

INCLUSION AND GENDER EQUITY IN BRAZILIAN OIL & GAS SECTOR CAREERS

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- **ABSTRACT:** This qualitative, descriptive, and cross-sectional study analyzes the perceptions of women working in the Brazilian oil and gas sector regarding organizational policies and practices aimed at gender inclusion and equity in both onshore and offshore settings. The research was approved by a Research Ethics Committee, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews and a sociodemographic questionnaire, totaling nine participants. The findings indicate that although institutional initiatives exist, they are predominantly formal, lacking measurable goals and robust monitoring mechanisms. Challenges persist concerning career progression, representation in leadership positions, offshore working conditions, and experiences of harassment, all of which impact mental health and female retention. Despite the inherent limitation regarding statistical generalization, the results provide relevant insights for future research and for strengthening policies aligned with the UN 5thSDG.

- **KEYWORDS:** Diversity and inclusion; Gender equity; Law; O&G; Oil; Right to work.

INCLUSÃO E EQUIDADE DE GÊNERO NAS CARREIRAS DE ÓLEO & GÁS NO BRASIL

- **RESUMO:** Este estudo qualitativo, descritivo e transversal analisa as percepções de mulheres que atuam no setor brasileiro de óleo e gás sobre políticas e práticas organizacionais de inclusão e equidade de gênero nos regimes *onshore* e *offshore*. A pesquisa foi aprovada por Comitê de Ética e os dados foram coletados por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas e questionário sociodemográfico, totalizando nove participantes. Os resultados indicam que, embora existam iniciativas institucionais, estas são predominantemente formais, com ausência de metas mensuráveis e fragilidade nos mecanismos de monitoramento. Persistem desafios relacionados à progressão na carreira, representatividade em cargos de liderança, condições do trabalho offshore e ocorrências de assédio, com impactos na saúde mental e na retenção feminina. Apesar da impossibilidade de generalização estatística, os achados oferecem subsídios para pesquisas futuras e para o fortalecimento de políticas alinhadas ao ODS 5 das Nações Unidas.

- **PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Direito; Direito ao trabalho; Diversidade e inclusão; Equidade de gênero; O&G; Petróleo.



1. Introduction

This study addressed organizational policies and practices aimed at inclusion and gender equity in women's direct onshore and offshore careers in the Brazilian oil and gas (O&G) sector. Its objective was to examine the perceptions of women working in this sector regarding organizational policies and practices for inclusion and gender equity in direct onshore and offshore positions, through a qualitative, descriptive, cross-sectional research design.

In Brazil, there is a gap in scientific studies concerning the landscape of women's participation in O&G careers. Existing research indicates low female participation, limited recruitment and retention of women, and structural discriminatory issues. These issues include lack of mobility, pay disparities, discrimination and harassment, as well as impacts on the mental health and family life of women working under offshore rotational regimes (Grubba, 2024).

Within this context, the study was guided by the following research question: What are the perceptions of women employed in direct onshore and offshore positions in the Brazilian O&G sector (i.e., Brazilian companies headquartered in Brazil, or foreign companies operating in the country) regarding organizational policies and practices for inclusion and gender equity in their careers? The expectation was to broaden and deepen the understanding of these perceptions, contributing to the identification of challenges, best practices, and opportunities for improvement within organizations.

The specific objectives were: to identify organizational policies and practices for inclusion and gender equity in women's direct careers in the Brazilian O&G sector; to analyze the effectiveness of these policies based on participants' perceptions; to identify challenges and obstacles embedded in organizational culture; to examine practices adopted in response to cases of gender-based violence or abuse; to identify differences between policies directed at onshore and offshore careers; to contribute to the scientific literature on inclusion and gender equity in the sector; and to inform the development of new policies and practices aimed at overcoming barriers and strengthening the recruitment and retention of women.

Although this study is qualitative and based on a limited sample, its findings provide relevant insights into women's perceptions of inclusion and gender equity policies and practices. To strengthen future analyses and enable more robust generalizations, it



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is recommended that the sample be expanded and combined with quantitative methods, such as structured questionnaires administered to professionals from different regions, hierarchical levels, and roles (onshore/offshore). Such methodological triangulation would allow for the identification of more representative patterns and support more reliable recommendations for companies and policymakers.

By understanding the perceptions of women working in these careers, it becomes possible to assess the existence and effectiveness of inclusion and equity policies, generating insights that support the development of effective strategies and best practices, in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5), which addresses gender equality (United Nations, 2015). It is expected that this study will raise awareness among oil companies operating in Brazil regarding the importance of gender equity policies and practices, contributing to the development of an organizational culture in which inclusion and diversity are core values.

