

**TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY IN ORGANIZATIONS:  
BENEFITS OF SUPPORTING GENDER DIVERSITY IN TOP  
MANAGEMENT AND PROPOSALS TO BREAK THE  
GLASS CEILING.**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This work is the result of a theoretical study about the 'Glass Ceiling', that is, the limitations that women find when they want to be promoted in a professional organisation. This problem has existed for decades but in the last years the interest in it has increased and even the concern over this invisible phenomenon. Women find barriers during their professional careers and this affects all the developed countries. Even so, the focus of this work is on a developed country: Spain.

Women suffer the burden of the housework, which increases their responsibility in comparison to men and even more if we add the family charge such as taking care of children, old parents, ill members of the family... Therefore, they have less time to be devoted to their professional careers, and they even feel forced, sometimes, to choose between their professional careers or their families (Luis Carnicer, 2002).

At present, the European Union attempt to look for a solution for the difficult work and family reconciliation. For this reason, a lot of European countries, together with Spain, have the objective to improve this aspect. The inclusion of policies of reconciliation in companies will have benefits for both the female gender and the executives because a better welfare will have a repercussion of the productivity. The beneficiaries of the gender-specific division will be women, who will feel more liberated and will have more free time to be devoted to their professional goals.

Increasingly, a higher competitiveness is required in the market and therefore, workers must work harder and spend more hours there, its demand increases in top positions. Many times, women find themselves forced to renounce for a specific period of time to the work life because they have to focus their attention on their families so it distanced them from the possibility of getting a job in a better position (Sarrió, 2002).

The aim of this study is to analyse the gender inequality, the 'glass ceiling' and the barriers that support it and propose measures to break with this. This study is divided into two parts: the historical analysis and the research of the 'glass ceiling'. In

order to comprehend their low presence in the management board and top positions, we must look back and observe the causes. Once this first part is studied, a theoretical analysis will be carried out about the 'ceiling glass'.

Firstly, we have done a historical analysis about the political situation of the country, education, fertility, economic evolution and society since 1930 up to the present time. A mention of the feminist movements is included from its origins to the moment in Spain. Straightaway, there is an emphasis on the wage inequality because when we talk about gender equality we also talk about the 'gender pay gap', so although it is not the objective of this study, it should be considered.

Secondly, the 'glass ceiling' concept is analysed, and different definitions along the time are described. Then, factors that have lead to the appearance of this phenomenon are studied and classified according to internal, external and mixed factors. Moreover, numerous studies that agree with the importance of the woman in the business field are indexed and this work also defines which are the benefits that companies may find if they bet on diversity of genre in top positions. Lastly, different proposals are suggested in order to break with the 'glass ceiling'.

Finally, the last section shows conclusions from the work, and some of the most relevant elements in the work are described, as well as a personal opinion of the author.

## 2. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DIFFERENCES DUE TO GENDRE REASONS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

The fact that nowadays we face unfavourable situations for women in the labour market is explained with the inequality that the female gender has always suffered. The woman has always been secondary in education, employment and many other fields.

### 2.1. REPUBLIC, FRANCO'S DICTATORSHIP AND DEMOCRACY

In order to comprehend the current situation of the female genre in the labour market, we must look back 50 years. In 1935, the Civil War broke out between the republic and the national sides. Therefore, a victory of the Francoist put an end to this period in 1939 and lead to Franco's dictatorship. It is in this period when we can find big negative consequences of inequality. Women used to be educated to serve their husbands and every boy around them (father, brother, son...). They lost their right to vote and the Divorce Law was set aside. The financial, labour and political fields were for men and girls used to be educated to become good wives and homemakers. All these aspects were supported by the religion and the laws of that moment. The 40s and the 50s were more repressive than the 60s or 70s. Thanks to the relation with other countries, some progressive movements appeared and political parties contrary to the dictatorship were created. The 60s started with nothing less than the approval of the General Law of Education, which forced the school attendance of Spanish girls. This supposed a big step for the equality between men and women.

In 1975, democracy was imposed but it was not until 1978 when the Spanish Constitution included the decriminalisation of adultery, the use of contraceptives, and later the legalisation of the divorce and the partially decriminalisation of the abortion. These advances were considered as the consolidation of the Spanish Constitution.

## 2.2. EVOLUTION OF EDUCATION SINCE 1930

Table 1: Rates of illiteracy considering genre in Spain (older than 10 years old)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Male rate</u>	<u>Female rate</u>	<u>Total rate</u>
<b>1930</b>	19.5	32.0	25.9
<b>1940</b>	13.8	23.2	18.7
<b>1950</b>	9.9	18.3	14.2
<b>1960</b>	7.3	14.8	11.2
<b>1970</b>	5.1	12.3	8.9

*Adopted from: INE, Censos de población.*

Considering that these results have been taken from the census (1930 reflects the 20s), the Francoist period is represented from 1950, when a considerable difference between men and women are appreciated. In 1960 and 1970, women double and nearly triple the illiteracy rate of men.

Table 2: Schooling according to levels of education and considering genre from 1975 to 1981.

<b>Levels</b>	<u>1975-76</u>			<u>1981-82</u>		
	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>EGB</b>	51.0	49.0	5.473.468	51.3	48.7	5.629.874
<b>FP</b>	71.2	28.8	305.254	60.6	39.4	619.090
<b>BUP/COU</b>	51.2	48.8	818.403	46.3	53.7	1.124.329
<b>Educación superior</b>	63.7	36.3	482.873	56.0	44.0	629.649

*Adopted from: Informe FOESSA, 1983.*

*EGB: Educación General Básica (Basic and general education)*

*FP: Formación profesional (vocational education)*

*BUP/COU: Bachillerato Unificado Polivalente/ Curso de Orientación Universitaria (A Levels)*

The obtained results by 'Informe FOESSA' allow us to observe that with the time the presence of women in educational levels has increased. Even so, men continue being majority in this period.

At the beginning of the 90s, there is a minor equality of education between women and men but with big differences in the specialities. Whereas women prefer the humanistic field, men opt for the technical one.

Nowadays, Juan Carlos Rodríguez, a sociopolitical researcher, obtained the percentages of the visibility of Spanish women in the University areas from the data offered by the 'Ministerio de Educación'.

Table 3: Percentage of women enrolled in University studies considering the field

	Percentage of women		Percentage difference
	2008-10	2014-15	
<b>Total</b>	54.4	54.2	-0.1
<b>Education</b>	76.3	75.7	-0.5
<b>Arts and Humanities</b>	61.8	60.3	-1.4
<b>Social Science, Commercial Education and Law</b>	57.3	55.9	-1.5
<b>Science</b>	36.6	35.4	-1.2
<b>Engineering, Industry and Building</b>	30.3	29.3	-1.0
<b>Agriculture and Vet</b>	47.8	48.1	0.3
<b>Health and Social Services</b>	74.9	70.9	-4.0
<b>Services</b>	55.3	46.3	-8.9

