Gender inequality in corporate Mexico: analysis of cognitive dissonance impeding social growth and development

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Abstract: Mexican law is not only thorough but extensive on the matter of gender equality in corporations; however, rooted beliefs, ingrained traditions, and work feminisation and masculinisation are strong proponents of gender inequality. The study’s general objective is to understand elements causing cognitive dissonance between gender equality legislature and firms’ actions in Mexico. That is, is gender inequality in corporate Mexico due to lack of regulation, organisational compliance, structural inherencies, or national culture? This paper contributes to understanding gender inequality in business by analysing national culture, legislature, structural violence, and corporate practices. There is evidence of inequality in all walks of economic, political, social and cultural life in Mexico due to occupational segregation, gender pay gaps, and underrepresentation in top management. Cognitive dissonance causes an inverted effect, meaning, gender equality does not keep pace with legislation and while corporate Mexico deters gender equality, they are neither ethical nor engaging in CSR.

Keywords: gender equality; legislation; culture; structural violence; cognitive dissonance; corporate social responsibility; CSR; Mexico.


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1 Introduction

The importance of emerging economies in the global economic context has become clear with their significant impact on economic growth (Hale, 2012). These economies are very different from each other; however, they have significant common characteristics like the internationalisation of their economies, great growth potential of the domestic market and export capacity, among others. They are also described as volatile and changing at a high velocity (Calvo, 2004) as there are risk factors such as political instability, corruption, among other negative aspects. Mexico is a spearhead for the Latin-American economies, and its rapid growth in economic activity, which is associated with internal growth and the remarkable increase in trade relations (The World Bank, 2016) renders it an emerging market.

Mexico is considered the 16th largest exporter in the world, 82% being exported to the US (De Hoyos and Iacovone, 2011). More than 90% of Mexico’s trade is under ten free trade agreements with over 45 countries (De Hoyos and Iacovone, 2011), and it produces and exports the same amount of goods compared to the total amount of other Latin-American countries. In recent years, through a National Development Plan, characterised by different structural reforms, Mexico has been seeking the improvement of its productivity (The World Bank, 2016). Within the framework of an agreement with the three largest political parties, the ‘Pact for Mexico’, has enacted reforms on labour, education, telecommunication and competition policy and financial sector. Furthermore, according to Rajagopal (2013) Mexico is a significant gateway for markets in Latin-America; therefore, it is representative in the pursuit of both business and social growth and development.

In the 1970s women’s active participation in the workforce rose to 18% and, in 1993, there was an increase of 33% (Olvera, 2003); this growth has steadily improved throughout the years, however, the percentage of economically active women in Mexico is still less than half of men’s participation (STPS, 2016). Moreover, although dialogue on gender equality has become an important issue in business dynamics, women are still actively discriminated solely because of their gender; they are targets for harassment, segregation, and sexual abuse, and do not, in general, receive equal pay for equal jobs.

The absence of women in strategic managerial positions is not an issue of education, despite popular belief. There has been an unquestionable increase of women enrolling in higher education but this is not reflected in the number of women in top management. Artigas et al. (2013) held a study in which they considered that there are approximately 30 years between graduating and reaching top management; in the 1980s 50% of University enrolments in Argentina and Brazil were women, and 30 years later, only 7%
of executive seats were filled by women. The situation resembles that of Mexico; therefore, education is not the principle reason behind gender inequality in corporate Mexico.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) argues that gender equality makes good business sense; further, it enables organisations to retain high performing collaborators, achieve competitive advantage, and it is well associated with innovation, financial stability, improved reputation, consumer satisfaction, and organisational performance (WGEA, 2013). It is true that there are many firms worldwide that have been persistent in their gender equality discourse. Nonetheless, no matter how many organisations implement codes of ethics and conduct, policies, norms, standards, and engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR), the gender gap in corporate Mexico is still inordinate.

Gender equality is discussed in most fields because its achievement is essential not only to men and women, but also for countries’ sustainable development and growth. The fight against gender inequality is central to social, political and economic discussions; it has also become an important issue in business dynamics. “The existence of gender diversity in organizations, everywhere, is more than a social issue, it is a “business imperative” (Artigas et al., 2013); hence, organisations around the world are including policies, norms, and measurements, to ensure that there are no gender disparities. Although many organisations operating in emerging markets such as Mexico have also begun to incorporate such policies, and in some cases effectively implemented them, the country’s gender gap is still awfully significant. Although gender equality has been discussed as an important element in business dynamics, the disruption between legislature and corporate action has not been addressed.

The study began with the formulation of two questions:

1. Why, in spite of thorough legislation on the subject, is there gender inequality in the workplace?
2. What elements are causing cognitive dissonance between what is decreed by Mexican law and what is executed in corporate practice?