2. Literature review

In the workplace, diversity¹, equity, and inclusion aim to ensure the formal representation of diverse individuals and the possibility of their active participation. However, the inclusion of diverse individuals (i.e., formal representation) does not in itself guarantee equitable inclusion, understood as active participation, involvement in decision-making, equitable hiring and promotion policies, and access to a safe environment. Within this thematic field, gender inclusion encompasses multiple dimensions of diversity (e.g., social, cultural, ethnic, educational, and emotional), thereby requiring more just and equitable work environments.

In the labor context, the multiple dimensions of diversity (e.g., gender, sexuality, disability, skin color, race/ethnicity, educational background) affect individuals' accessibility or inaccessibility, influencing recruitment, hiring, and retention. These dimensions also shape opportunities for professional advancement. Thus, individuals situated at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities may experience more complex barriers, such as double or multiple discrimination, undermining access and equity in the workplace (Fleury, 2000).

1 Diversity refers to the uniqueness of each individual across visible dimensions (e.g., gender expression, race, and ethnic origin) and invisible dimensions (e.g., personality, family background, education, political views, and religion), which together make each person distinct (Catalyst, 2020).



Despite the importance of representation as a means of removing organizational barriers, Beach and Segars (2022, pp. 27–29) recommend strengthening participation so that individuals feel free to share knowledge and contribute fully. To this end, they suggest redesigning deeply rooted organizational processes that privilege certain groups based on implicit biases, as well as promoting the value of diversity and inclusion within organizations.

From a legal perspective, both international and domestic instruments address workplace non-discrimination. Among them, Convention No. 111 of the International Labour Organization (ILO, 1958) mandates the elimination of discrimination, and Brazil's Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT), in Article 373-A, prohibits discrimination in the workplace and ensures that no individual is treated unequally or discriminatorily on the basis of characteristics such as sex, origin, race, color, marital status, family status, or disability. Additionally, Law No. 14,611/2023 establishes mandatory equal pay for equal work, and Decree No. 678/1992, which promulgated the American Convention on Human Rights, affirms that all persons are entitled to the enjoyment of their rights and freedoms without discrimination (Brazil, 2023, 1992).

Non-discrimination is further reaffirmed in other international instruments and consensus-based norms, such as the United Nations Global Compact (1999) and the ILO Tripartite Declaration (2012). Although companies have an indirect obligation to comply with international standards, they are directly bound by Brazilian laws and regulations (United Nations, 2011, 2012). Accordingly, corporate responsibility arises through both adjudication and regulatory frameworks (Certanec, 2019; Ruggie, 2024).

Equitable gender inclusion directly affects women's professional experiences, self-esteem, and interpersonal dynamics. The effects of inequity include harassment, the gender pay gap, reduced opportunities for advancement, occupational segregation into roles deemed "feminine," bias related to motherhood, and the questioning of women's intellectual capabilities. Both implicit and explicit biases influence recruitment, selection, and retention processes. On this subject, see: Almeida (2018), Biroli (2016), Brazil (2023), Carvalho (2016), Duarte and Spinelli (2019), and Guimarães (2016).

When gender is analyzed intersectionally with other dimensions of diversity, such as race/ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation, the challenges become even more complex, intensifying barriers and inequalities (González, 1984; Chura & Gonçalves, 2023; Ribeiro et al., 2020).



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The absence of inclusive policies and practices hinders women's full participation and undermines equality of opportunity. Data indicate that organizations that underinvest in gender inclusion face significant challenges, including the perpetuation of stereotypes and the limitation of opportunities. Conversely, equity and diversity in organizational environments are associated with higher engagement and improved commercial and financial performance (Ser Jobs, 2023), in addition to fulfilling human rights commitments. Significant statistical evidence correlates diverse leadership teams with stronger financial performance (Dixon-Fyle et al., 2023).

In the Brazilian O&G sector, studies point to low female participation and persistent inequalities, including lack of opportunities, sexism, discrimination, harassment, and difficulties in balancing family life due to offshore rotation schedules (Grubba, 2024, p. 187). Existing literature rarely explores intersectional dimensions, thereby limiting understanding of the challenges faced by women who belong to multiple marginalized groups. This gap provided the foundation for the development of the present qualitative study, which seeks to contribute to the scientific literature and to inform policies and practices that benefit women's careers and foster more inclusive organizational environments in the O&G sector.

3. Method

A qualitative, descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and a sociodemographic questionnaire, with a final purposive sample of nine interviews and data saturation (Sampieri, Collado, & Lucio, 2013; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). The aim was to understand the perspectives of participants, women working in the Brazilian O&G sector, regarding organizational policies and practices for gender inclusion and equity in onshore and offshore work.

The qualitative method was selected due to the complexity and multiplicity of meanings inherent in the social and cultural phenomena under examination, which require an in-depth understanding of interpersonal dynamics within organizational environments, particularly given the specificities of the O&G sector. This approach made it possible to capture the meanings attributed to professional experiences, valuing participants' perceptions, feelings, and interpretations of institutional policies and practices.