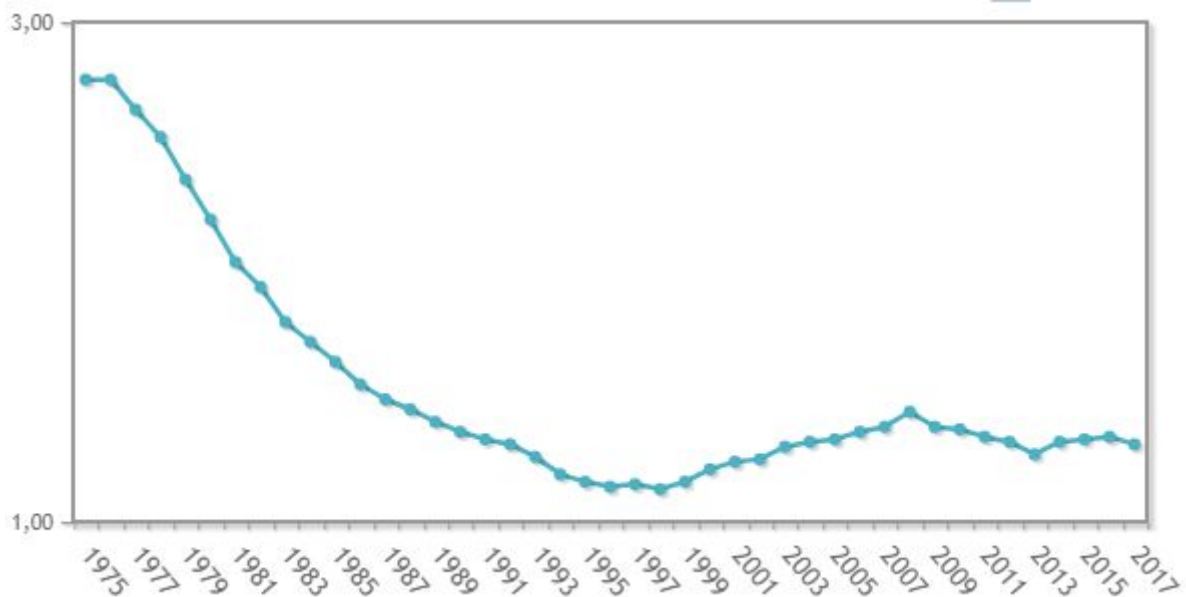
Adopted from: Juan Carlos Rodríguez (data from Ministerio de Educación)

Nowadays, there are more women than men studying at University. However, the percentage has decreased 1% due to the increasing presence of men at university in the last years. Focusing on specialisations, we can observe that in Science or Engineering the amount of men is considerable, and Education and Humanities are mostly chosen by women.

### **2.3. FERTILITY**

The number of children that women must care for, influences in the disposition that they will have when they want to incorporate in the labour market. As we already know, the average number of children some years ago was four. However, from 1975, this amount decreased a point per year. Precisely in 2017, the average number of children per woman is 1.31. This reduction equalises industrialised countries, which means a large presence of the woman in the labour market.

Graphic 1: Number of children



*Adopted from: INE, Publicado 2018*



## **2.4. ECONOMIC EVOLUTION**

### **2.4.1. The 50s**

In the post-war period, Spain was in a poor and miserable state. Due to the carelessness of the fields during the war, there was a lack of raw material and therefore the industry was paralysed. It was at the end of the 50s when Spain broke its isolation with the outer. Thanks to the agreements with the U.S.A., the entrance in the United Nations (UN), and the incorporation to the International Monetary Fund, the spanish economy started to have some similarities to the economy of the other occidental countries. Focusing on the economic stability, some austere measures were adopted to help women work to support economically their families. It that period, one salary was not enough to live.

### **2.4.2. The 60s**

The 60s were years of economic brightness. This period is known by the economic liberalisation and industrialisation. The mechanisation of the processes lead to the job destruction. The subsidy, known as 'paro', appeared but it was thanks to the emigration that the unemployment rates were not as tall as some years later. The female activity rates were increasing little by little in this period, compared with the previous one.

### **2.4.3. The 70s**

In the 70s, the secondary sector started to decreased and the tertiary sector was emphasised. On the other hand, with the arrival of the world petrol crisis, an economic recession turned up and it could not be regulated by the emigration. All the countries fall into the economic crisis. Youth who incorporated to the labour market in those years came from the well known baby boom and therefore the unemployment rate increased. Moreover, it coincided with the democracy transition. In spite of the economic crisis and of the high birth rates, the female activity rates kept their positive inclination.

#### **2.4.4. The 80s**

In these years '*Pactos de la Moncloa*' were signed, and this led to a control of the liquidities, a devaluation of the '*peseta*' and a control of the salaries. The economic recovery was not consolidated as it was expected but it supposed the union of the economic agents facing the crisis. In 1982, the Socialist Party was governing and it suggested the control of the inflation and the salaries. This democratic stability helped Spain be part of the European Community in 1986. Thanks to the incorporation to the European Union, Spain got a great stimulus to the economy. The agreement obliged Spain to be an open economy and it meant that foreign countries were ready to invest in our country. This economic competitiveness improved the Spanish productivity. On the other hand, the Spanish birth rate decreased and together with the economic recovery, the female activity rates considerably increased.

#### **2.4.5. The 90s and 2000**

After some years of economic brightness, Spain fell into recession in 1992. The unemployment considerably increased, getting to the 20%. At the same time, the European Union imposed Spain serious measures from the '*Tratado de Maastricht*'. They implied the inflation and the public deficit. In the middle 90s, the economy expanded again. It is in this period when the *Euro* entered. The Spanish *PIB* kept growing an average of 3.5% each year until 2008. In 2008, the biggest global crisis after the Second World War arrived. Spain was mainly affected by the debt of families and businesses and the well known real estate bubble, and also by the external influence of the world financial crisis. This led to a heavy rise of the unemployment and a bigger inequality. Spain has now double number of super rich people in comparison to the beginning of the crisis. As a consequence, there were more women who decided to take part in the labour market. (Graphic 2)

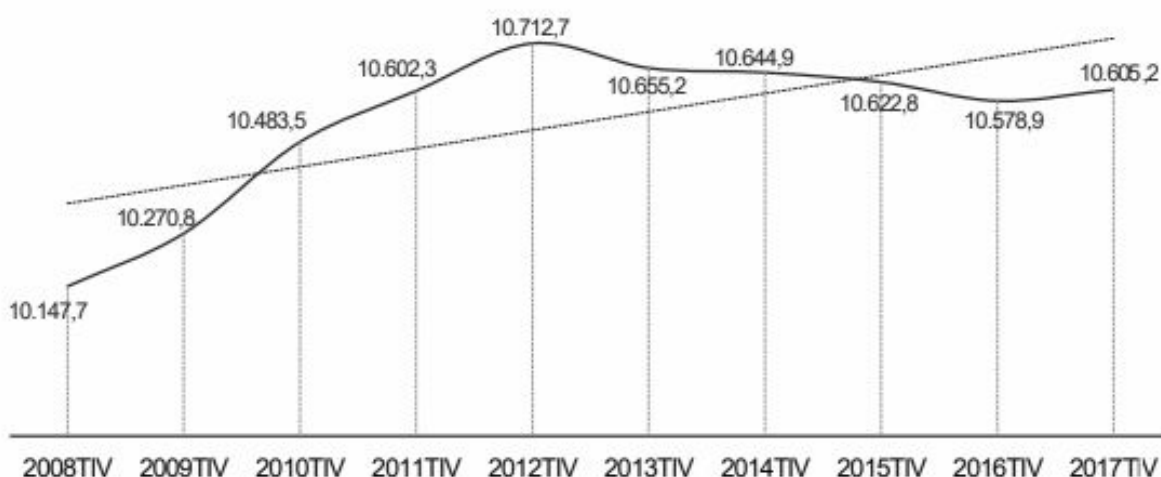
#### **2.4.6. 2014-2018**

Nowadays there is an increasing in the *PIB* rates and we could say that we are recovering after the break of the real estate bubble. Although the unemployment rate slightly decreases each term, it is of 14.45% in the last term of 2018. An added problem is that the

average income of Spanish people and that of the European Union are very different, so this implies an inequality of the conditions in comparison to them.

