8% hold the position of CCO or agency CEO (n= 1,139); 30,4% unit leader (n= 942) and 27,7% team member and consultant (n= 858). Three of four (73,4%) works in public relations departments (20,9%, n= 464, joint stock company; 22,7%, n= 703, private company; 10,8%, n= 334, non-profit and 19%, n= 588, government-owned, public sector or political organization) while 26,6% (n= 825) are public relations consultants working freelance or for agencies. Specific analyses have been run for the variables of job satisfaction, stress, position, salary, gender, dependents' care and use of non-working time (non-paid work at home and leisure time).

**[Table 1 near here].**

### ***Job satisfaction***

Job satisfaction was measured using 7 items, based on the previous questionnaire of Zerfass et al. (2010). Items has been self-evaluated with a 5-point Likert-type scale ranking from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Rhee & Moon, 2009). The scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Cronbach alpha statistic reliability test was applied with a result of 0.81 in 7 items. From a value of 0.7 onwards it is considered a valid reliability (Neuendorf, 2002).

**[Table 2 near here].**

### ***Stress factors***

Stress factors have been measured with 17 items derived from the Workplace survey (American Psychological Association/ Harris Interactive, 2012). Stress has been self-evaluated with a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The reliability test was performed with the Cronbach alpha statistic with a result of 0.89 in 7 items.

**[Table 3 near here].**

**[Table 4 near here].**

### ***Data analysis***

The SPSS statistical package was used to perform univariate analysis – frequency distributions and means –, bivariate analysis – contingency tables and correlations – and multivariate analysis – predictive segmentation trees. The logic of the research followed a sequential process that began with a univariate analysis of the variables under

investigation. Subsequently, a bivariate analysis was carried out with the crossing of variables planned in hypotheses -H1 and H2-. Multivariate analysis was used for the rest of the hypotheses.

In H1 and H2 we have used valid variable correlations with the chi-square and independent samples T-Test. For H3, H4, H5 and H6 we used the segmentation tree technique with the CHAID method. This method divides the variables of the model by the strength of the chi-square significance of the categories of the variable and how these are related to the rest of the variables of the model. The model starts with a dependent variable and introduces all the independent variables that are predicted to be related to the dependent variable. This prediction is made on the basis of the literature review prior to the research and bivariate statistical analysis. The main potential of this data analysis technique is that it allows statistically significant correlations to be made with qualitative variables with the same validity as a correlation. This technique groups categories of variables that are statistically significant thanks to the chi-square statistic.

Once all the independent variables have been introduced, the model discards the variables that are not statistically significant. Thus, in the graphical representation of the segmentation tree, only the variables with statistical significance are shown.

Node 0 is always the dependent variable and from that node the variables and their categories begin to be related by their statistical strength. Each division of the nodes in the CHAID method has a 95% confidence, i.e. chi-square,  $p < 0.05$  (Escobar, 1998), to which it should be added that this model has a risk of error (error deviation) of 0.01, i.e. the model classifies correctly with a margin of error of 1% (Berlanga et al., 2013).

Statistical significance and interdependencies have been tested with Chi-square independent samples T-Test evaluating significant differences ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) and highly

significant ( $p \leq 0,01$ ). Some variables that have been recorded to increase operability are pointed out in the results chapter.

## **Findings**

### ***Gender, satisfaction and stress***

In the analysis of self-evaluation of satisfaction desegregated by sex, female practitioners perceive less satisfaction than their male colleagues for all satisfaction factors on a five-point Likert's scale. Means have been calculated for each factor. It is especially interesting to see highly significant differences in salary and job status (0.2 points of difference). Excluding "my job is secure and stable" all variables are statistically significant with sex. The T-Test show high significance ( $p \leq 0.01$ ) for the variables "the salary is adequate", "the job has a high status" and "I have great career opportunities"; while is significant ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) for "my tasks are interesting and a manifold", "superiors and (internal) clients value my work" and "my work-life balance is all right".