Initially, twelve interviews were planned, following the saturation criterion suggested by Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006). However, saturation was reached with nine participants, when consistent thematic repetition and the absence of new meaningful analytical categories were observed. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that the small sample size does not allow for statistical generalization, being appropriate instead for the production of in-depth but context-specific knowledge.

Inclusion criteria comprised individuals who self-identified as women, held direct onshore and/or offshore positions in Brazilian oil companies (or foreign companies headquartered in or operating in Brazil), and had at least six months of continuous employment. Individuals under 18 years of age, interns, and workers in indirect positions within the sector were excluded.

Participant recruitment initially occurred through a public call posted on December 10, 2024, in various online forums related to the O&G sector, with no responses received by February 1, 2025. Subsequently, individual outreach was conducted via LinkedIn, a professional networking platform, targeting different oil-producing regions of the country. Professional profiles of companies operating in Brazil were reviewed to ensure representation across regions, including: the North Region (Amazon Basin and Solimões Basin); the Southeast Region (Espírito Santo Basin, Campos Basin, and Santos Basin); and the Northeast Region (Sergipe Basin, Potiguar Basin, Parnaíba Basin, Recôncavo Basin, Camamu-Almada Basin, Barreirinhas Basin, and Tucano Sul Basin). Within company profiles, women working offshore and onshore who appeared to meet the inclusion criteria were identified. Nineteen companies in the sector were analyzed: 3R Petroleum, Acelen, Brava, Carmo Energy, Constellation Oil Services, Conterp, Enauta, Eneva, Equinor, Forsea, Modec, Ocyan, Origem Energia, Perbras, Petrobras, Petroreconcavo, PRIO, SBM Offshore, and Seadrill. Between February 10 and March 29, ninety-nine women were contacted and invited to participate, with an explanation of the study's objectives and procedures. Of these, thirty-two responded to the initial invitation, and nine agreed to participate in the interviews.

Interviews were conducted virtually via the Zoom platform, with an average duration of approximately one and a half hours. They were recorded, fully transcribed, and stored in accordance with ethical standards and Brazil's General Data Protection Law (CNS, 2012, 2016, 2021; Brazil, 2018). All participants signed an Informed Consent Form, and no withdrawals were recorded.



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Data were analyzed using Bardin's (2011) content analysis technique, in three stages: pre-analysis; definition of open analytical categories based on exhaustiveness, relevance, and exclusivity; and interpretative analysis with critical inference. The meaning of the messages was constructed through reflective reading, seeking internal coherence and interpretive depth.

The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee (Opinion No. 7,041,950/2024). Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured, and participants were allowed to choose pseudonyms for use in the study.

Although the qualitative design allowed for in-depth analysis, future research is encouraged to adopt a mixed-methods approach, particularly in an exploratory sequential format. The findings of this investigation may support the development of a structured quantitative instrument (survey) to be administered to a larger sample of women working in the O&G sector, enabling the testing of identified patterns, comparison of regional realities, analysis of hierarchical variables, and examination of correlations between perceptions of policies and indicators of retention or career advancement. Such methodological triangulation may strengthen external validity and expand the generalizability of the results.

4. Results and discussion

Nine women were interviewed. Among them, five work exclusively under the onshore regime, one exclusively under the offshore regime, and three have experience in both regimes. The inclusion of participants with simultaneous experience in onshore and offshore contexts contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of organizational dynamics, allowing for a comparative analysis of the specific characteristics of each work regime with respect to perceptions of gender inclusion and equity.

The participants have varying lengths of experience in the sector and occupy diverse roles, including technical, operational, and administrative positions, which contributes to a plurality of perspectives on organizational dynamics and gender inclusion policies.

Regarding regional distribution, six interviewees work in the Southeast region and three in the Northeast region of Brazil. There were no participants affiliated with the South, North, or Central-West regions. Considering that there is currently no



active oil production in those regions, despite their potential, the composition of the sample reflects the geographic distribution of economic activity within the sector.

In order to preserve participants' anonymity and reduce the risk of identification, the companies in which they are employed are not disclosed.

Analysis of the interviews allowed the findings to be organized into three thematic axes: (1) the existence of gender inclusion policies and practices; (2) perceptions of the effectiveness of these policies in reducing career inequalities; and (3) the main challenges faced by women in the oil and gas sector. The organization of these axes resulted from the categorization process conducted through content analysis, as described in the methodological section, emerging from recurring discursive patterns identified in the interviews.

4.1 Does the company promote gender inclusion policies and practices?

Eight of the nine participants stated that the companies in which they work have policies or practices aimed at gender inclusion, while one indicated the absence of such initiatives. Similarly, eight interviewees reported that their organizations internally communicate actions related to diversity and inclusion.