The European Union set the objective of not having less than 20% of the PIB in the industry. Unfortunately for us, it seems we will not accomplish it, in spite of being one of the most important sectors of our economy. Moreover, we are in a commercial deficit, Spain imports more than what it exports, in comparison to other countries. Finally, it seems that the economy keeps growing but far from solving the inequality with our neighbouring countries. In relation to the female activity rate, in 2017 was that of 46.59%.

Graphic 2: Evolution of the active female population (in thousands of women)



*Adopted from: SEPE (data from INE. Encuesta de Población Activa. IV term, 2008-2017).*

The previous graphic sequently shows the active female population of all the fourth terms from 2008 to 2017. With the arrival of the economic crisis, the female activity increased due to the income needs of the affected families. Some women that because of their husbands' jobs had not seen the need of working incorporated to the labour market in this period. In the last decade, the highest rate of the female active population happen in the fourth term of 2012, 10.721,7 (in thousands of women).

## **2.5. WOMEN AND THE YEAR THEY WERE BORN**

### **2.5.1. Women born between 1957 and 1977**

These women still were educated in a traditional society, it was not very common that the woman worked out of home so they used to live seeing their husbands as the main economic support for the family. Even so, thanks to the aforementioned General Education Law of 1970, women were beneficiary of a better education than their ancestors. Unluckily for them, they had the legal age to incorporate in the labour market when Spain was in the height of the economic crisis. However, this made them devote time to their formation. In this way, their presence in faculties increased up to a 40%. Later, they could look for a job with a total normality and it can be said that they were the first generation in reconcile their working and personal lives. They did not leave their jobs to take care of their babies and they were supported by family members, babysitters and nursery schools. Regarding their couples, they were less sexist than their parents and they understood the need of earning two salaries at the end of each month in order to have the life they desired, but they still associated the housework to women.

### **2.5.2 Women born between 1978 and 1986**

This group of women was born with the democracy and therefore they have been educated in a less discriminatory society compared with previous ones. But, although their conditions are more favourable than their mothers' or older sisters', they are still unequal in comparison to the male generation. Also, it is important to highlight the facilities that they had to study with the sacrifice of their parents and the economic rise they found when they went to look for a job. Apart from that, their couples were educated in a less sexist society and they were more involved in the housework but not enough.

### **2.5.3 Women born between 1986 and 1996 or 2002**

With the new Law '*Ley Orgánica de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo de España*' (LOGSE) passed in 1990, these women started their first steps in the educational field. This law promoted the educational right for every citizen regardless the genre. With a

new structure (nursery school, primary school, secondary school and A levels) that was addressed to Universities. Women in Spain and in Europe make a higher number of students at University than men. Therefore, this female generation is more prepared than ever to take part in the labour market. This, along with the delay of the maternity leads to a better disposition for the labour market. Regarding society, there is an equality awareness but it is not enough. A lot of women and some men believe in the necessity of fighting to eliminate the current inequality. The number of feminist movements is increasing. It is also important to mention the economic crisis of 2008, which as it has been mentioned, led to a decreasing rate of the female unemployment.

## **2.6 FEMINISM**

*“For most of the history, Anonymous was a woman”*

Virginia Woolf.

One of the most influential women of this modern period wrote this quote to show the invisibility of female in the society.

According to the ‘*Real Academia Española*’ (RAE), feminism is a “*principle of equality for the women and men’s rights*”. Feminism looks for equal opportunities in both educational and working fields and in the same society. In contrast to male sexism, also defined by the RAE as “*the overbearing males’ attitudes with respect to women. It is a combination of practices, behaviour and sayings that are offensive against the female genre*”

### **2.6.1 Feminist movements**

It was not until the 19th century when the traditional version of the woman started to be questioned. The first feminist organisations that appeared were formed by rich women. for example, women from the ‘*Junta de Damas de la Unión Iberoamericana*’ of Madrid. They reclaimed the equality in the work and in the education. The movements started by modest women did not get enough support, but they fought for their interests. Then, ‘*Societat Autònoma de Dones*’ arose in Barcelona and it was extended to the rest of Spain through the organisation of different protests around the country. In 1918, the ‘*Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Españolas*’ (ANME) was founded. This organisation was formed by women that did

not want to be radical or anti catholic. Two years later, the university collective created the '*Juventud Universitaria Femenina*' (*JUF*) and in 1928 its twelfth anniversary was celebrated. In 1936, a new foundation from *ANME* was formed, the so called '*Acción Política Feminista*', which fought against unequal salaries due to genre differences.

The feminist movement during the Second Spanish Republic "*was supported by few female supporters, who lacked of the needed resources to influence the political process of decision-making*" (Valiente, 1997). On the one hand, there were the labour women that took to the streets to reclaim their rights as both as women and workers. On the other hand, there were women that were part of the middle class and wanted to be called 'feminists'. These last women founded trade unions and sometimes did not agree with what the labour women defended. Moreover, these traditionalist women created their own organisation, called '*Unión Internacional de Ligas Católico Femeninas*', which defended that women should take care of homes.

### **2.6.2 Political parties and trade unions**

In 1932, nearly all the labour women took part in strikes with the labour men, and for this reason, when the dismissals increased in the textile, food and tobacco sectors (usually occupied by women), trade unions became aware of the women's situation. The presence of trade unions increased when in 1932, women had by first time the right of enrolling trade unions without their husband's permission. Moreover, the enrollment fee was reduced in the *UGT* for women. In 1930, there were 30 female trade unions and in 1936 there were 100,000 Spanish women enrolled in the *UGT*. During the Second Spanish Republic, the left political parties of Spain talked about equality between men and women in their electoral programmes.

### **2.6.3 The current feminism**

According to Barreiro (2018) "*during these last years we have been perceiving that something was changing in this country*". A study carried out by the magazine '*Contexto*' in Zaragoza, affirms that more than 50% of Spanish people feel feminist. Even so, they declare that they are not activist although they believe in the equality between men and women. It is true that more than the 50% of people who affirmed they felt feminist were women but the

45% of men said so too. It is also important to highlight that the feminism is a movement that takes place mainly among youth. They affirm that in their daily life they put into practice feminist values. The majority of people who consider themselves as 'feminist' vote left political parties and less than 40% vote right political parties. However, the majority of Spanish people who think that the feminism should not be a left or right movement but a movement for all the society.

## **2.7. INEQUALITY IN THE SALARIES DUE TO GENDRE DIFFERENCES**

Although near all the governments signed in 1995 the '*Declaración de Beijing*' (its third objective deals with the promotion of equality between genres and the empowerment) with the intention of promoting the equality between genres, they still talk about unequal salaries.

A study of *FEDEA*, based on the gross wage earning since 2014 until now, affirms that women get lower salaries than men in a 12.7%. This percentage has decreased in the last years but there is still a notorious imbalance. In those positions taken by men, women will earn less money each hours than in the job positions that have a paritary representation.

The following table shows the representation of women according to sectors.