**[Table 5 near here].**

H1 has corroborated: male and female practitioners perceive diverse levels and factors of satisfaction in their jobs. Female practitioners are statistically significant more dissatisfied than male professionals.

### ***Gender and stress***

Regarding the perception of job stress, a similar scenario to satisfaction can be seen. Female practitioners present higher levels in all stress variables in a five-point Likert scale. The arithmetic mean shows a stronger difference for low salary (2.25 women versus 2.59 men), underlying salary as a factor of stress for professional women along as a dissatisfaction factor. The T-Test proves highly significant differences in all variables for

stress, except “problems with (internal) clients” and “personal life interferes during work hours”.

**[Table 6 near here].**

Findings verify H2: male and female practitioners perceive diverse levels and factors of stress in their jobs. Female professionals are highly significantly more stressed.

### ***Gender, position, satisfaction and stress***

After the confirmation of the two first hypothesis, we have a look in depth into the variables that cause statistical signification and are linked to the main gender issues identified in the literature for the profession. Predictive trees analysis measure and prioritize the strength of the relationship between categories of variables with the statistic Chi2 trough CHAID method. Some variables have been recoded to dichotomic values to better operationalize for the predictive trees’ analysis.

The predictive tree (see Graph 1) relates gender to the following variables: position – practitioners holding managerial positions versus non-managerial positions – with work stress – high stressed versus low stressed; job satisfaction – high satisfied versus low satisfied; weekly non-paid work time at home – less than two hours versus more than two hours; and weekly leisure time – less than 10 hours versus more than 10 hours.

The central node is gender and the first subdivision is position. It can be appreciated that despite more women (58,1%) in the profession, they grouped more in the non-managerial positions (61,2% females and 38,8% males). The tree makes a second subdivision for practitioners with managerial positions and job satisfaction, showing that male managers are mainly satisfied with their job (53,5%) while females are mainly unsatisfied (57,3%). Inside practitioners with low satisfaction a new branch of the tree emerges regarding dedicating time to non-paid work at home. The majority of men dedicate less than two



hours a week, while most women commit more than two hours. At the same time, a new branch flourished with the variable stress for practitioners without managerial positions and show that 63,7% of non-manager female practitioners experience high levels of stress. This branch drifts into another related to leisure time that explains that every seven out of ten non-manager female practitioners with a high level of stress, enjoy less than ten hours of weekly leisure time.

**[Graphic 1 near here]**

These findings corroborate H3: There are strong relations between gender, position, satisfaction and stress. Moreover, they empirically show the relationship between satisfaction, stress and position are mediated by the distribution of non-working time, suggesting that the glass ceiling can certainly be affected by private life factors related with social gender discrimination.

***Gender salary and job satisfaction***

One of the factors of satisfaction with higher significant gender differences is salary. A new predictive tree combines the variables beginning with gender as the original node and presents the variable salary as the one with a higher significant relation with gender. Thus, the second node is produced by the differences between gender and salary. The tree subdivides into two branches: the first for practitioners who perceive they have an adequate salary and the second with the rest of the practitioners. In both nodes women are the majority. Nevertheless, the node of salary dissatisfaction is more manifested: 61,5% of women believe their salary is not appropriate, while only 38.5% of men believe that their salary is inappropriate. It is from the inappropriate salary node that another branch flourishes, linking satisfaction and creating two new branches: less satisfied and highly satisfied. More than six out of ten female practitioners believe their salary is inappropriate are unsatisfied with their job.

**[Graphic 2 near here]**

H4 is already confirmed: salary mediates the gender relation with job satisfaction.