However, qualitative analysis of the narratives reveals that although these policies are formally acknowledged, they are perceived as incipient, fragmented, and, to a large extent, recent, primarily implemented beginning in 2024. Participants point to the predominance of isolated initiatives that are not necessarily integrated into a structured, documented policy accompanied by goals or performance indicators. As observed in the accounts of Helena and Gabriela, many organizations lack a formal gender equity plan with defined objectives and mechanisms for monitoring the reduction of inequalities.

Ane is the only participant who describes the existence of practices perceived as effective, even though they are not formalized through specific indicators. According to her account, the company maintains an internal women's group dedicated to discussing equity-related issues, promoting debates and inviting guest speakers to foster reflection within the organizational environment. For the interviewee, this initiative represents progress compared to a previous professional experience in which no gender inclusion policies or practices existed and leadership positions were entirely



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occupied by men. Nevertheless, even in what was considered the most structured case, there is no formal systematization of actions or measurable evaluation of outcomes.

Some participants, such as Helena, Laila, and Marina, reported organizational concern regarding increasing the hiring of women. In Marina's company, this concern extends to other underrepresented groups, including Black individuals, older workers, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and persons with disabilities. However, according to the interviewees, such initiatives occur predominantly in a value-oriented and informal manner, without documentary records or defined goals and indicators to assess their effectiveness.

Mentorship programs aimed at women were also mentioned. Gabriela reports the existence of a program targeting young women interested in entering the sector, in which mentors serve as role models and provide career guidance. Ana likewise mentions a women-focused mentorship program intended to foster professional advancement. In both cases, however, these initiatives are not formalized within structured institutional policies nor accompanied by impact metrics.

With respect to training, the reports are heterogeneous. Marina and Ana indicate the existence of mandatory diversity and inclusion training within their companies, aimed at conferring greater institutional legitimacy to the issue, although without clear evaluation indicators. In two other companies, training is offered on a voluntary basis. Overall, five participants stated that their companies do not offer specific training on inclusion and equity, while four indicated the existence of some form of training.

Finally, sporadic initiatives were reported, such as forums held on International Women's Day and lectures organized on commemorative dates, as noted by Laila. Although such initiatives signal institutional acknowledgment of the issue, they are perceived as episodic and insufficient to produce structural transformations in gender dynamics within the sector.

There is, therefore, a disconnect between the perceived existence of inclusion policies and the presence of structured mechanisms for their implementation and monitoring. Inclusion is recognized discursively but lacks formal institutionalization and evaluative instruments capable of measuring its effectiveness. Consequently, the reported practices assume an episodic, symbolic, or group-dependent character rather than constituting a transversal and structured organizational policy. The absence of goals, indicators, and accountability mechanisms suggests that gender inclusion still occupies a peripheral position within the corporate governance framework of the sector.



4.2 Gender inclusion policies and practices are not effective in reducing gender inequality in careers

Participants' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of gender inclusion and equity policies and practices are not uniform. Divergences may be associated with differences in educational background, racial identities, areas of professional activity, and organizational contexts, considering that some participants work both onshore and offshore, while others work exclusively offshore or exclusively onshore, in operational, field-based, or administrative roles. Nevertheless, the majority of interviewees indicate that the effectiveness of such initiatives is limited, partial, or nonexistent.

For analytical purposes, effectiveness is understood as the capacity of organizational policies and practices to produce verifiable structural changes, such as: consistent increases in female representation at all hierarchical levels; expanded participation of women in leadership positions; reduction of inequalities in opportunities for career advancement; improvement of the organizational climate; and effective responses to gender-based discrimination and violence. From this perspective, the accounts suggest that although isolated initiatives exist, they have not produced measurable structural transformations.

In Helena's words, the policies "could be better," although she acknowledges some progress over time. Ana's perception converges with this view: despite not perceiving concrete results, especially regarding women's participation in leadership positions, she considers it positive that the topic is under discussion. Thus, while discursive engagement has advanced, practical effects remain limited.

Barbara recognizes that her company has women in leadership positions, which distinguishes it from other organizations in the sector. However, she notes the absence of a formal document, defined goals, or a structured plan aimed at reducing gender inequalities, such that actions depend largely on the sensitivity of individual managers. The absence of indicators, targets, and data transparency emerges as a central analytical element: without metrics, impact cannot be assessed, leadership cannot be held accountable, and commitments cannot be institutionalized. Consequently, the gender agenda remains dependent on individual initiatives rather than being integrated into organizational governance.

Several accounts point to a predominantly quantitative form of inclusion, without a corresponding redistribution of power or transformation of hierarchical structures.



