

Woman, Work and Health: The Role of Woman Leadership in Wellbeing at Work Promotion. Spanish Women Entrepreneurs Focus Groups.

Introduction

Women and men differ biologically and the professions, activities and roles they play in organisations differ as well. Therefore, it is important to integrate gender differences in the strategy, policies, procedures, problems solving and decision making process and actions in the area of risk and health prevention. Although there is increasing interest in this issue, this has not always been well understood, assimilated or integrated.

Involved in the purpose of analyse and deepen knowledge contribution about this situation, a cycle of three focus group sessions were designed and performed.

This qualitative study explored opinions, attitudes and experiences with women managers in the field management prevention of occupational risks and health promotion and analyses the perception of the segregation of occupational health by gender.

The sessions (n = 32) were developed between April and September 2016 in Murcia (Spain). Each session was structured in stages and was led by an expert with a guide of guidelines and contents prepared by the researchers who probed on:

- General Health and Health at Work;
- The occupational hazards and the consequences for the health in men and women and
- Possible ways of improvement or proposals of action on the part of the companies.

Participants & Recruitment

Project authors elaborated the invitations (Figure 1) that OMEP sent via email to the associates, explaining the methodology and purpose of the project. Previously to the celebration of each session, a reminder was made by telephone to confirm attendance, limiting the participation to a maximum of 15 participants.



FIGURE 1: Focus Group invitations

Focus groups were held in Clara de Campoamor meeting-room – Campus de la Merced. Each session was designed with a duration of 1.5 h. (Figure 2) -in the morning over the course of a breakfast-.

Previously, the objectives were recalled, the importance of participating openly and the confidentiality in the use and treatment of the answers, recorded in audio during the development. Once in the campus, participants were also asked to complete a pre-focus survey (Figure 3) in which each participant signed the consent and identified data about their profile and that of their company (Figures 4 and 5).