The general objective of this study is to explore the factors producing gender equality cognitive dissonance in corporate Mexico and understand the implications of such dissonance on social growth and development. The paper is sectioned as follows: Section 2 includes a review of previous literature on the factors leading to gender equality cognitive dissonance; propositions are included for each factor. Section 3 presents analysis and discussion on the suggested model and propositions; Section 4 contains concluding remarks and Section 5 includes directions for future research.

2 Literature review

Mexico’s current business environment, with rapid globalisation and structural changes that seek to boost its development, has become a critical challenge for any and all organisations operating in the country regarding their ability to adopt, change and operate successfully. Gender equality is widely discussed in most every realm, which is certainly progress; however, according to Kilgour (2007), it might continue to be a non-issue in emerging markets because the lack of law enforcement against human rights’ violations
and inequality obstructs the achievement of gender equality. Thus, gender equality is not only an issue for emerging markets, such as Mexico, but also for the corporations operating within such markets.

2.1 CSR

Firms operating in emerging markets as well as developed economies have come to understand that focusing strategies exclusively on fulfilling financial performance objectives is insufficient to achieve desired performance and competitiveness. Meaning that, firms should and need to do good and act well (Drucker, 1984; Kurucz et al., 2008), that is, be ethical and socially and environmentally aware and diligent in tackling related issues. Firms do so, or attempt to do so, by becoming socially responsible, taking part in CSR. Socially responsible firms are typically associated with ethical practices (Valentine and Fleischman, 2008), compliance with social and economic aspects (Fernández and Rajagopal, 2014), transparent communication (Amaladoss and Manohar, 2013), and positive, long-lasting relationships with internal and external stakeholders (Tuzzolino and Armandi, 1981; Frankental, 2001; Madueño et al., 2016). Stakeholders include collaborators, consumers, investors, shareholders, the environment, community, and regulatory authorities, amongst other parties with stake in the firm (Fernández and Rajagopal, 2014). Collaborators are interested in working with an organisation that is ethical and socially responsible (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001), and with every generation the demand for proactive engagement in CSR increases, and consumers are increasingly activist consumers; in general, stakeholders demonstrate strong preferences for socially responsible firms (McWilliams, 2015), over those less socially responsible or unethical. Further, CSR has a positive effect on the effective management of stakeholders and, therefore, on the firm’s competitiveness (Madueño et al., 2016).

CSR ultimately means maximising positive outcomes for the firm and society (Nicolae and Sabina, 2010); thus, efforts should begin internally. It suggests that the firm acts in a lawful manner (Mordi et al., 2012) in regards to its core operations, as well as with the societal ambience in which the firm operates. Therefore, abiding by legal standards is not only ethical but complying with national and international norms and laws is only vital to CSR. Many firms turn to international organisations and guidelines, such as the GRI, for direction on CSR practices, disclosure, and communication (Fombrun, 2005). According to Grosser and Moon (2005), there are several frameworks that direct firms in the reporting of CSR domains; however, López-Fernández and Mansilla (2015) held a study on CSR communication and disclosure in Mexico and found that firms, in general, lack in reporting detail. Furthermore, many firms have yet to disclose information on gender equality policies, or lack thereof. The GRI does include indicators that are related to gender equality within the G3 guidelines (GRI, 2011), however, as in most cases, the compliance remains voluntary. Gender equality in the workplace is observed as women and men receive equal circumstances, including but not limited to opportunities, conditions and fair and equal compensation (GRI and IFC, 2009). Certainly, ensuring gender equality is of utmost importance for all stakeholders and it has a positive impact on corporate image, competitiveness, and performance (GRI and IFC, 2009) and on society’s wellbeing. The existence of inequality impedes development, sustainability (Renouard and Lado, 2012), and social responsibility; thus, gender equality is a must in order to comply with CSR.
2.2 Equality and gender equality

The debate on equality and gender equality is far from resolution; in many instances the debate is fed by lack of universal definitions. Mexico is no exception, as government agencies, organisations and lawmakers have yet to come to an agreement on the definition of terms. According to the Secretariat of Education equality is the “condition in which social, work or gender equality is guaranteed allowing access to the same opportunities and to be treated in the same manner” (SEP, 2014). Conversely, the Secretariat of Civil Service says equality is the principle of justice rather than a condition (SFP, 2011). In regards to gender equality, the Mexican Women’s Institute defines gender equality as a “principle of justice related to the idea of substantive equality and recognition of social differences…combined to give rise to a concept that defines ‘equality’ as ‘equality in differences’ … includes … respect and human rights and equal opportunities’ guaranteed” (INMUJERES, 2007).