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Gabriela observes that efforts are being made to increase female representation, yet the environment remains predominantly male. Ane reports that in a previous company, women were hired, but without effective inclusion in daily work routines or decision-making processes. Laila recounts a similar situation: women, including Black women, are hired for lower-level positions without career plans and, in many cases, without being granted permanent status. This represents inclusion that increases numerical representation but not opportunities.

Laila further problematizes the hiring of women for isolated onshore roles, such as overnight security positions in remote locations, without consideration of concrete working conditions related to safety and equity. In such cases, insertion is not accompanied by structural adjustments, revealing a logic of symbolic presence without transformation of labor conditions.

Participants also highlight a performative dimension of inclusion. Patrícia mentions the broad dissemination, on social media platforms such as LinkedIn, of committees and initiatives symbolizing “female empowerment,” which in practice do not translate into structural change. Marina summarizes this perception by stating that policies exist but are superficial. Amanda is more direct, declaring that their effectiveness “is zero.” These accounts suggest the presence of institutional visibility strategies that do not necessarily result in redistribution of power or revision of organizational hierarchies.

The low representation of women in leadership positions constitutes one of the primary indicators of the limited effectiveness of these initiatives. Participants report that when women occupy management roles, they are generally concentrated in middle management, being virtually absent from senior leadership. Amanda encapsulates this perception by stating, “I look up and don’t see any women.” Even in non-hierarchical settings, she reports often being the only woman in the room, especially in operational areas. According to her, inequality is not perceived as an organizational problem; and if it is not recognized as such, it is unlikely to be addressed.

Helena, Patrícia, Bárbara, and Marina likewise point to the absence of women in senior leadership. Laila states that the issue is sensitive: although it is informally acknowledged that female representation is lower, leadership resists recognizing it as an institutional problem. The lack of disclosure of official data reinforces this invisibility. As Ana notes, the numbers are not publicly shared, preventing precise diagnoses and revealing limited organizational transparency.



These perceptions are consistent with studies in the energy sector indicating persistent low female participation in the workforce and even lower representation in executive positions. Thus, participants' accounts do not appear as isolated cases but rather as part of a broader structural pattern.

Beyond leadership representation, interviewees emphasize the absence of structured policies for professional development and career advancement. Amanda reports the inexistence of a formal career plan; Marina mentions only informal recommendations regarding parity in recruitment processes; Helena and Bárbara state that there are no targets related to women's progression. When mentorship programs exist, as in the companies of Gabriela and Ana, there are still no metrics to evaluate their effectiveness. In summary, development initiatives appear episodic and not institutionalized.

Another critical aspect concerns organizational climate and experiences of hostility. Bárbara describes an adverse environment in which remaining requires significant psychological endurance: "you have to really want to work here, because if you only want it a little, you'll leave in the first month." She reports having thought that she "was going to lose her mind." These testimonies indicate that the ineffectiveness of policies is not neutral: it translates into suffering, emotional strain, and the need for constant resilience on the part of women.

With respect to reporting mechanisms, all companies provide anonymous channels, often linked to compliance departments. Most participants consider them effective. However, there are no specific instruments dedicated to addressing gender-based harassment or discrimination. Ane expresses concern about confidentiality and the handling of complaints, especially in contexts where leadership is predominantly male. Ana recounts a case of moral harassment whose handling she did not consider satisfactory. Thus, the formal existence of a reporting channel does not necessarily guarantee organizational justice or a safe environment.

Overall, the accounts indicate that the limited effectiveness of gender inclusion policies and practices results not only from lack of formalization but also from failure to recognize inequality as a structural problem. Fragmented initiatives predominate, dependent on specific managers, lacking targets, indicators, or transparency. Inclusion, when it occurs, tends to be quantitative, symbolic, or concentrated at intermediate hierarchical levels, without significant alteration of power positions.

Accordingly, although organizational discourse on equity and inclusion is present, the structural transformations necessary for the effective reduction of gender



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inequalities in career trajectories have not yet been consolidated within the companies analyzed. The gender agenda remains, to a large extent, peripheral to organizational governance, limiting its impact and perpetuating historical asymmetries within the sector (Grubba, 2024, p. 176; Yanosek et al., 2019; African Natural Resources Center, 2016; World Economic Forum, 2016; Energy Council, 2023).

4.3 The main challenges faced by women in careers in the oil and gas sector

The participants perform diverse roles² within the oil and gas sector, working in offshore activities as well as in operational and administrative onshore positions. Although this diversity could potentially hinder an in-depth analysis of a single specific area, it enables a comprehensive understanding of the sector's organizational functioning. Despite contextual differences, thematic saturation was achieved in the interviews: qualitatively, perceptions converge across multiple dimensions. The challenges reported are structural in nature and widely shared

4.3.1 The production model and the logic of permanent availability

The first challenge concerns the unpredictability and the logic of constant availability that characterizes the sector. Except for certain administrative onshore roles, work in the oil industry, especially in operational field activities, is marked by extended rotations, on-call duties, and frequent schedule changes.