***Gender, satisfaction, stress and non-working time distribution***

Graph 1 showed interesting relationships between stress and distribution of non-working time regarding position. To go into depth in the variable satisfaction a new segmentation tree uses satisfaction as an original node. The first variable related to it with higher significance is gender. Most women are unsatisfied (53.6%) while most men are satisfied (53.8%). For both, stress is the significantly related variable. Men on the level of work-stress continue to be satisfied. In contrast, 58.1% of women with high stress shows low job satisfaction. There is a clear relation between stress and satisfaction for women in both directions. Most women with low stress are also the most satisfied. The tree finishes with a new branch that flourished from women with low satisfaction and high stress and presents a new subdivision about leisure time. Six out of ten unsatisfied female practitioners enjoy less than ten hours a week of leisure time.

**[Graphic 3 near here]**

Findings corroborate H5 explaining strong significant relationships between gender, satisfaction, stress and leisure time.

***Gender and work-life conflict: care responsibilities and distribution of non-working time***

For H3 we confirmed strong relationships between gender, position, satisfaction and stress but also the mediation of non-working time distribution. Going into depth into how work-life conflicts can affect female practitioners, a new analysis was run with the variable dependents in your charge. This variable has two values: to have children or responsibility for other dependents, or not. The tree began with the original node of the

dependent variable and the first division is created about the variable of gender. The first observation is that male practitioners have more dependents (57%) than females (50,5%). For men the node branches first into the variable leisure time and second into the variable non-paid work at home. Nevertheless, the branches for women are exactly the opposite. The variable with a stronger influence is non-paid work at home. Concretely, 66,8% of female practitioners who only dedicate less than two hours a week is the group without dependents in their charge. On the other hand, although with a similar percent, there is a group of women who dedicate more than two hours to non-paid work at home and have children or dependents and indeed this node branches into the later one of leisure time. Eight out of ten female practitioners that have less than 10 hours of leisure time dedicate more than two hours to non-paid work at home and have dependents in their charge.

**[Graphic 4 near here]**

H6 is corroborated: there are strong significant relationships between gender, family care, non-paid work time and leisure time. Although in the node for men there is also a statistically significant relationship between the triad – dependents in charge, less leisure time and more non-paid work at home, the node for women sees this relationship is produced to a larger extent and with stronger statistical power.

## **Discussion**

This study proposes the theory of integrated gendered work evaluation in public relations (IGWE) to hold that gender inequalities in the workplace are intrinsically linked to work-related evaluations and the holistic nature of workers' lives must be acknowledged.

This paper questions the causes of diverse differences between genders in the public relations industry, rather than continuing to note that these differences exist. It provides a synthesis of literature on three main problems of gender inequality in the public relations

profession in Europe: the glass ceiling, pay gap and work-life conflict and explores the lived gender differences using two dimensions of work evaluation: job satisfaction and stress.

Through univariate, bivariate and multivariate analysis of data from an online survey targeted to 3,096 practitioners through Europe, we first examined what factors of satisfaction and stress present significant differences by gender. Second, through segmentation tree analysis we looked for statistical relationships between gender, position, overall satisfaction, stress, salary and private life variables related to the work-life conflict. Those variables of private life were operationalized as having dependents, time spent on non-paid work at home and time expended for leisure time.

Predictive tree analysis found strong significant relationships between gender, position, satisfaction and stress, which point to the glass ceiling; between gender, salary and job satisfaction, which point to the salary gap; between gender, satisfaction, stress and leisure time, that point to the work-life conflict and is also explained by the relationship between gender, family care, non-paid work time and leisure time.

The empirical contribution of this paper drives on what Wrigley (2002) underlined nearly two decades ago: the need for research to isolate factors that perpetuate gender discrimination. This request is still pertinent as long as they can still become breaks for the advancement of female careers in the industry. It not only acknowledges the gender inequalities, but also explores factors of gender inequalities and conflicts that can affect the work-related evaluation of those people who make up the majority of the industry's employees: female public relations professionals. Specifically, it has empirically analyzed what gender issues affect the work-related evaluation of satisfaction and stress of female practitioners working in public relations in Europe.