UN Women (2016) states that gender equality denotes:

“Equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.”

WGEA (2013) posits that gender equality is fulfilled when “people are able to access and enjoy the same rewards, resources and opportunities regardless of whether they are a woman or a man”. Gender inequality not only negatively affects girls and women, but it also negatively impacts boys and men (IPPF, 2013). Hence, it is a fundamental human right and determinant in the achievement of sustainable world (UN, 2016; UN Women, 2016). Therefore, although it is understandable that variations in definitions may cause unease, gender equality ought to be equally upheld with highest regard in social, political, economic, and business realms, especially within firms engaging in CSR.

2.3 Cognitive dissonance

Behaviour is a response commonly based on beliefs, ideas, culture, and customs, among others; it is a change or modification that occurs in relation to the context and may or may not have a purpose driving it (Rosenblueth et al., 1943). Behaviour is sometimes incongruent with what is thought, and what ought to be, reflected in differences between what is decreed and what is actually executed. These types of behavioural situations are well explained by the cognitive dissonance concept. According to Festinger (1957), cognitive refers to the “knowledge, opinion, or belief about the environment, about oneself, or about one’s behaviour”. And, dissonance indicates the “existence of nonfitting relations among cognitions”. Berkowitz (1969) posits that dissonance is caused when a person holds two psychologically inconsistent cognitions. Cognitive dissonance is not based on the premise that human beings are rational, rather that they are rationalising. Meaning that, they tend to work on the cognitive side of the issue rather than eliminating the dissonance, by creating consistency between notions that are otherwise psychologically inconsistent (Festinger, 1962; Cooper and Carlsmith, 2015; Guazzinia et al., 2015).

Cognitive dissonance is a common occurrence in the workplace as there is a disruption between organisational policies and the actual corporate practices; such is the
case of cognitive dissonance regarding opportunities, workload, and gender equality (Kjeldal et al., 2005), amongst others. In Mexico, these behavioural situations become much more evident when legislation is cantered in the discussion; the behaviour of individuals, institutions, organisations, businesses and lawmakers alike, tends to be incongruent with norms and laws. Gender equality is surrounded by behavioural inconsistencies, cognitive dissonance. What is more, society justifies this behaviour with commonplace sayings such as it’s cultural, that’s the way things are, and it happens everywhere, amongst others, which demotivate others from asserting themselves. The fact is that gender equality in Mexico is thoroughly legislated, yet firms depict inconsistent behaviour by not executing these laws.

2.4 Mexican law

The Mexican Constitution holds 136 articles, amongst which three are specific to gender equality. Article 1 states that any type of discrimination is forbidden including “ethnic or national origin, gender, age, disability, health and social status, religion, opinions, preferences, marital status or any other discrimination that violates human dignity or violates individuals’ rights and freedoms”; Article 4 establishes that men and women are equal under the law; and, Article 123, Section 7, determines that equal work should receive equal pay regardless of sex and nationality (SEGOB, 2014). All Secretariats’ codes of conduct describe their responsibility to ensure gender equality. The Secretariat of Education’s code indicates that as civil servants it is their duty to promote equality, tolerance, dignified and respectful treatment without distinction of gender, preferences, disability, age, religion, ethnic origin or hierarchical level, and in general promote gender equality for growth opportunities (SEP, 2014). In 1992, the Human Rights’ National Commission Law was passed and ratified in 2014; it states in Article 5, Section XIV BIS, that the commission is responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of equality among women and men compliance follow-up (Cámara de Diputados, 1992). Therefore, it is clear that there are parties responsible for fostering and safeguarding gender equality in Mexico.

The Federal Labour Law, Title First, General Principles, Article 2, establishes that equality is granted among female and male workers; it is attained by “eliminating discrimination against women that impairs or nullifies the acknowledgement or exercise of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in the workplace. It involves access to the same opportunities, considering the biological, social and cultural differences between women and men”. And Title Fifth, Women’s Work, Article 164, states that “women enjoy the same rights and have the same obligations as men” (Cámara de Diputados, 2015). Furthermore, Mexican labour law states that paid parental leave or family leave is granted to women and men for maternity, paternity and adoption, which is clearly strides ahead of other countries.