Patrícia reports working under fourteen-days-on/fourteen-days-off rotations, which can extend to twenty-eight-days-on/twenty-eight-days-off. During the pandemic, her sister remained offshore for more than forty consecutive days. Ana mentions having worked on a demand-driven basis, without any predictability. Gabriela states: "I have a date to board, but I don't have a date to leave." Marina emphasizes that, at coordination and management levels, "time off is not really time off." Bárbara, working in operational onshore activities, reports having worked more than twenty consecutive twelve-hour night shifts.

2 The participants work in the areas of production engineering, well engineering, reservoir engineering, production operations, legal affairs, contracts, infrastructure and optimization, and process management.



These accounts reveal an organizational model structured around the logic of permanent availability. Rest periods are unstable, on-call expectations are frequent, and the boundary between work and private life becomes blurred. This work organization presupposes total dedication and absolute flexibility on the part of the worker, a model that disproportionately affects women, particularly in light of socially constructed expectations related to caregiving and family life. Thus, the challenge is not limited to specific companies but appears to be linked to the very productive design of the sector.

4.3.2 Mental health, exhaustion, and organizational suffering

Unpredictability and extended work schedules significantly affect the physical and mental health of the participants. Marina states, “No one is well.” She reports having left operational work after realizing she was on the verge of burnout. Ana describes periods during which she worked seven consecutive days, alternating between day and night shifts, leaving “extremely exhausted, mentally speaking.” Amanda characterizes onshore work as “terrible” for mental health, citing structural precariousness and the absence of institutional psychological support.

The recurring accounts of anxiety, exhaustion, ongoing therapy, psychiatric medication use, and persistent fatigue indicate that the suffering described is not episodic, but structural. The organizational culture portrayed is oriented toward continuous high performance, pressure, and the normalization of overload. Although some companies provide health insurance or digital support platforms, there are no structured policies aimed at preventing or mitigating the psychosocial impacts of work.

Organizational suffering thus emerges as a central element of women’s experiences in the sector.

4.3.3 Motherhood and structural incompatibility

Another critical axis concerns motherhood. The offshore regime, particularly under fourteen-days-on/fourteen-days-off rotations, is perceived as incompatible with pregnancy and child-rearing. Ana articulates this dilemma directly: “Would you stay fourteen days away from a baby?” According to her, among the women she has known in the sector, only one chose motherhood while remaining offshore; the others transitioned to office-based roles.



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The participant also highlights the gender asymmetry involved: whereas men may continue offshore assignments after becoming fathers, for women this choice is perceived as virtually unfeasible. The productive structure shifts the burden of reconciling work and social reproduction onto women, thereby reinforcing gender inequalities.

Motherhood thus emerges as a tension-laden choice, not merely a personal decision, but a consequence of an organizational model that is poorly aligned with women's reproductive lives.

4.3.4 Isolation, masculinization of the environment, and lack of representation

Offshore work also entails social isolation. Patrícia reports platforms with one hundred fifty to two hundred workers and only two women per shift. Such low representation reinforces feelings of loneliness and hinders the formation of support networks.

This scenario reflects a historically masculinized organizational environment. The sector's culture is described as hostile, with male predominance in teams, leadership positions, and decision-making spaces. The lack of female representation is not merely quantitative; it also affects the symbolic legitimation of authority.

4.3.5 Professional delegitimizing and the need to prove competence

One of the most recurrent challenges reported is the constant need to prove one's worth. Amanda states that she has to "do NASA-level calculations" to be recognized. Laila adds that women must make "five times more effort" to be considered credible. Marina recounts being technically questioned and disrespected at the beginning of her career, while male colleagues did not face the same level of scrutiny.

This delegitimization of female authority manifests itself in exclusion from meetings, the prioritization of male colleagues for operations, difficulties in being heard, and the mediation of decisions by male supervisors. Respect or "being respected and heard," in Marina's words emerges as a central category in the professional experience.

It is a continuous process of suspicion regarding women's technical competence, imposing an additional burden of effort in order to achieve equivalent legitimacy.



4.3.6 Harassment, microaggressions, and symbolic violence

Participants report episodes of moral and sexual harassment, microaggressions, and differential treatment. Bárbara describes being repeatedly called “my love”, “baby”, and “my little baby”, even after requesting to be addressed by her name. Ana mentions constant pressure and messages sent at inappropriate hours. Amanda reports being encouraged to postpone her marriage due to work demands.

These episodes are not merely “jokes” or isolated situations; rather, they constitute forms of symbolic and gender-based violence. Infantilizing language, insistence on non-professional forms of address, and abusive pressure reinforce power hierarchies and processes of disqualification.