Table 4: Female workers regarding their professional situation and economic sectors

General	Agriculture	Industry	Construction	Services
Working women (in thousands)	195,3	683,5	101,2	7679,1
Rate of working women (%)	23,8	25,21	8,85	53,61
Professional situation	Agriculture	Industry	Construction	Services
Female employers	9,1	23,5	7,7	261,4
Business women without employees or autonomous work.	63,4	30,9	9,9	584,2
Member of a cooperative	2,1	0,5	..	3,3
Help in the company or in a familiar business	8,5	1,5	1,9	34,1
Salaried	112,2	627,1	81,7	6792,7
Other	..	..	..	3,4

Adopted from: 'Observatorio del SEPE' (data taken from INE. Encuesta de Población Activa. IV trimestre, 2017)



The following table shows the economic activities with most female representation

Table 5: Economic activities with the big number of enrolled women

Economic activities	Enrolled women	Women's rate (%)	% variation 2017/2016
Retail trade sector, except motor vehicles and motorbikes	1,162,578	60.91	1.23
Health activities	792,231	73.62	3.65
Education	630,321	65.74	5.41
Food and drink services	628,542	50.93	4.17
State Administration and defense; compulsory Social Security	561,222	51.51	6.60
Housework as employers of home workers	413,125	89.19	-1.65
Agriculture, ranching, hunt and related services	399,542	36.27	-1.11
Services to buildings and gardening activities	382,601	66.31	1.85
Wholesale trade and intermediary traders, except motor vehicles and motorbikes	348,531	35.98	2.38
Other personal services	229,352	73.47	2.78
Assistance in resident establishments	222,244	84.13	3.79
Activities in social services without accomodation	183,021	76.17	9.23
Legal activities and accounting	177,383	59.13	0.90
Administrative office activities and other activities related to companies	166,168	53.50	7.22
Food industry	140,882	38.49	3.14

*Adopted from: Observatorio del SEPE (data taken from MEYSS. 31st december 2017)*

Even so, the female sectors are worse paid and therefore the inequality appears when comparing the average salary of a full working day between both genres.

This salary gap is rejected with arguments such as women have more partial-time works than men and therefore the perceived salary is more reduced. Also, because they take part in jobs that are usually worse paid than others due to the required responsibility or qualifications.

Society has a wrong concept of the salary gap. Honestly, it is believed that the inequality may be found clearly in the salaries of workmates that share the same job position in the same company. Nevertheless, the differences are not appreciated at first sight. They are hidden behind income supplements, as '*Comisión Sindical de Comisiones Obreras*' (CCOO) states.

What are the income supplements? They refer to the salary increase due to service, special working risks, nocturnality, festive complement, shifts, the role played or availability, among others.

An article written by the *UGT*, called '*La igualdad salarial, un objetivo pendiente*' claims that a woman must work 88 days more than a man in order to get the same salary. Sometimes, when a woman has the same responsibilities than a man in a company, is recognised a lower position and therefore the salary is lower. For instance, a female secretary and a man administrative with similar functions but different salaries.

It is difficult to find a salary gap inside a company because businesses do not give the necessary information. The objective is to exactly know where the imbalance is and to suggest realistic measures to regulate it.

This inequality can be also found when looking for a job. A research carried out by '*Observatorio Social*' of '*laCaixa*' affirms that women have less possibilities of getting a contract. 5600 of fake curriculums of men and women were sent, with the same qualities, to 1372 different job adverts. The result was a discrimination of a 30% in order to get an interview.

At the same time, in a video posted on the website of the 'la Sexta' about the causes of this discrimination, Maria José González (teacher at Universidad Pompeu Fabra), affirms "There is penalty to the maternity and award to paternity".

Women with children have a 35.9% less of possibilities of being employed than men with children. *'Nathalie David de Ágil Consultores'* affirms that they "continue being asked questions related to women about their family situations".

### 3. 'THE GLASS CEILING'

There is an increasing concern with the lower presence in the last levels of the hierarchical pyramid. Men hold the direction and advices of the administration in the companies.

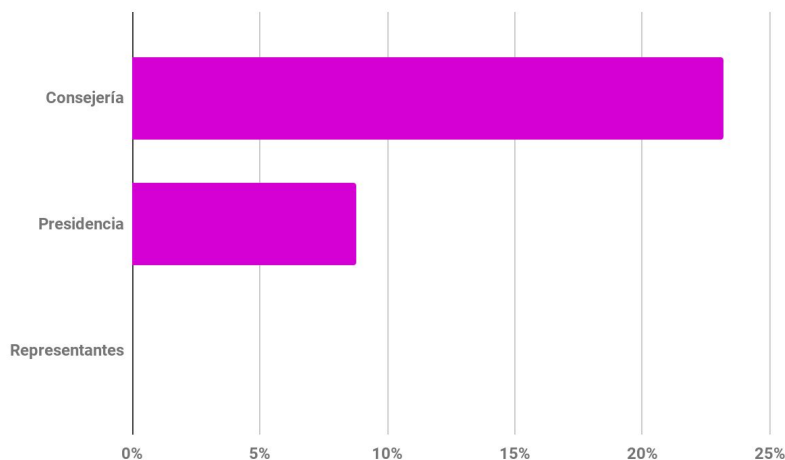
The main cause is the well-known phenomenon 'the glass ceiling', which intangibly represents a fine barrier that is defined as transparent, but it supposes a great impediment for women to access the corporative hierarchies (Morrison, 1987). Due to its knowledge, abilities and capacities, and its effort, women should have the same possibilities to reach relevant positions than men. In real life, these positions are truly unachievable for most women.

The professors Eagly and Carli (2004) defined the 'glass ceiling' as "*an imposed barrier for the prejudice and the discrimination, which shows a disproportion between men and women in leader positions*". Although they have the same qualities to access to the same positions than men, they are unconsciously discriminated. The 'glass ceiling' is an imposed limitation that some women have in the work environment. The barriers that the most qualified women find in their professional careers prevent their professional development, their promotion to hierarchical levels, the equality in the salaries and the professional objectives. This is caused by a 'glass ceiling', which is seen as invisible because it does not legally exist. Women do not usually access to executive positions, but why?

It is true that nowadays there are a lot of women who work out of home. Society has changed and it is some time ago when we stopped seeing 'normal' the fact that the woman only worked at home. The last data obtained by the *INE* says that "due to the gender, the employment increases this term in 45,800 women and decreases in 9,300 men". Even so, high positions are scarcely taken by women. The pieces of advice of the companies' administration are mainly dominated by men. ¿Why does the active population increase each year for the female population but not the rate of women in high positions? What happens is what Zurdo (2013) calls "*glass ceiling, invisible barriers to which highly qualified women are exposed and which prevent them from achieving the highest hierarchical levels in the world of business, regardless their attainments and merits*".

Graphic 3: Women in the presidency and in management boards of the ibex 35. 2018

(%)



*Adopted from: Instituto Europeo para la Igualdad de género (EIGE)*

The previous graphic shows the female presence in the management board of the IBEX 35 companies. A 22,2%, one point more than in 2017 and near eight more than 2013. The rest of the presence is related to men. This is supported by the digital newspaper 'El Español', which affirms that there are some IBEX 35 companies such as *Naturgy*, *Bankia*, *Inmobiliaria Colonial* and *Técnica Reunidas*, that only have a women in their management boards. On the other hand, it outlines several companies such as Santander (33,3%), Inditex (33,3%), Bankinter (30%), Dia (27,3%), BBVA (26,7%), Mapfre (26,7%) or Repsol (21,4%) for their scarce female presence. Even so, none of these companies exceeds a 35% or have more than 5 women in the management board.