In 2003, the Federal Law to Prevent and Eliminate Discrimination was passed and ratified in 2014. This law is comprehensive and detailed in the statute; it states that, under Chapter II, Measures to prevent discrimination, Article 9, Sections III and IV, restricting opportunities as well as differences in remuneration, benefits, and conditions for equal jobs, are discriminatory and cause for sanction (Cámara de Diputados, 2003). Further, there is also a discrimination prevention council, national system for equality among women and men, and a national program for equality of women and men, among other national agencies, institutions and organisations.
In 2006, the General Law for Equality among Women and Men was passed and ratified in 2015. The law covers all aspects including, national politics and economy, access, social rights, and stereotypes, among others. Article 34 states equality in the workplace as well as the fundamental right to not be discriminated; it further states, in Section XI, that incentives and certifications will be granted annually to the organisations that comply with:

1. an ethics code prohibiting gender discrimination and internal sanctions in case of non-compliance
2. integration of an assembled workforce when it is composed of, at least, 40% of the same gender, and 10% of the total corresponds to women holding top management positions
3. equal processes in personnel selection, from vacancy publication to entry
4. other health, protection and inequality prevention considerations in the workplace (Cámara de Diputados, 2006).

Mexican Norm NMX-R-025-SCFI-2009 “establishes the requirements for the certification of practices to obtain labour equality between women and men” (STPS, 2009). It was developed to determine indicators and practices that would best foster equality despite “ethnic, racial or national origin, sex, gender, age, disability, social or economic status, health, pregnancy, language, religion, opinions, sexual preference or orientation, marital status or any other characteristic or similar condition” (STPS, 2009); norm, NMX-R-025-SCFI-2012 was ratified in 2012 and published in 2013 (SEGOB, 2013). Mexican legislation regarding gender equality is forthright and unambiguous; yet, however comprehensive the legislation, gender equality continues to be a moot point in society, politics, and business. Most organisations, institutions, government agencies, and firms speak of unwitnessed and conspicuously absent equality.

2.5 Gender inequality in corporate Mexico

In 2007, the economically active population was 43.6 million, 27.4 million men and 16.2 million women (INEGI, 2007) and, in 2015, said population rose to 53.8 million, of which 33.1 million were men and 20.7 million women (STPS, 2016). Although the number of women in the workplace has increased (García and Oliveira, 1995), they remain the minority representing less than half of the economically active population. The Statistics and Geography National Institute (INEGI) develops an annual report on equality among women and men in Mexico; from 2007–2013, results consistently indicate that:

1. being a woman is within the top three reasons for discrimination
2. men earn a significantly higher salary

Women in top management are still a non-issue. McKinsey & Company held a study with 345 organisations operating in Latin America; findings indicate that women in strategic decision making positions are more likely to be on executive committees rather than on boards of directors; only 8% hold positions in the former and 5% in the latter. In
Mexico, the majority of women, 25%, on an executive committee head the marketing department. It is noteworthy that findings showed that gender equality in top management is well associated with performance; firms with women in their directive committees showed higher performance than those with only men. In fact, such firms presented a 44% increase in ROE and 47% increase in their EBIT margin (Artigas et al., 2013). Thus, corporate Mexico is not doing its part to close the gender inequality gap, rather, the behaviour is utterly inconsistent with legislation, it is cognitively dissonant. Hence,

P₁ Gender inequality in corporate Mexico is caused by cognitive dissonance.

P₂ Cognitive dissonance between legislation and corporate practice causes gender inequality in corporate Mexico.

2.6 National culture

Human beings face a structural fact: anatomical difference. In every society the human body becomes a basic matter of culture and opposition where being male/female is key to the processes of meaning (Hérétier, 1996). Gender is the way societies symbolise anatomical differences, and cultural logic is the underlying force that prevents men and women from being treated as equal citizens. This innate difference has resulted in social inequality, discrimination, stigmatisation and, sometimes, even social lynching and death (Lamas, 2012). Societies organise social life with the idea that there are certain capabilities, feelings and behaviours that correspond to men and women according to biological data of sexuation; gender is what enables codes and particular cultural prescriptions for women and men to be instituted. Cultural logic of gender attributes ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ characteristics to diverse spheres of life and each sex’s activities; these attributes take shape in practices, ideas, discourses and social representations which, in turn, influence and condition people’s objective and subjective behaviour (Lamas, 2012).

Religious beliefs and national identity are very important to culture (Sweetman, 1998). National cultures are fundamental (Pickel, 2013) and much more than beliefs related to traditions and/or religions, they are the behaviours that are acceptable for society. Development cooperation programs and projects aimed at promoting gender equality are often limited by cultural barriers which diminish the effectiveness of their objectives. These barriers weaken the effectiveness of the organisations’ work and hamper the very objective of gender equality. The World Conference on Cultural Policies (UNESCO, 1982) has stated that culture is:

“The whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.”

Culture often becomes central to discussions about gender equality because it is a qualifier that aids in the description of women and men.