### ***Theoretical implications***

This study is theoretically placed under the new and comprehensive Socio-Ecological Model for Understanding Gender in Public Relations (Aldoory & Toth, 2021). We understand that the organizational level of the Socio-Ecological Model brings again to the floor the perspective of the integrative phase of feminism, acknowledging that organizational policies that limit women's advancement include those affecting work-life balance or integration, lack of accommodations for childbearing, child-care and elder care.

The integrative phase of feminist theory, as conceptualized by Larisa Grunig for public relations (Grunig, 2006), acknowledges the holistic nature of workers' lives and their commitment to fulfil not only their worker or employee roles but also their commitments to family and communities.

This perspective, that emerged in the feminist third wave under the demand 'the personal is politic', is still one important claim of the fourth wave (Khalil, 2021). As patriarchal structures in organizations and society continue to alter female practitioners' careers, this perspective needs to be included in future research on public relations.

There is a need for including work-place factors as long as private-life factors that explain the causes that constitute long term breaks on the growth and advancement of female careers, their race for leadership positions and the perpetuation of gender issues in the field. Exploring factors that compose the work-life conflict could enhance our understanding of female practitioners' career management, remove barriers for leadership and help organizations to guide their internal programs to face gender discriminations and enhance female promotion.

The introduced theory of integrated gendered work evaluation in public relations (IGWE) argues that gender inequalities in the workplace are intrinsically linked to work-related evaluations, at the levels of satisfaction and stress. IGWE theory provides a new way of

identifying, contextualize, theorizing and analyzing how gender discrimination affects work evaluations both in the work-place and the private lives of practitioners from an integrated gender perspective. Two direct implications for research in public relations can be underlined:

*Gender matters for work evaluation*

In despite of the incongruence of results of gender differences in the research of satisfaction in the field, this paper shows that gender matters to satisfaction and also to stress. Stress factors are generally rated higher by female practitioners, which means that they feel more stressed than their male colleagues. Gender differences in satisfaction point to the factors of salary, status and opportunities of career that highly significantly perceived as lower for female than male practitioners. Gender differences in stress and satisfaction can be related to the on-going, persistent existence of the glass ceiling in Europe, undermining female practitioners' race to leadership, with the low satisfaction and high stress of female professionals being strongly linked with lower positions. Additionally, satisfaction is also strongly related to gender and salary, pointing to the dissatisfaction that can be generated in the workplace by the pay gap. Thus, gender issues must be appropriately operationalized for researching the workforce in public relations.

*Private life and gender social issues matter*

The literature showed that the ceiling glass and gender pay gap can no longer simply be explained based exclusively on preferences, cognitive differences or organizational politics, but we must look deeper into social factors. It is clear from the findings that domestic care responsibilities affect mainly female practitioners in the distribution of their non-working time. This, in turn, is increasing their non-paid work at home time and decreasing their leisure time. We empirically tested that this time distribution can trigger

stress and dissatisfaction, undermining, again, their path to leadership positions in the public relations industry.

The artificial dichotomy between the public and private spheres of the paid workforce and the home (Creedom, 1993) might lead to simplistic views of equal opportunity and access that emerge in deeper and sagacious analyses of the industry (Meng & Neill, 2021). There is a need to include private-life factors as explanatory causes influencing the long term breaks and impact on career growth and advancement for female careers which is perpetuating the lack of women in leadership positions. Even in descriptive surveys into the industry, more private-life factors should be acknowledged as they are seen as the important mediators in work self-evaluations for the majority of the workforce of public relations.

### ***Implications for practice***

Work-life conflict is a significant issue for public relations, as it directly affects the majority of the workforce and the factors of private life are related to three of the main gender issues in the profession: the ceiling glass, salary gap and work-life conflicts. The work-life balance issue has been reported as a concern for organizations (Aldoory et al., 2008; Meng & Neill, 2021). Programs for mentoring and empowering female practitioners are becoming a reality in many organizations committed to increase the number of women in leadership positions, but they tend to be focused on the workers' in employment role(s), to the exclusion of the rest of their social roles.