### **3.1. FACTORS THAT EXPLAIN THE 'GLASS CEILING'**

The fact that women do not get high positions in the work environment cannot be supported by saying that they are less qualified than men. As it has been previously explained, there are more women than men who study university degrees nowadays. Therefore, the problem does not reside in their lack of knowledge.

In this job it is believed that the factors that complicate women to get high positions inside a company are found inside the same company, in the organisation and in the

surroundings. In Agreement with other experts (Agut Nieto and Martín Hernández, 2019) the following sections classify these factors in: internal factors, external factors and mixed factors.

### **3.1.2 Internal factors**

The internal factors are those that can be found in a woman. We can define as internal factors the personality, the ambition, the leader styles and the knowledge.

Cheng (1994) believes that there are two ways of acting and leading that depend on gender. That is, the values that each person has according to his or her gender are different and this brings to heterogeneous behaviour. Moreover, the female values are rejected to be ideal when considering an executive position. It is understood that in order to run a business, men have more appropriate features (Schein, 1973). This thought does not only exist in men's minds, but a lot of women think they are not able to run a business as a man does (Adler, 1984).

The kindness, the calm, the prudence, the empathy and the submission are features that define women according to Williams and Bennett (1975) and they distance women from the possibility of being part of the management positions of a company. In general, women show less dominant and competitive behaviours (Mazur and Boot, 1998).

Therefore, those women that are far from the female features think that a man will always run a company in a better way and that they are the exception because they feel more similar to men's behaviour (Hampden-Turner, 1993). According to Rosener (1995), women tend to adopt a male's leadership because they believe that this option will make them more competent.

On the other hand, there are other theories that counterattack the existence of female and male features. A leader style does not depend on gender but on the person itself. Each person has different qualities that can be adapted in a better or a worse way to the company's structure. It is a really complex issue to classify people in only two types (Wacjman, 1998). Cheng (1994) suggests a multidimensional leadership formed by different people that will bring out different types of leadership (structural, human, political, symbolic

and educational). Even, the fact that a person has the capacity to adapt himself or herself to distinct leader styles regardless they gender considerations (Pounder and Coleman, 2002).

On the other side, some years ago people used to believe that the problem was located in women's personality, in the responsibilities society thought they should have, such as the housework, family duties or their lack of ambition (Tomas and Guillamón, 2009). As Juan Antonio Gisbert explained in the digital newspaper '*La opinión de Murcia*', these external factors cause what is called 'the asbestos cement roof'. It is formed by obstacles that are indirectly put by women in their ways because they feel guilty when they choose a professional career that distances them from their children or, they cannot feel able to reconcile their home life and their job demands. This is caused, as it has been aforesaid, because there is an inequality in the distribution of the responsibilities both at home and among men.

Although this aspect has been improved, there are some studies that show the existent inequality of gender at home. It is true that the responsibility is better distributed but it does not happen everywhere. Accordint to Shutterstock "The housework and the main home responsibilities are still unbalanced between men and women". There are a lot of women that have a 'dual work' and this has a negative impact on their health. According to *Artazcoz, Borrell, Rohlfs, Beni, Moncada, Benach (2000, p. 150-153)* "the probability of having a bad mental health increases in women that live with more than 4 people at home and that do not have any other person that helps them with the housework."

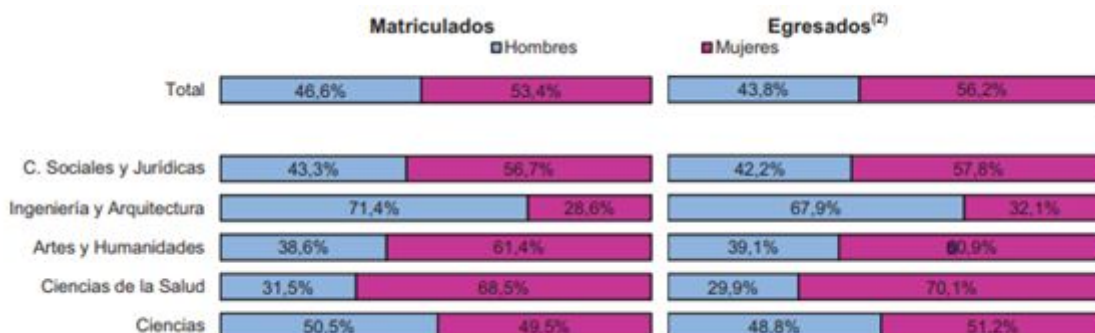
Inequality was also supported through the idea that men were better prepared than women in education. It is true that this thought is not maintained because current data confirms the higher female presence in all the educational levels (CSI, 2008). The fact that an increasing number of women are better prepared creates a desire of achieving more and therefore, nowadays there are women that are as ambitious as men in their professional careers (Burín, 2006).

Graphic 4: Distribution of students of first and second stages regarding educational field and gender. academic course 2014-2015



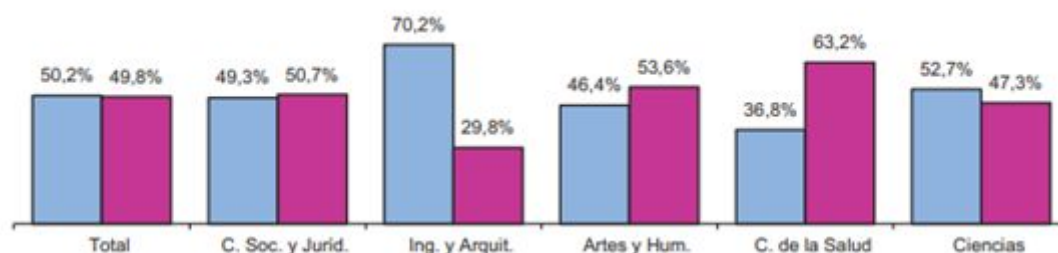
Adopted from: 'Estadística de Estudiantes Universitarios. Sistema Integrado de Información Universitaria (SIU)'

Graphic 5: Distribution of students of 'máster' regarding educational field and gender. academic course 2014-2015



Adopted from: 'Estadística de Estudiantes Universitarios. Sistema Integrado de Información Universitaria (SIU)'

Graphic 6: Distribution of students of phd according the rd 99/2011 and regarding the educational field and gender. academic course 2014-2015



Adopted from: 'Estadística de Estudiantes Universitarios. Sistema Integrado de Información Universitaria (SIU)'



The previous graphics show on the left side the percentages of students enrolled and categorised in men and women and on the right side the percentage of students that have finished their studies, also categorised according to their gender.

From the report 'Datos básicos del sistema universitario español 2014-2015', we can say that the 58.5% of university students of this stage were women (Graphic 4). Considering students that finish the engineering and architecture studies, there are 72.1% of men in contrast to 27.9% of women (Graphic 4). Women have more presence in social science and legal studies, health sciences, and arts and humanities. In relation to the 'Máster', the percentage of women improves by reaching a 32.1% in engineering and architecture. This case decreases in PHD (Graphic 5), with only a 29.8% of women specialised in that field (Graphic 6). Positions in top management usually require studies related to the scientific and technical field, which explains why there are more men in the aforementioned positions.

To sum up, the fact that female features are perceived by a lot of companies and managers as less appropriate qualities (this discrimination leads to discard them immediately) , and the large presence of women in social studies, causes that women are seen as less competitive and competent to run a business. Therefore, men are rewarded simply because they are men and have specific features that will help them achieve goals. The fact that women tend to generally opt for studies related to social sciences instead of applied science, distance them from certain job positions, as management positions.