Certainly discussing gender inequality and culture is difficult in most countries; in fact, within some cultures it leads to debates on morality, ethics, as well as negative attitudes such as disdain and even community shunning, if gender equality is considered disruptive to said cultures. Therefore, culture is quite the obstacle in the fight for gender
equality and hinders change (Schalkwyk, 2000; CIDA, 2001). There are many roles that have been arbitrarily assigned to men and women according to their gender, gender relations (i.e., within the community, workplace, school, and family, amongst others) and gender identity, although it is much less recognised and accepted; people are somewhat conditioned by these roles, particularly in politics and religious affairs (Tripp, 1999). Meaning that, in general, there are jobs ‘fit’ for women and men that are based on cultural expectations in the household as well as workplace (Schalkwyk, 2000).

In Mexico, the general cultural belief that women’s role in society is isolated to certain ‘feminine’ activities is particularly significant in the existence of gender inequality. Because, although women are valued, tradition dictates that they remain within their assigned roles. A study held by Montes de Oca et al. (2013) regarding gender roles revealed that 37% of male participants stated that women should be faithful, friends, kind, and submissive, while women stated that they should be independent, wives, educated, contenders, and respected. Therefore, national culture shapes gender roles in Mexico which ultimately hinders gender equality and helps define their participation in corporate Mexico.

Inequality decreases women’s autonomy, access to resources, health attention, education, and participation in decision making (Schalkwyk, 2000), thus, creating a system of domination (Mills, 2003); unfortunately, the latter, is sometimes accepted as the ‘normal’ because such disparities are communicated from males to females (Rosales, 2010) from one generation to another. These are just some of the negative effects that gender inequality has on women; in response, many men and women have cooperated with organisations to obtain the acknowledgement and reclaim the respect deserved as human beings in a male-dominated society (Bridger, 1996). According to Jayachandran (2015) these types of gender gaps are almost always visible in developing countries, such as Mexico; nonetheless, unfair wages, which is equally prejudicial to women, is a global recurring practice. In fact, Mexico is one of the highest ranking countries on income inequality (OECD, 2016).

The design and promotion of how society should be, along with any modifications in culture and gender issues, are fostered by women’s empowerment. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has developed a policy on gender equality which has a significant focus on empowerment as a driving force for gender equality: the agency states that empowerment is “about people, both women and men, taking control of their lives: setting their own agendas, gaining skills, building self-confidence, solving problems, and developing self-reliance” (CIDA, 2001). And, the United Nations Development Program’s (UNDP) report on human development also refers to empowerment as a stimulus for societal change in the effort to abate gender disparities (UNDP, 2016).

Empowerment is difficult to introduce and carryout in countries such as Mexico primarily because of sexism, both hostile and benevolent (Glick and Fiske, 1996), better known as machismo and micromachismo (Méndez, 2005), which pervade society. On the one hand, women not only lack autonomy but their assigned roles are considered significantly inferior and of much less value, or none; it is not just about women’s jobs generally being restricted to the household, but that it occurs because it is assumed they have limited intellectual, emotional, and physical capabilities (Pantaleón, 2008). On the other hand, women are responsible for their family’s wellbeing, education, growth and financial success (Rosales, 2010). Furthermore, León-Ramírez and Ferrando (2013) posit that “Mexico is the second country in the world with more catholic people where women
are considered as ‘submissive’”. Although, today’s society is, to a degree, less rigid about the ‘proper’ jobs for women and men (Brumley, 2014), and women’s participation in the workforce has increased, these are no indications of gender equality because the attributes embedded in the culture impede such achievement. According to Young (2000), women’s discrimination and segregation within the workforce is not restricted to a particular group because it is “a tyrannical power that coerces, but by the daily practices of a well-intentioned society”. In a sense, the national culture has a great impact on gender inequality which, inevitably, percolates firms operating in Mexico. Hence,

**P3** Cognitive dissonance between legislation and national culture causes gender inequality in corporate Mexico.

### 2.7 Structural violence

It is plausible that culture is not the only national element that is cause for behavioural inconsistencies regarding gender equality in corporate Mexico. Particularities of the very environment, context, and structure of the country’s society may also be significant; for instance, the presence of violence is also an important factor in the development of gender equality cognitive dissonance. In Mexico, 63 of every 100 women over 15 years of age have been victims of some type of violence (i.e., physical, emotional, economic, sexual, and patrimonial, amongst others) at least once (INEGI, 2015).