Bárbara describes the profound impact of these experiences on her mental health, including the need for therapy and medication. Her therapy sessions became entirely focused on work-related issues, until she ultimately decided to leave the operational sector.

4.3.7 Analytical synthesis

The main challenges faced by women in the oil and gas sector are not limited to isolated episodes, but stem from a combination of structural factors: a production model based on constant availability; extended and unpredictable working hours; a masculinized organizational culture; low female representation; systematic delegitimization of technical competence; harassment and microaggressions; structural incompatibility with motherhood; and significant impacts on mental health.

Although there are variations among companies and roles, the convergence of perceptions indicates that these challenges are characteristic of the sector as a whole. The oil industry culture, historically male-dominated and oriented toward high performance, imposes on women a continuous need for adaptation, resilience, and proof of competence, often at the expense of their health and personal projects.

Thus, the reported challenges demonstrate that gender inequality in the sector manifests not only in low representation, but also in the concrete working conditions, the organization of time, power relations, and women’s everyday subjective experiences.



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4.4 Partial conclusions of the findings: recommendations

The findings of this study demonstrate that, although initiatives aimed at including women in the Brazilian oil and gas (O&G) sector exist, such measures remain largely formal, fragmented, and lacking structured mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation. Declared diversity policies are present; however, they are not consistently translated into clear targets, performance indicators, or institutional transparency. At the same time, participants' accounts reveal barriers to career advancement, significant impacts of the offshore operational model on personal and family life, and recurring experiences of harassment and microaggressions.

Based on this empirical evidence, the following recommendations are presented in an integrated manner, articulating diagnosis and intervention in order to offer concrete pathways for reducing the structural inequalities identified. The data indicate that the absence of formalized policies and clear accountability mechanisms contributes to the persistence of gender inequalities in the sector. Isolated initiatives, dependent on individual managerial goodwill, tend to lack continuity and structural effectiveness. It is therefore recommended that companies formalize written gender equity policies, explicitly defining objectives, institutional responsibilities, and periodic evaluation mechanisms. Progressive targets for female representation by hierarchical level, including senior leadership positions, should be established, alongside diversity committees endowed with deliberative autonomy and real capacity to influence strategic decisions. The annual publication of diversity reports, presenting aggregated data on workforce composition, promotion patterns, and remuneration structures, constitutes an essential measure of transparency and institutional commitment.

To monitor effectiveness, objective indicators should be adopted, such as the percentage of women by hierarchical level, percentage of women in leadership positions, promotion rates by gender, retention rates, and adjusted gender pay gap by role. Continuous measurement enables the assessment of progress, the identification of bottlenecks, and greater organizational accountability.

Regarding career development and professional advancement, participants' reports highlight obstacles to progression and the absence of structured development policies for women. Quantitative inclusion without advancement strategies tends to reproduce the concentration of women in positions with lower decision-making power.



It is therefore recommended that formal mentorship and sponsorship programs be implemented, with periodic evaluation of results and systematic monitoring of participants' trajectories. Gender parity in final candidate lists for strategic positions should be required, and gender considerations incorporated into succession planning processes. Regular internal audits of promotion procedures may contribute to identifying implicit biases and systematic inequalities. Relevant monitoring indicators include average time to promotion by gender, percentage of women nominated to strategic programs, female participation in succession-critical roles, and gender-disaggregated organizational climate survey results.

With respect to mental health and the operational model, the onshore and offshore regime was identified as a structuring element of inequality, particularly due to unpredictable schedules, physical overload, and difficulties reconciling work with family projects and motherhood. The logic of permanent availability affects both mental and physical health and places pressure on reproductive choices and professional trajectories. In this regard, it is recommended that companies ensure minimum schedule predictability, strictly limit consecutive offshore days, and guarantee effective rest periods without recurrent interruptions. Institutional psychological support, accessible also under offshore conditions, should be made available to mitigate psychosocial impacts. Additionally, the development of a specific policy addressing motherhood in the offshore context is advised, including temporary reassignment options, schedule flexibility, and enhanced support following maternity leave. Monitoring metrics may include average offshore days by gender, rates of mental health-related leave, work-family balance satisfaction indices, and the percentage of women transitioning from offshore to onshore positions after motherhood.

Concerning harassment prevention and cultural transformation, the findings reveal the presence of microaggressions, moral and sexual harassment, and a perceived lack of institutional safety for reporting. The mere existence of generic compliance channels has proven insufficient to ensure trust and protection. It is recommended that a dedicated reporting channel for harassment and discrimination be created, staffed by a specialized team independent from the direct hierarchy of the involved areas, ensuring impartial investigative procedures with defined timelines and transparent communication. The annual disclosure of aggregated data on complaints and measures adopted contributes to strengthening institutional credibility. Mandatory leadership training on implicit bias, gender equity, and harassment prevention should



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be implemented, accompanied by a formal zero-tolerance policy with clear and proportionate sanctions. Relevant indicators include the number of complaints by category, average investigation time, percentage of cases resulting in concrete measures, and annual internal survey results measuring psychological safety.