### **3.1.3. External factors**

The external factors are barriers that women find in their environment. They do not correspond to a woman on its own, so they are external. These factors that used to be believed cannot be used to explain the inequality that we find in job positions. Therefore, they are not internal factors but external, such as society, culture, male chauvinism, the difficulty to reconcile work life and housework, business policies, the high responsibility of women in housework, and the prejudices, which affect the job discrimination (Miguel and Pérez, 2009)

The stereotypes are archetypes created in the mind of a group of people where it is expected that something or someone acts in a specific form or has certain qualities. This happens with women in this society, it exists a female stereotype that shows women as obedient, generous, empathic and solidary women (Eagly, 2009). They are seen as sensitive people that worry about people's welfare, visionary and non-authoritarian (Burgess and Tharenou, 2002). Sometimes, it is difficult for society to see a woman as an executive and not as a mother. It is taken for granted that in any moment they will leave their professional careers to have children (Powell and Butterfield, 1994). From a female executive it is always expected more than a male executive because of gender reasons. For this reason, the effort a woman has to make will always be double in order to achieve the same goals. This happens due to the stereotypes that are created in the society, which make men more capable of leading than women (Heilman, 2001).

There are also difficulties inside the business' structure and sectors. As it has been previously explained, there are sectors that are hold mainly by men and that are better paid for them too. Therefore, when women are in top positions, such as in services or administration, they are worse paid (Sarrió, 2002).

Likewise, Jensen and Meckling (1976) believe that this discrimination towards the woman is explained throughout the '*Agency theory*'. In order to understand it, it explains that on the one hand there are the executives and on the other hand the owners of the companies. There are usually conflicts in both parts, because the first ones demand freedom in taking decisions according to executive criterion, and the second ones want to become part of these decisions to make sure that the benefits of the company are increasing. This theory considers the group of conflicts that may appear and the fact that the owners are normally men, which favour that the chosen person as an executive is a man due to the similarity with people of the same gender.

Problems can be found in the company and in its surroundings. To start with, there is a favouritism in male leadership inside the organisations, which think that the way of running women and men is different, and have preference for the last ones. Adler (2002) thinks that the male leadership is a model. According to Fondas (1997), aggression, independence, objectivity, competitiveness, ability in businesses, ambition and self-confidence, are the characteristics of a good male executive.

Also, a topic related to the *'Agency theory'* is the lack of patronage of women in the business. A sponsor is a workmate with a higher position that behaves as a mentor and gives advices and runs the professional career. A study called *'Women and mentoring'* deals with the lack of patronage of the woman. The female interviewee used to believe in the importance of a mentor in order to be promoted but only 1 out of 5 women had received that support.

On the other hand, it exists the *'Spanish Law for the effective equality'* between men and women. This law forces companies to include in their annual accounts the number of women that work in them and to develop equality plans between men and women to big companies (more than 250 workers). In any way, this law leaves the decision of the equality in the moral of each company because it is not compulsory. For this reason, it is considered that the Spanish legislation in equality issues is not convincing enough.

The last March 1st the *'Real Decreto-Ley 6/2019'* was approved and it included *"urgent measures for the guarantee of the equal treatment and equal opportunities between women and men in the work and the occupation"* and that modified the *'Ley 3/2007'*. This modification is due to the fact that the expected results were not enough and therefore, the objective of the law is contradictory. As it cannot guarantee the equality accomplishment of women and men in the companies and considering that the inequalities in the work conditions are still obvious, it is considered necessary to elaborate a new text that guarantees the accomplishment of the *'Spanish Law for the effective equality'*, based on the articles 9.2 and 14 of the Spanish Constitution.

The *'Real Decreto-Ley 6/2019'* modifies the Article 28 in the statute of workers right: *'Equality in the remuneration on the basis of gender. This article affirms that "a job will have the same value than another when the nature of the functions or tasks effectively given, the educational, professional or formative conditions required for its accomplishment, the factors strictly related to its achievement and the work conditions in which the activities take place are equal"*.

The news "Only a 25% of the Spanish companies enforce the Law for equality" points out that this percentage is the same in the last years. Even in 2018, it was close to the 26%

(Europa Press, 2019). It is still more worrying that in those companies in which the State takes part in, the percentage is lower, a 22%.

According to consultancy INFORMA D&B: “Although the massive mobilisation of March 8th of last year, the differences in the salaries between men and women has become one of the main topics of discussion when talking about professional discrimination, it is true that the female presence in management positions is still in the same levels of some years ago: a 64% of the Spanish companies do not have any woman in its top positions”. In 2010, the female presence in top positions was of 73%. Therefore, not only there is not a progress but there is a relapse.

*INFORMA D&B* analysed different companies and it concluded that most of the companies has an only administrator (more specifically a 82% of the Spanish organisations) and only the 23% are women.

To sum up, the external barriers that women find are the gender stereotypes, the discrimination in the sectors, the ‘*Agency theory*’ and the Spanish regulation. Firstly, stereotypes condition women and cause the necessity of a biggest effort in order to be promoted. Also, the discrimination in the sectors, that is, those better paid positions are hold by men. Moreover, the highest presence of men in management boards and in executive positions favours men, because they opt for men and not for women. Lastly, in Spain the inequality was being regulated with a ‘*Law for the effective equality*’, which was inefficient and that until this present year it has not been modified with a new article.

#### **3.1.4. Mixed factors**

Lastly, there are factors that cannot be classified because their nature depends on the surroundings of women and on herself. Therefore, they are considered as mixed.

Firstly, we will talk about the business rejection of maternity. Maternity is a way that the human being has in order to remain in the Earth during a lot of years, without being extinct. It is something related to women and it is not well accepted by society. Even so, for the company is only a cost because it causes the absence at work (Instituto de la Mujer, 1999).

A curious reflection of Carnoy (2000) affirms that companies prefer married men, because it provides stability. Actually, it is not relevant if a man has children in order to be employed.

Maternity causes a temporal availability in women that leads to obtain works of lower quality, because due to this fact they feel forced to reject better qualified jobs, or the companies reject them. Hence, this gender is affected by job insecurity and therefore, its professional career is not developed with the same success as the opposed gender.

According to PWC (2012) in an academic article called 'La mujer Directiva en España' "maternity complicates the professional careers for women because in any moment they may decide to spend time with their children, and therefore they may divert their professional objectives during years". However, it does not happen the same in the paternity because companies regard it as something positive as they believe that male parents will make an extra effort to support the family.

Secondly, the housework and family responsibilities are still offloaded onto women. There is not an equitable distribution among family members and there is not any social help that allows women to develop their professional careers. Accordingly, they develop a professional and a familiar role, which makes them feel exhausted and sometimes it complicates their progress at work. At the same time, companies think again the next time they give a top position to a woman because of its 'role overload' (Osca and López-Sáez, 1994).

According to Carnoy (2000) the ideal worker is the person that is always available for his or her job and devotes the 24 hours to it. In other words, even out of the working schedule the ideal worker does not stop thinking of new ideas, suggestions or strategies to accomplish the objectives. It only takes place among people without social life and that do not have children.

To sum up, the factors that we classified as mixed are the maternity and housework. On the one hand, the maternity is perceived as a cost by the companies and on the other hand, it is a barrier for women in order to develop their professional careers due to the absence of facilities for working women. Regarding the housework, in most of the families women have still the main responsibility.