The concept of violence is not only employed to refer to physical harm but also the psychological injury (Galtung, 1969). Many consider that violence occurs when an individual is directly harmed by another; however, structural violence entails that the violence is not instigated by an individual as it is embedded within the structure. Structural violence may be observed as social inequality (Galtung, 1969; Gilligan, 1997) with a certain degree of stability, meaning that structural violence is a precursor of structural violence (Galtung, 1969). Further, this type of violence is usually not condemned because it is, more often than not, inflicted by “established and respected forces in the society” (Carmichael, 1968). According to Farmer (2004), structural violence is “violence exerted systematically – that is, indirectly – by everyone who belongs to a certain social order…In short, the concept of structural violence is intended to inform the study of the social machinery of oppression”. Said indirect structural violence, such as poverty, racism and sexism, is quite dangerous as it is usually not ‘visible as action’.

Violence, including structural violence, pervades Mexico’s society (Piña, 2015); poverty, kidnapping, femicide, sexism, domestic abuse, sexual abuse, and human trafficking (Pereyra, 2012), are just some of the ways that violence is present in Mexico. The workplace is no exception (Villazul, 2012), as harassment, exploitation, hazing, unfair wages, unequal pay, belittlement, gender inequality, and segregation are commonplace occurrences. Results from a study held in Guanajuato, Mexico regarding gender equality showed that structural violence not only originates from disparities amongst the population, but also perpetuates gender inequality (Piña, 2015). Mexican laws certainly provide recourses against such violations; therefore, there are persistent behavioural inconsistencies in this regard due to a damaged structure, a structure of violence. Meaning that, such violence certainly constitutes poor corporate practices to say the least, and absolutely averts firms from adequate engagement in CSR. Hence,
Gender inequality in corporate Mexico, derived from cognitive dissonance between legislation and corporate practice, is caused by structural violence.

2.8 Global gender gap index

Gender inequality negatively impacts everyone, although there are different degrees of disparities which have different impacts on growth and development. For such reason, it is vital to develop frameworks to capture the magnitude of these inequalities in order to design effective measures to reduce and, ultimately, eradicate them (Hausmann et al., 2012). One of the frameworks is the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), introduced by the World Economic Forum; the first report was published in 2006 and the index currently analyses 145 countries. The GGGI addresses the need for a consistent and comprehensive measurement of gender equality that can track a country’s progress over time; the magnitude of gender-based disparities is measured and disclosed in the GGG report. The GGGI’s report seeks to measure one important aspect of gender equality: the relative gaps between women and men across four key areas, sub-indexes: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health survival, and political empowerment (GGGI, 2015). Table 1 includes the indicators used by GGGI to measure critical areas of inequality between women and men. While no single measurement can capture the situation completely, this index provides a panoramic view of each country’s progress in the fight for gender equality.

Table 1  
GGGI domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical areas of inequality between men and women</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic participation and opportunity</td>
<td>Female labour force participation over male value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wage equality between women and men for similar work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Estimated female earned income over male value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female legislators, senior officials and managers over male value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female professional and technical workers over male value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational attainment</td>
<td>Female literacy rate over male value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female net primary level enrolment over male value</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female net secondary level enrolment over male value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female gross tertiary level enrolment over male value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political empowerment</td>
<td>Females with seats in parliament over male value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females at ministerial level over male value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of years of a female head of state over male value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and survival</td>
<td>Female healthy life expectancy over male value</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Sex ratio at birth</td>
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</tbody>
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Reports from 2006 to 2015 indicate that some countries have shown significant progress by closing gender gaps; this is the case of Nordic countries (Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden), where gender is more neutral compared to other countries. In contrast, Yemen, Pakistan, Chad and Syria account for the highest scores on inequality. In Latin America, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Cuba and Argentina show lower levels of inequality; while Suriname, Belize, Guatemala and Venezuela have the highest degree of inequality.
Overall, the report finds that among the 145 countries considered, the category in which the gender gap is narrower is health and survival. In reference to educational achievement, which has reached 94% worldwide, 25 countries have closed the gap completely. The gender gap in economic participation and opportunity is persistently low, and political empowerment remains the lowest scoring sub-index, 28%, although most progress has occurred in this area since 2006 (Hausmann et al., 2010, 2015).

Table 2  GGGI for Mexico

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015*</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>0.699</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>0.545</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0.991</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.980</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0.281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014**</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0.690</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>0.552</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0.991</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.980</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013***</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>0.692</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.991</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.980</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0.246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012****</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>0.671</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>0.538</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>0.991</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.980</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011*****</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0.660</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>0.532</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.991</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.980</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010*****</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>0.658</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>0.521</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.991</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.980</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Countries: *145; **142; ***136; ****135;*****134.