Finally, the results indicate the need for sector-specific regulatory action in O&G. Regulatory authorities should require annual diversity and pay transparency reports, as well as effective monitoring of equal pay legislation. Regulatory or reputational incentives may be established for companies that set verifiable equity targets and demonstrate consistent progress. Explicit alignment of the sector with Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality) of the United Nations is recommended, with measurable metrics and periodic monitoring. As an additional proposal, the development of a sectoral Gender Equity Index in O&G is suggested, structured around dimensions such as representation, career advancement, organizational safety, and work-life balance. Such an instrument would enable longitudinal monitoring and interorganizational comparison, fostering transparency, accountability, and positive competition among companies, while contributing to structural transformation within the sector.

5. Conclusions

Knowledge about corporate policies and practices in the Brazilian oil and gas (O&G) sector, particularly from the perspective of women building their careers in the petroleum industry, is essential to assess the effectiveness of gender equity initiatives and to identify their main obstacles. By privileging the lived experiences of female workers, this study shifts the focus from the formal analysis of declared policies to their actual implementation in everyday organizational life. This approach makes it possible not only to verify the existence of institutional initiatives, but also to examine their real effects on organizational culture, sense of belonging, motivation, and the retention of women in the sector.

Participants report that the companies in which they work communicate policies and practices aimed at inclusion and gender equity. However, they point to the absence of written formalization, clearly defined targets, and monitoring mechanisms. In general, these initiatives take the form of programmatic guidelines or discursive commitments not accompanied by measurable indicators or institutional accountability.



This gap between discourse and practice compromises the effectiveness of actions and reveals a fragile pattern of institutionalization, marked by fragmented and insufficiently transparent initiatives. The consequences are evident both in female representation, especially in core technical petroleum careers and leadership positions, and in opportunities for professional progression.

The challenges described extend beyond the formal dimension of policies and reach the organizational structure of the sector. Unpredictable schedules, the offshore regime, social isolation, and difficulties in family coexistence constitute structural elements of inequality, particularly when combined with social expectations related to motherhood and caregiving. In addition, consistent reports of moral and sexual harassment, microaggressions, and the delegitimization of women's technical and intellectual competencies emerge. These experiences directly affect mental health, motivation, and professional engagement, producing the perception that personal life and work become, in certain contexts, nearly irreconcilable. In this scenario, female retention depends not only on financial incentives, but on the construction of organizational environments that are genuinely safe, respectful, and equitable.

The findings engage critically with the hypothesis presented by Yanosek et al. (2019), mentioned in the systematic review conducted by Grubba (2024), which suggests that low female representation in the sector is associated with remote assignments, work-family conflict, gender prejudice, and harassment. The results of this qualitative research confirm the presence of these factors; however, they also reveal that, despite such barriers, the interviewees persist in their careers. In some cases, they report repeated exclusion from strategic missions, even when more qualified than their male counterparts. Thus, women's permanence in the sector does not stem from the absence of obstacles, but from their capacity to confront them. This shifts the debate from an alleged "lack of interest" on the part of women to institutional responsibility in producing and maintaining such barriers.

Additionally, the reports demonstrate that although high income is perceived as relevant, it is neither the exclusive nor the determining factor for retention. The interviewees indicate that professional recognition, real growth opportunities, a healthy organizational environment, new challenges, mental health, and family proximity are equally decisive dimensions. This finding partially challenges the conclusion of Grubba (2024) regarding the central weight of income in female retention, suggesting that symbolic, cultural, and organizational factors play a structuring role in the decision to remain in or leave the sector.



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From a theoretical perspective, the results indicate that gender inequality in the O&G sector cannot be understood merely as a problem of access or numerical representation, but as a structural phenomenon sustained by organizational dynamics, operational models, and cultural practices that reproduce power asymmetries. From a practical standpoint, the findings provide a foundation for the formulation of institutional strategies guided by internal diagnosis, with emphasis on policy formalization, target setting, continuous monitoring, and organizational culture transformation.

It is concluded that promoting gender equity in the petroleum sector requires moving beyond merely declaratory approaches and adopting structured, measurable, and transparent measures. The creation of healthy organizational environments, with real prospects for growth and recognition, is not only a matter of social justice, but also a condition for institutional sustainability, talent retention, and the strengthening of the sector itself. By articulating empirical evidence with organizational implications and theoretical critique, this study contributes to shifting the debate from inclusive rhetoric to the effective transformation of practices.

This study contributes to the literature by offering in-depth qualitative evidence on women's experiences in the Brazilian O&G sector, an area still insufficiently explored from an empirical perspective in the national context.

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