Previous research also evidenced that maternity may have negative effects on the career development of female practitioners (Choi & Hon, 2002). The findings of this paper go towards further evidence that maternity is more than a temporary interruption for the female career. All family care roles, including care for elderly people, means an increase in non-paid job time and a decrease in the amount of available leisure time. Simply,

talking about the politics of maternal leave and the related implications on women and work is not enough.

We side with Shen, Jiang, Jin & Sha (2015) that organizations that don't address issues of work-life balance are only adding to and perpetuating the conflict and the related issues that are caused. As corroborated in our findings, this conflict affects mainly primary family caregivers: this is the female practitioners. Exploring factors that compose the work-life conflict could enhance our understanding of female practitioners' career management and help organizations to guide their internal programs to empower women to get and keep a leadership position.

How can the profession advance and embrace all the values in our foundations whilst continuing to turn a blind eye to the inequalities that most of the workers in the industry, female practitioners, face in their career journeys and justified representation in leadership positions?

As Grunig, Toth and Hon (2000) stated at the beginning of the century, embracing feminist values should help define the field and clarify its purpose. These principles of purpose should include the reinstitution of community; understanding strategic relationship management and diversity; the resolution of conflicts; and the diverse perspectives of excellence (Tench, Verčič, Zerfass, Verhoeven & Moreno, 2018).

### **Limitations and future directions**

We acknowledge that using sex as an independent variable for comparing men and women with other variables can produce the alpha bias, or the exaggeration of differences (Grunig, 2006). With the segmentation tree technique, we consciously tried to reduce the Malinowsky's bias. The researcher has a lower intervention in the



construction of the relations between variables as the software maps the nodes of relations. We also acknowledge the limitations of the feminist perspective approached in this paper (Golombisky, 2015) as we acknowledge that female practitioners in public relations cannot be treated as a homogeneous group. We have begun looking for overall differences between the male and female population of practitioners in Europe.

Intersectional perspectives should be included in the future to test diverse groups. The IGWE proposal aims to dynamically and cooperatively introduce diverse gender approaches, issues as well as different work evaluations indicators besides satisfaction and stress. An important effort in the survey distribution was made in order to achieve a larger number and diversity of professionals: working in different geographic environments, types of organizations, different levels of responsibility, salary, experience and educational background. However, as it was a European based study, future studies should test the hypothesis in diverse geographical and cultural environment. We have only focus in the most prominent gender issues reported in Europe— the glass ceiling, the salary pay gap and work-life conflicts— related to the work evaluation indicators satisfaction and stress.

The proposed theory of integrated gendered work evaluation in public relations (IGWE) is an open door to introduce diverse gender issues as well as different work evaluation indicators besides satisfaction and stress.

The IGWE theory provides a new open way for identifying, contextualizing, theorizing and analyzing how gender discriminations affect work evaluations both in the work-place and in practitioners' private lives from an integrated gender perspective.

## **Conclusions**

The paper questions the causes of diverse differences between genders in the public relations industry, rather than continuing to note that these differences exist. A theory of

integrated gendered work evaluation in public relations (IGWE) was proposed sustaining that gender inequalities in the workplace are intrinsically linked to work-related evaluations. It has been empirically supported that female practitioners are more likely to be dissatisfied and stressed at work with significant differences in some of the drivers of both job satisfaction and stress. Strong significant relationships were found between gender, position, satisfaction and stress, which point to the glass ceiling; also between gender, salary and job satisfaction, which point to the salary gap; and between gender, satisfaction, stress and leisure time, that point to the work-life conflict and is also explained by the relationship between gender, family care, non-paid work time and leisure time. Work-life conflict is a significant issue for public relations, as it directly affects the majority of the workforce in the field and in their careers and representation in leadership positions.

Under the new and broader framework of the Socio-Ecological Model for Understanding Gender in Public Relations (Aldoory & Toth, 2021) The paper emphasizes the need to look the whole life experience of the person rather than just the worker role to advance the research and field and to support women in public relations' leadership claims in the professional practice of the future.

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