### **3.2. MEASURES OF GENDER EQUALITY INSIDE THE COMPANY AND CARRIED OUT BY THE GOVERNMENT**

The 'glass ceiling' will not disappear at least in 50 years and it will do so with the help of all the governmental organisms, companies, academic institutions, workers and women (Johns, 2013).

The European Union encourages its countries that in 2020 the management boards of the companies that contribute on the stock have a representation of at least a 40% of women. There are a lot of countries that are implicated with this proposal and promote measures to achieve this objective. At the same time, there are countries that are not implicated in the cause (Zurdo, 2013).

In Spain, it governs the '*Law for the effective equality*', explained in the previous section. As it has been mentioned, this law does not force companies to take measures in order to achieve the equality between men and women but it recommends it. Therefore, there is not any binding and mandatory legislation but it collects the general ideas that are advisable to achieve in relation to this issue. In Spain, the objective fixed by the European Union (management boards of the IBEX 35 where the 40% of their members are women) is not expected to be achieved until 2045 (Zurdo, 2013).

Considering the company level, there are ideas about the questionable leadership of women, the employment policies question the aptitude of women in certain work positions, the difficulty of reconciling the work-family life and the fact that companies do not only offer eases but companies also distance them from can go right to the top. Ramos López (2005) sets out that those executives and management boards that are formed equally by men and women will be more competitive and will get more benefits for the company and for society. An heterogeneous group expands client portfolio and therefore, it causes an increasing productivity (Barberá, 2003). Those companies that have the support of executives and managers for the inclusion of women and moreover are aware of the existence of stereotypes and work with them, will be more successful and will stop the 'glass ceiling'.

The most useful measure for companies to equalise the presence of women in front of men's in management boards ('CA') is that of the participation rate regarding sex or the

women's participation rate. In this way, companies have the power over the number of women that are in their CA but this is not the most efficient tool. Even so, companies that have more gender variation in top positions, have a 53% more financial profit according to a study called '*8 tendencias para ejecutivos 2019*', carried out by the leader consulting in the section of middle managements and executives, PageGroup.

Finally, not only the governmental measures (European Union and Spain) and the attitude of the business organisations have an influence in the task of destroying the 'glass ceiling'. The company *PwC* is carrying out an initiative called *Women to Watch*, through which the company offers the possibility for consultants of becoming executives. Each year, the company chooses 40 successful women in business to hold important positions in management boards. An article published by *EL ESPAÑOL*, points out Eva Fernández, Amalia Blanco and Alba Tous, chosen from the third edition of *Women to Watch* as members of the management board of the administration *EL ESPAÑOL*, *Bankia* and *Tous*, respectively.

### **3.3. STUDIES THAT SHOW THE IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN IN THE BUSINESS SECTOR**

Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) were pioneers in their study, which differentiates the female management from the male one. It concluded that women are better oriented towards people and men towards tasks. This happens because women take care of social relationships and personal problems. As Barberá (1996) affirms, they are sensitive, solidary and do not pretend to have the control over other people. It is true that their objectives are to accomplish the proposed goals but in an empathic way. However, men consider that achieving goals and getting people's recognition are the most important aspects. More than social relationships, they are interested in social prestige.

Different empirical studies have been carried out, which demonstrate that an executive formed by men and women show a better profitability for the company.

A study carried out by Schrader et al. (1997) collects a sample obtained from the 200 most important companies of the United States and it analysed the relation between the percentage of executive women, women in top positions and women in management boards, with the financial result. The information that was used to research this relation was taken

from 1992 and 1993. Actually, a positive relation was found between the female presence in top positions and the results. In other words, in those companies that had women in the executive or in the management board had a bigger prosperity.

Furthermore, Adler (2001) studied the same relation than Schrader with data taken from 215 companies between 1980 and 1988. It also confirmed that the relation was positive. In fact, those companies that had the female presence in these positions, obtained a 24% of profits higher than companies without this presence. Adler concluded that a 'Return on assets' (ROA) 18% higher, and a ratio of profitability over the investment (ROI) of a 69% higher.

Carter, Simkins and Simpsons (2003) through the 'Q de Tobin' with the data obtained from 638 companies of the United States with a higher importance in the market analysed the relation between the representation of women in top positions of companies and its value, following Adler's steps. The result was positive, that is, it is affirmed that executive positions with women have more value.

Following previous researchers' steps, Catalyst (2004) analysed 353 companies from the United States to study the possible existence of a relation between the return on equity (ROE) and the total profitability for the stockholder (TRS), with a higher presence of women in the executive. The data obtained was related to the period of 1996 and 2000 and it concluded that the most optimal results were from companies that promoted gender equality.

Likewise, Erhardt, Werbel and Schrader (2003) affirmed and confirmed the positive relationship between the equal gender management board and the prosperity of ROA and ROI with a sample of 127 US companies between 1997 and 1998.

Moreover, we will talk about an empirical study about the relationship between the number of women in top positions and the profitability of the companies. As in previous studies, Krishnan and Park (2005) confirm positive results. In addition, it is clarified that none of the results have been influenced by other variables such as diversification or the market growth.



Different studies affirm that women have a higher multitask capacity. This aspect exists because women need less time and effort to change from one task to another (López, 2016).

As it has been previously mentioned, women have more empathy than others. The company can benefit from this characteristic and they should not see this feature as less competent, as it happens sometimes. Women will lead empathically over workers that depend on them and this creates a more satisfactory work environment that will be reflected in the profitability. A woman in a top position generates more confidence towards external representatives, because women are seen as more honest than men (Powell, 2002).

### **3.3.1 Benefits of supporting gender diversity in top positions**

According to the benefits explained, the presence of women in board managements implies benefits that a lot of people do not know. In a past study carried out by *Universidad de Oviedo*, considering the data of companies that contributed in the period of 2011 and 2015, shows that the fact that there are female managers leads to an improvement in the practice of the corporative government León, A. (2018). When women are promoted to top positions, the big companies become more responsible. *Universidad de Oviedo*.

The benefits that companies with women in the management positions and board of directors will obtain are the following:

Firstly, the financial results increase positively, together with the company's value, the *ROE*, *ROA*, *ROI* and a higher diversification of the business and the growth of the real market, as it has been explained before through numerous studies.

Secondly, it entails the projection of a positive image of the company. A company with a higher female representation in the management boards and executive positions transmits good values and it is seen as a more modern company (Costa, 2004).

Furthermore, it provides a higher diversity. This is positive because a work team that is equitable between men and women leads to a higher creativity. A team formed only by men, or in contrast only by women, lacks of plurality and therefore, the company is less competent (Muñoz, 2008). The *Global Leadership Forecast* reiterates that a higher plurality in the

thoughts, collaborating with different genders, sexual orientations, ethnic groups and places of origin in the workplace, leads to a greatest efficiency, and therefore to the profitability of the company.

There is a growing number of benefits that companies obtained because they have equality of gender in top positions. This is because the investors show their interest in the social and environmental causes when supporting companies with financial capital. They are attracted by companies with corporate social responsibility (RSC) because they will obtain a better development of the business in the future, according to '*Bank of America*'. A responsible behaviour of the organisations implies ethical and transparent practices that will reinforce their credibility in the market and it will increase loyalty of clients.