The GGGI rates on a scale of 0 to 1, one being the highest score to reveal equality, to qualify each of the items that make up the report. Mexico has consistently scored rates between 0.6577 and 0.699 from 2010 to 2015; the country, globally, currently ranks 71 of 145 countries and 19 at a regional level in the gender gap (Hausmann et al., 2010, 2015). Table 2 contains the GGGI’s Report for Mexico from 2010 to 2015. One of the reasons why Mexico currently placed 71 worldwide is because of a decrease in the percentage of women’s economic participation and opportunity which declined from 55% to 54%, thus, lessening opportunities to rectify gender disparities. The category where there is greater inequality in Mexico is political empowerment, with a score of 0.281, followed by economic participation and opportunity with a score of 0.545; the country scored 0.980 in health and survival and, finally, scored 0.991 in educational attainment (Hausmann et al., 2015).

Gender inequality in Mexico, then, not only remains unresolved (Navarro et al., 2014), but also continues to deter social growth and development. The abovementioned elements, national culture, structural violence and the cognitive dissonance of gender equality regarding legislature all negatively impact firms’ ability to effectively design and execute strategies required to successfully engage in CSR; thus, virtually disrupting the process towards growth and development. Hence,

P₅ Cognitive dissonance causing gender inequality in corporate Mexico increases the gender equality gap.

P₆ Gender inequality in corporate Mexico renders CSR unrealisable.

3 Model analysis

The proposed model for the study, depicted in Figure 1, describes the effects of gender equality cognitive dissonance in corporate Mexico. The model illustrates how the
Gender inequality in corporate Mexico

Concepts legislation, culture, and structural violence coexist within the country’s social sphere. Their presence and invariable interaction generate cognitive dissonance in regards to gender equality in corporate Mexico. This unquestionably influences Mexico’s gender equality disparities which, in turn, impact gender equality dynamics in corporate Mexico. Furthermore, the latter influences firms’ business dynamics and performance which directly impact the country’s development and growth.

Figure 1  Gender equality cognitive dissonance in corporate Mexico

Women’s views on their active presence in the workplace have increasingly become less traditional (Kane, 1992; Powers et al., 2003). And, one of the issues on the Feminist agenda has been to achieve workplace equality and equal pay; fortunately, in comparison to past decades, the gender wage gap has gradually decreased (Stanley and Jarrell, 1998). Unfortunately, in Mexico, it is much ado about nothing; businesses across the country confirm to abide by, at least, Mexican law, and most even go as far to say that there are no gender inequalities within their organisations. However, data shows women account for less than half of the economically active population, earn less for the same jobs, and less than ten percent of top management positions are held by women.

There are numerous organisations that state to be engaged in CSR; this year close to three hundred firms operating in Mexico received the ESR distinction (i.e., merit for being a socially responsible company), a little over twenty percent more than in 2015 (Cemefi, 2016). These firms that are not being proactive in the closing of the gender gap in Mexico cannot be categorised as socially responsible and should not, for that matter, be receiving an unmerited distinction; the actions of these firms are more consistent with social washing.
No matter how clear the law on gender equality in the workplace, to the degree that there is no room for interpretation, language has the power to elicit gender inequality. For instance, both men and women are still, in most social spheres, referred to as men (i.e., men’s evolution, instead of people/human beings/evolution; all men have a right to vote, instead of all people/human beings have a right to vote, etcetera); there is really no excuse for such practice, as the Mexican Constitution, Article 4, states that “men and women are equal under the law” (SEGOB, 2014) meaning that the law is clear on the use of terms for each gender. Therefore, there is cognitive dissonance between the legislated and articulated. Further, as mentioned earlier, the law states that men and women have the right to family leave for maternity, paternity and adoption; however, the Mexican Institute for Social Security (IMSS) still refers to family or parental leave as a disability, that is, “she is on ‘disability for maternity’” (IMSS, 2016). The use of the term disability to refer to maternity leave suggests that when women have children they become disabled. As such, these types of behavioural inconsistencies, situations in which there is cognitive dissonance regarding gender equality in corporate Mexico, paint a picture of the extent of the gender gap.

Traditional gender roles, domestic and societal, persist in Mexico; women’s rights movements are, undoubtedly, responsible for the progress made. Women are increasingly joining the economically active population, however, they are still expected to bear children, take care of the home, and be a good wife and mother, whilst receiving unequal pay for same jobs, on average 38% of men’s wages (INMUJERES, 2005). According to Rashotte and Webster (2005) gender inequality still exists because there are certain beliefs regarding gender that suggest that men have more capacities and/or competencies to execute certain tasks. These beliefs, which lead to gender inequalities in the workplace, are incongruent with current legislation. Thus, cognitive dissonance on the subject matter, between what is proclaimed and actions taken, is a direct cause of gender disparities in corporate Mexico.