FIGURE 2: Focus Group Sessions

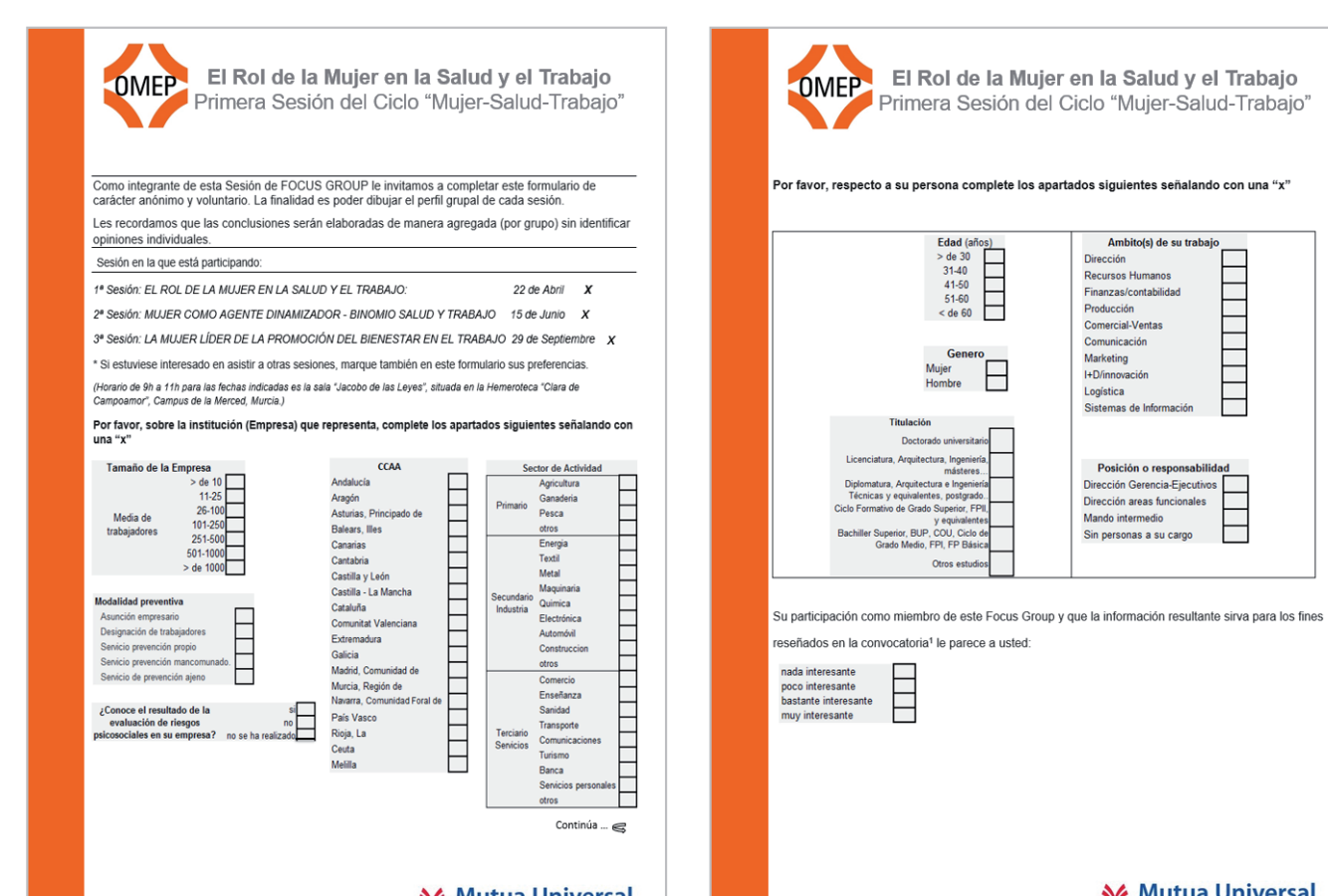


FIGURE 3: Questionnaire

Method

A Focus Group Moderators' Guide was developed in collaboration with Mutua Universal – Mutual Society Partnering the Social Security, - (the authors), Murcia University (author) and the Women Entrepreneurs and Professionals Murcia Association. Project researchers participated in the discussion by interjecting information on occupational health and clarifying critical points regarding current project related research. Topics included in the guide of the three sessions [I-The role of women in health and work (13 participants), II-Women as a dynamic agent: binomial health and work (11) and III-The leading woman in the promotion of well-being in the workplace (8)]; were based on the project's the major objectives:

- Identify the level of knowledge and experience of women entrepreneurs and managers on the typology and the risk index at which workers of their companies are exposed; as well as, the effects it causes on the health of employees and the organization.
- Identify perceptions of the biased exposure of workers to these risks by gender.
- Identify perceptions of occupational health segregation by gender derived from the above-mentioned exposure.
- Identify new management systems to reduce differences in exposure and effects on health and well-being.
- Identify barriers to the adoption of the indicated preventive measures.

Key findings

The majority of participants appreciated deficiencies in the LRP in the companies, mainly psychosocial nature, recognize the existence of these occupational hazards and consider that, in addition, mostly affect women deteriorating their Mental Health and increasing the rates of Temporary Disability (TD). Identifying hazards and issues in the occupational health of women remains a challenge.

Participants agreed that not all risks affect men and women equally. Especially those of psychosocial etiology as a consequence, among other factors, to the existing labor segregation by gender at a horizontal and vertical level (glass ceiling, wage gap, among others).

Among all, highlights the concern to work-life conflict, which affects mostly women, due to work and nonwork roles have not regular distribution by gender; and even, they point out, is not perceived as a risk by men or affects them in a lesser proportion. In their companies, women workers usually undertake the work at home, or combine part or full time paid work with household and the care of children, elderly and the sick. This fact coupled with the culture resistant to change that slows the adoption of effective measures of reconciliation work-family.

Participants coincided in identifying as an effective measure those that promote to work-life balance, standing out the policies focus on creating greater flexibility in work schedules, not so much at quantitative level, as qualitative, with proposals such as to promote the European timetable and flextime. Objective is promote action with government and non-government organizations, at the national or regional level, level to improve and promote women's health at work as their right.

Participants voiced concerns and interest to get out of "victimhood", lead a cultural change and demonstrate that the measures of "work-life balance" are profitable. As well, they are in favor of adopting new practices that promote and improve the capabilities of people in organizations and not only solve problems or diseases.

Characteristics of focus group participants

In the three focus groups, the participation ranged from seven to thirteen. Participants profile describes a managerial woman between 41 and 50 years old, with a university level, who holds a management position -management- and with a high degree of responsibility (Figure 4).