The fact that companies form their management boards with members of different nations with different knowledge and experience is a very valuable aspect for investors. However, the interest in the presence of women in these organisms has received increasing attention from the capitalists, because their objective is waging for companies that generate benefits to the society and the environment, here are included the practices of fighting against inequality between men and women. This is considered as an opportunity for the market of the companies because the capital fund as *RED Capital Partners* launched a new fund called 'venture capital' in Spain for technologies with the female presence in the executive. Murga, A. (January 17th, 2019). According to *Bolsamanía* (2019) investing in gender is profitable and investors know it.

It is a very important market opportunity for impressive companies that are not being fully exploited. The idea is to show that diversity of companies has very interesting results in the economy. The fundamental message is to show that it is worthy, and it is not only a female empowerment from women that are 'poor', escape from the victimised message because it does not have any relation; but there are fantastic opportunities that are wasted and they are going to show it with the profitability.

According to Georgeson and Cautrecasas (2019) "Some investors such as Hermens, Allianz or Ostrum - before Natixis - have announced that, the next season will together vote against the reelection of managers that are not independent in societies where there are not at least 30% of female managers".

A 77% of the investors claim the diversity in the management boards of the companies, near the major part of the rest of the investors agree in applying specific fees of women and a minor part would not invest its financial fund in companies whose management board would not exceed the 80% of male members. This conclusions have been obtained by experts that have previously analysed the voting policy of the top 85 of institutional investors.

According to a study carried out by Georgeson and Cuatrecasas (2019) the inclusion of women in the companies of IBEX 35 has increased in the last years by a 3.6%. At the same time, this increase is not enough because out of the 443 positions of these characteristics we find 35 of the most valued Spanish companies, with only 104 women.

The Good Governance Code for the valued Spanish societies recommends that the female presence reaches the 30% in the board managements in 2020. For some companies this is a challenge in the long term, but for others such as Santander or Iberdrola already exceed this 30%. This should be a motivation for the rest of the companies, which still do not have reached the verge.

There are more reasons to increase the female presence in these organisms, which we can find in the project '*Ley de Presupuestos Generales del Estado*' (PGE): "*Companies will be able to subtract the 10% of the annual salary of female executives that are incorporated in their board managements*".

Apart from the economic profits, companies can also benefit from an improvement of the corporative and image and reputation. Experts talk about a new concept called 'the economy of the reputation', in which the impression is cared because it can give long live to the company. Therefore, as it has been previously explained, the practices related to the Gender Equality generate a good image for the company (Costa, 2004).

If companies bet on an appropriate RSC, certain risks can be prevented such as complaints and judicial processes, negative advertising or boycotts towards products of the company, and a better relationship with the clients, employees and trade unions. If the satisfaction of the employees improves, they will have a higher agreement with the company

and therefore the self-esteem and their motivation and it will be reflected in the competitiveness and productivity of the company (Atalaya, 1999).

To sum up, on the one hand we can find economic benefits such as a high investment by the investors and the deduction of the 10% of the salary thanks to the PGE, and on the other hand we can find the non-economic benefits, such as the improvement of the corporative image and the increase of the productivity and competitiveness of the company.

### **3.4. PROPOSALS TO BREAK THE GLASS CEILING**

The following paragraphs list the different proposals to end, or at least break the glass ceiling.

Firstly, fighting against the glass ceiling is not enough because each company must analyse where its inequality is in order to focus its efforts on this breach.

In order to fight against the '*Agency theory*' and the lack of patronage of women in the company, it is suggested to carry out mentoring and coaching programmes. Those women with top positions in the company, will have the responsibility of advising, supporting and running the professional career of other women in order to foster their talent. This would be called female empowerment.

Thereupon, companies can develop strong points and executive abilities through programmes that develop the female leadership, to inspire careers.

Secondly, the creation of programmes that make the reconciliation of work and family life possible so woman do not have to necessarily interrupt their careers because they have to form a family. At the time when different companies start to apply this practice, society will understand that it is compatible with some help.

It is also advisable to form mixed teams that choose the employees. In this way, there will be distinct opinions and a free recruitment of gender biases will be introduced.

Following the objective of breaking the glass ceiling, it is recommended that companies elaborate an internal document about the actions they are going to perform in order to achieve the objective. This document can be public and should be available for every worker, and actions in the short or long term will be measurable in order to evaluate its development at the end of the period.

Also, companies can offer the possibility of having a flexible schedule in top positions so women will not feel forced to choose between family or work when they get certain age. The 'Índice del Foro Económico Mundial' places Iceland in the first position in gender equality policies, followed by Norway, Finland and Sweden. From some decades ago, companies of northern countries carry out practices to promote the reconciliation between work and family life. For instance, they offer generous permissions of maternity and paternity, a total of 16 months, from which 3 correspond to men and cannot be transferred to women. With this measure, these companies want to help men to increase their responsibility in the care of their children. These Scandinavian countries should be a referent for Spain.

Women have an impact on other women in order to be referents in the work environment and positions of high relevance. This produces admiration in other women and a desire of achieving the objectives of their female referents (Barberá, 2003). Likewise, the support of the family for the careers of women helps them receive a greater impetus to fight for what they want. Therefore, they will not feel guilty if they have to devote more hours to their professional careers. Cheung and Halpern (2010), interviewed different successful women that believed in the necessity of having their husbands with them, who do not act according to the patriarchy and help them and even admire them because of their work and effort.

The base of every equality is based on the education that the society members receive. Therefore, I would like to claim to the Spanish government to include measures that foster gender equality in the education system. In higher education levels, such as universities, carrying out programmes of women's empowerment (these programs attempt to foster women's capacity in order to act by themselves). Also, something should be done from the company's base and for this reason the Human Resources departments should promote equality from the cultural base of the companies.

#### 4. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The 'glass ceiling' is an invisible barrier that a lot of women face when they want to develop their professional careers and when they want to access the top positions of the places they work. These barriers are not necessarily imposed by the outer but sometimes women themselves set their limits. This does not mean that women do not want to get these top positions but in some moments they feel pressed to adopt the role that society imposes them in regard to their children, families and home.

This inequality in the distribution of home responsibilities and children's care, which has been always accepted, is one of the main obstacles that society (formed by men and women) imposes on women. Therefore, we could affirm that women affect the 'glass ceiling' by accepting that most of the responsibilities, or all of them, are theirs, and they feel forced to refuse the access to top positions because of the time they devote to the aforementioned responsibilities.

The appearance of barriers has been encouraged mainly by society, which since some years ago has prevented women to study and work out of home. Currently, we all know that this situation is different but there is a current thought based on the idea that housework and children's care is a problem of women, although it is important to positively point out that this idea is less present nowadays. If society thinks so, as a general rule, the thought of business people will not differ too much. For this reason, they find more attractive the idea that workers in top positions are men. Also, because of a study carried out by the '*Instituto Nacional de Estadística*' (INE) the 73,57% of business people in Spain are men, and this contributes to the decision of choosing men as executives.

It is true that if there are sectors led by women but they are worse paid and contribute to wage inequality. According to Catalyst (2004), the female representation in top positions and in management boards is still scant in most of the countries, although this percentage has increased in the United States and in some European countries.

Women are considered one of the most affected sectors by the work scarcity and for this reason countries are becoming aware of the necessity of taking measures that favour this susceptible group. But in my opinion, there is a reason beyond the attempt of breaking the genre inequality. As this study has demonstrated, both women and men are necessary to

direct a company towards its vision. Various studies explain the profit generated by women in the company and therefore they are needed when it comes to run a business. It is demonstrated that we perform equally well when we run a team or a project and therefore, policies that fight against the barriers of the 'glass ceiling' favour the overall society and not only a group of people.

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