Structural violence determines and conditions gender equality, or lack thereof, in corporate practices in a very particular way. The workplace is plagued with maltreatment, discrimination, intimidation, and unjust circumstances. These behaviours are incongruent with the law and are, therefore, an effect of cognitive dissonance and a context permeated with violence. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that such behavioural inconsistencies and cognitive dissonance or, in layman’s terms, law breaking, occurs time and time again because of the senseless impunity in the country. Impunity occurs because there are problems with the structure, security and justice system; further, these high levels of impunity intensify corruption, insecurity and violence. In 2015, Mexico reached one of its worse performances and placed 58 with a score of 75.7 in the index; 33% of the impunity recorded was related to human rights’ violations (CESIJ, 2016).

The gender equality gap in corporate Mexico is unequivocally absolutely the country’s social growth and development. Mexico’s gender gap is mostly impacted by lack of political empowerment, which is visible in the low percentage of women in politics, and economic participation and opportunity, which is clear from the low percentage of economically active women and wage inequality. The effect is cyclical in that cognitive dissonance in gender equality is causing inequality in corporate Mexico, and the latter has a direct and negative impact on the country’s development and growth.
4 Conclusions

Gender inequality in corporations is a complex phenomenon which can be seen both in organisations’ structure and practices, as well as in their processes and procedures. Accordingly, corporate Mexico is not doing its job to close the gender inequality gap; rather, their behaviour is utterly inconsistent with the legislation on the subject matter. The cognitive dissonance between legislation and corporate practice has caused an inverted effect, that is, gender equality does not increase at the same pace as that of legislation. Moreover, societal beliefs and practices embedded in Mexican culture, closely linked to tradition and/or religion, generate a cognitive dissonance with the legislation that has been dictated regarding gender equality, from generation to generation.

Culture is not the only national element that is a cause for behavioural inconsistencies regarding gender equality in corporate Mexico. Gender inequality in the labour market persists in the twenty first century. The presence of women in the labour market is still far below that of men; however, the not so subtle presence of violence, which permeates business as well as society as whole, has become a determining factor in the achievement of gender equality. This visible structural violence is absolutely influential in the existence of gender equality cognitive dissonance in corporate Mexico as, once again, Mexican law provides the recourses to prevent the associated violations. Therefore, the country’s national culture regarding gender equality and structural violence are actually gender inequality facilitators.

The violation of women’s rights is fairly discussed, yet nothing is really done to prevent, reduce, and eradicate it. For all intents and purposes, the existence of gender inequality in corporate Mexico is possible by breaking the law, by completely unethical practices. Whatever the causes, be them rooted in culture or structural violence, by not actively and proactively creating or influencing policy to close the gender gap, corporate Mexico is equally accountable.

Gender inequality in corporate Mexico partakes in the lack of improvement of occupational segregation, furthermore, gender pay gaps persist, and women are still underrepresented at more senior job levels, especially among top management and on company boards. This chain of factors has, in turn, led to an increase in the country’s gender equality gap. Even more, gender gaps are pervasive in all walks of economic, political, social and cultural life in Mexico, and imply large losses in terms of development and living standards; therefore, we believe that greater gender equality in educational attainment, economic participation and political empowerment has a strong positive effect on economic growth and development.

There are several instances in which Mexican law seems to be ahead; however, in practice policies are far from inclusive and, in fact, avoid the core issue. It seems that in the race towards equality, cognitive dissonance has managed to achieve segregation. Instead of tending to issues of discrimination and human rights’ violations in, for instance, public transportation, the government has provided separate train cars for women on the subway system and separate buses for women and men; further, there are no male train cars. This practice is, then, translated into corporate Mexico, so, how do we expect to effectively empower women to sit on our boards of directors, be Chiefs, owners and Presidents, if women are segregated in the most public areas and legal aspects? The unfortunate truth is that the elements that are causing gender equality cognitive dissonance are embedded in the society. According to Morley and Walsh (1996) this
would indicate that the development of policies aimed at change seem nearly impossible. More so, this impedes the achievement of equality and, therefore, social growth and development. And so, women in corporate Mexico, unfortunately, remain ‘equal’ but separate.

5 Directions for future research

Future research could focus on the importance and ratio of the cognitions as to determine the actual magnitude of the dissonance regarding gender equality in the workplace. Further, future research could also study the nature of the justification of behavioural inconsistencies in order to understand why such dissonance persists. Also, socially responsible firms’ stance and practice regarding gender equality could also evaluated. And, finally, a cross-cultural study is suggested to evaluate differences among national cultures and presence of structural violence and determine their potential as facilitators of gender inequalities in business dynamics.

References


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