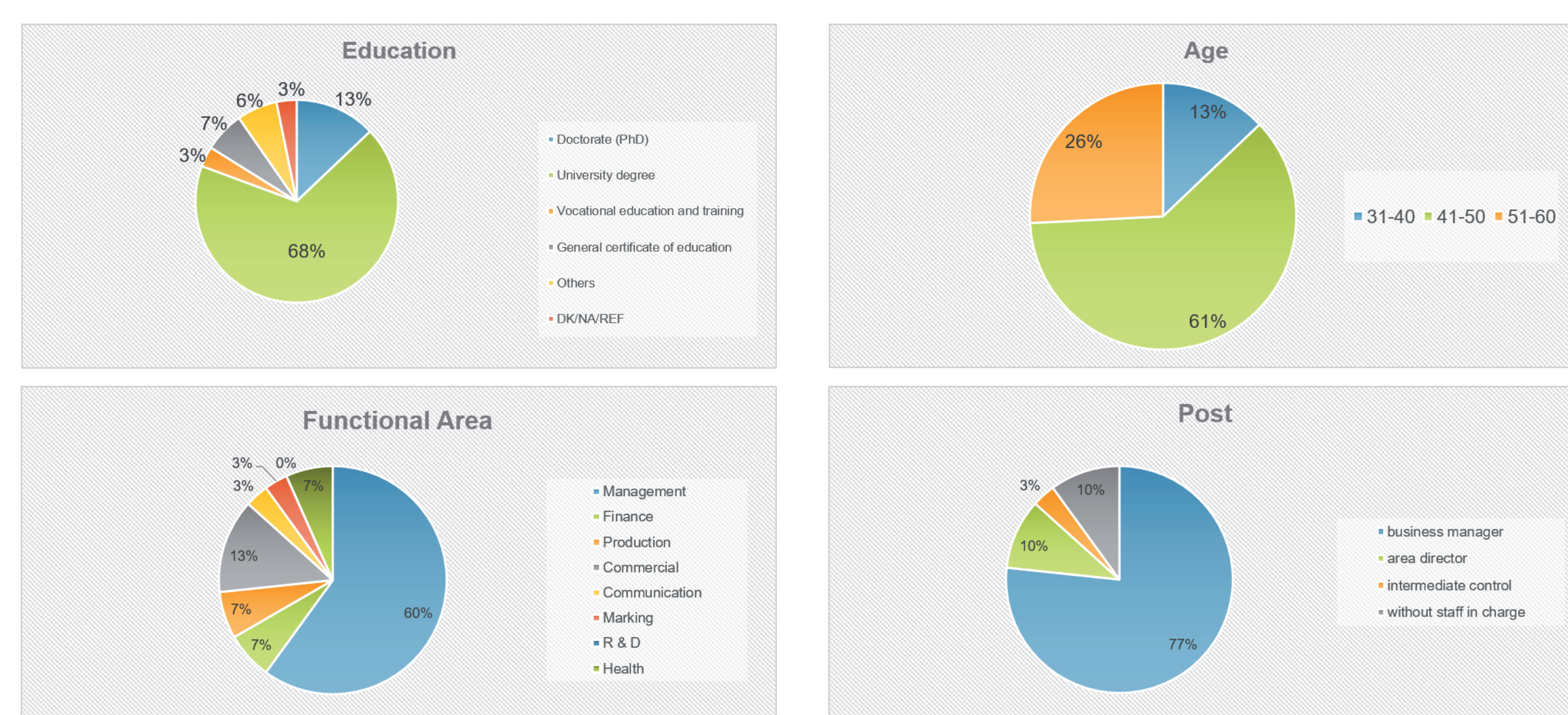


FIGURE 4: Participants profile in the Focus Group

Companies that represent (Figure 5) are mainly from the services sector (72%) and small enterprises [<10 workers (34%)], in these 50% of the employers opted to assume the management prevention of occupational risks -modality collected in Regulations for Prevention Services (Royal Decree 39/1997)-, the rest of companies (41%) hired an External Prevention Service.

It should be noted that 9% of the participants do not know the preventive modality of their company and only 56% of the total knows if the psychosocial evaluation has been carried out and knows its result, but the rest of participants were eager to learn and share their experiences.

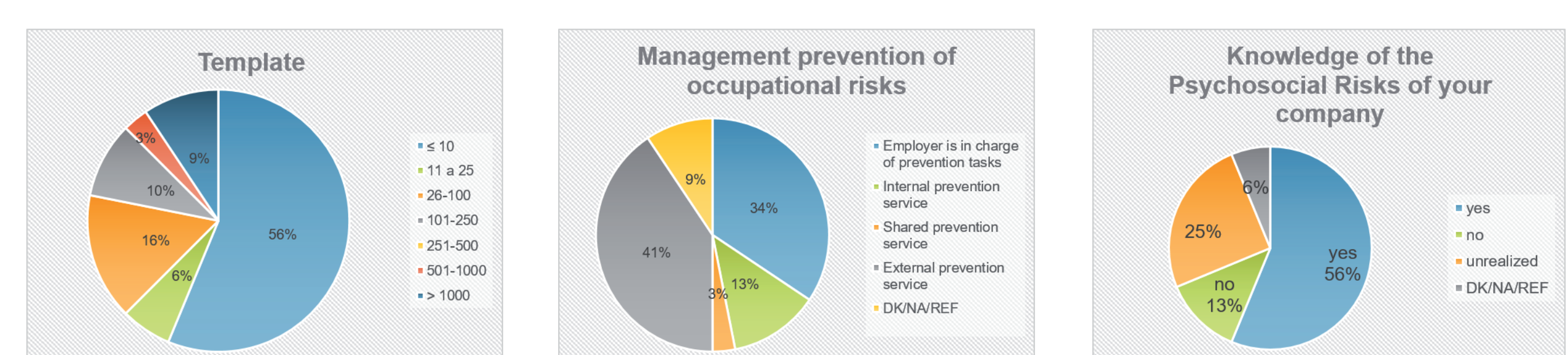


FIGURE 5: Companies profile