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Gender Division of Labour and Economic Autonomy of Women in the State of Minas Gerais and Brazil

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Abstract- The gender division of labour still remains today a disadvantage for women to achieve their economic autonomy. Responsibility for care giving tasks and the values associated with what is feminine and masculine build distinct places for men and women in society which, despite all the advances and achievements of recent decades, seem immutable. The aim of this work is to draw a picture of women's economic autonomy in Brazil and Minas Gera is from the relationship established between paid and unpaid work, based on the National Continuous Household Sample Surveys (PNADc) of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). The results show that the disadvantages faced by Brazilian women in relation to men persist in most inequality metrics and show that the possibilities of career progression and unrestricted access to the world of work remain associated with cultural values, discrimination and strategies of subordination.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In Brazil, since the 1970s, the pace of women's entry into the labour market has risen significantly. The capitalist restructuring in the post-war period and the Brazilian economic miracle (1968-1973), characterized by increased industrialization and urbanization, were important engines for the expansion of the labor force in the country, especially female labor. Guedes and Alves (2004) show the growing evolution of the participation rate of women above 10 years of age in the Brazilian labour market, based on the demographic censuses from 1970 to 2000. According to these authors, female participation increased from 18.5% in 1970 to 44.1% in 2000 - an increase of 138.3% over 30 years - while male participation declined from 71.8% to 69.6% over the same period.

This change in the composition of the Brazilian workforce can be explained by several factors: i) by the productive restructuring initiated in the 1990s that affected industrial employment with massive dismissal of men and, to a much lesser degree, of women, already little represented; ii) by the increase of the services sector, traditionally employer of female labor; iii) by the substitution of men for women, in works commonly thought for them; and iv) by the process of flexibilization of the labor market and precariousness of the labor relations, with increase of informality (Lavinás, 2001; Guedes and Alves, 2004).

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In fact, women have consolidated their participation in the Brazilian labour market by overcoming several formal barriers. Nevertheless, in the 21st century they still remain invisible walls, which are at the same time resultant and responsible for the gender division of labour and, consequently, for the horizontal and vertical occupational segregation of gender.

The gender division of labour leaves women with low-paid and less prestigious tasks and services, based on gender stereotypes that are further reinforced by responsibility for immediate and extended family care. According to Soares (2011), for business ideology, women's responsibility is still to help the family and not to provide it, that is, women's participation in the productive sphere remains secondary nowadays and their primary responsibility is with the care of the home and children.

This division constitutes a disadvantage for women to achieve economic autonomy as there is an overload of activities that directly affects their participation in the labour market and the way this participation occurs. Women's responsibility for caregiving tasks together with the values associated with what is feminine and masculine builds distinct places for men and women in society. In this sense, they are less available for the labour market and in many cases are more likely to have their careers interrupted by marriage, pregnancy, family illnesses etc. It is also important to stress that there is an interrelationship between gender, class and race in the configuration of these spaces.

The necessity to reconcile paid work in the market with unpaid work at home often obliges them to accept positions that require little or no training and/or professional qualification, but which because they allow such arrangements become the most appropriate, such as those with low pay, short working hours, which allow flexible hours and do not require overtime.

According to Soares (2011), autonomy can be physical, economic and decision making. For the author, economic autonomy, which is the object of this paper, is characterized by the capacity to generate one's own income, to control economic resources and to decide on material goods and family assets. It is a condition for the exercise of her power to make decisions about their lives.

The aim of this work is therefore to draw a picture of women's economic autonomy in Brazil and Minas Gerais, based on the relationship between paid and unpaid work, i.e. the relationship between work in the public (labour market) and private spheres (domestic chores and caring for relatives, the elderly and children, the disabled). To this purpose, the National Continuous Household Sample Surveys (PNADc) of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) will be used.

The article is divided into five sections, including this introduction. In the second, the structure of the labor market is analyzed, focusing on the evolution of participation rates, occupation and unemployment. The third section presents the characteristics and evolution of the population without income in Brazil and Minas Gerais between 2012 and 2019. The fourth section discusses the interfaces between women's economic autonomy and their relationship to unpaid work and care giving tasks. This is followed by a summary of the results.

II. METHODOLOGY

To analyze the autonomy of women in the labor market in Brazil and Minas Gerais, the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNADc) for the years 2012, 2014, 2017 and 2019 will be used. The evolution of the main indicators of women's economic autonomy and their interconnection with care activities and domestic tasks will be interpreted in the light of the results obtained annually. The indicators calculated include: i) characterization of the population without income; ii) participation rate; iii) type of insertion in the labour market; iv) working hours; v) care tasks; vi) unpaid work; and vii) income.

III. PRELIMINAR RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results show that the disadvantages of Brazilian women in relation to men continue in most inequality metrics. Despite women's achievements and advances in the productive sectors, still in the second half of the 21st century, their chances of career progression and unrestricted access to the world of work remain associated with cultural values, discrimination and strategies of subordination. In addition, there are difficulties in sharing family and caregiving responsibilities, i.e. women continue to be primarily responsible for domestic tasks.

According to PNADc, in 2019, 41 million women were employed in Brazil, 4% of whom held some leadership position, while among men the percentage was 4.5%. In Minas Gerais, there were 4.5 million women working and of this total 3.4% were in higher positions in the hierarchy of the labour market, while among men the percentage was 4%.

At first sight there seems to be a small difference in these occupational groups, but inequality is greater at the top than at the bottom of the social stratification. By way of illustration, on the whole, in 2019 women earned on average 21% less than men in the country, and in Minas Gerais, 27%. In the occupational group of directors and managers, they earned income equivalent to 68% of the usual monthly income of men in Brazil and 64% in Minas Gerais. In the group of elementary occupations, women's income was 93% of that of men in Brazil and 91% in Minas Gerais.

The data also reveal that, in addition to women being the majority of those without monetary income, in the country and the state there is a point of resistance in the social redistribution of care tasks over time. The proportion of women performing domestic or care giving tasks is considerably higher than that of men, and the intensity of these tasks is also higher for women. It was also found that women on some income devoted fewer hours to domestic chores or care giving, but the intensity of men's care giving doesn't change. The average weekly hours devoted to domestic and care giving work by women with some income was higher than that of men, even when they had no income. One of the most important highlights is that this structure changes little over time.

Finally, it is important to raise some points of reflection, even if preliminary, on the impacts of covid-19 on these dimensions of interest in the study. In principle, the restrictions imposed on the movement of people, goods and merchandise have a direct impact on the value of neglected jobs such as cleaning women, nannies, caregivers, social workers, nurses and primary school teachers, all of whom are mainly women. Some scholars are already calling for a new, more integrated, high-coverage care economy. But at the same time, the impact of the economic downturn may be greater or at least different for women as they are over-represented in more precarious and informal occupations.

On the one hand, women are essential in the fight against the pandemic because they are highly expressive in these occupations listed above, but on the other, they are disproportionately affected by the crisis (UN, 2020) since they have a more fragile and precarious insertion in the labour market; families headed by them tend to be poorer; there is still a high concentration of women in domestic employment; they are more affected by unemployment; they have less union presence and are concentrated in less organized segments of economic activity (Melo, 2005).

More than half of the people without monetary income in the country were women, especially black. At the same time, it should be noted that most of these women were fully dedicated to domestic or care tasks, but even those who are inserted in the labour market see their participation always negotiated with domestic responsibilities.

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