



# Labour Practice, Decent Work and Human Rights Performance and Reporting: The Impact of Women Managers

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## Abstract

This paper uses a sample of 1243 international firms for the period 2013–2017 to analyse the effect that a greater presence of women in management teams has on business behaviour in relation to labour and human rights, and the mediating role of improved performance in these rights on corporate transparency. The results show that gender diversity in management teams is positively associated with performance in relation to labour and human rights, and that such a performance acts as a mediating factor by fostering a higher disclosure of information regarding these issues. The findings therefore seem to indicate that the presence of women in management teams acts as a driving force for enhanced social responsibility.

**Keywords** Gender diversity · Labour practices and decent work · Human rights · Social reporting · Corporate social responsibility

## Introduction

Although still far from being equal to the proportion of men, the proportion of women in top and middle management positions has increased greatly over the last decade (UN,

2020; Calabrese et al., 2018; Birindelli et al., 2019; Furlotti et al., 2019). This has encouraged research interest in the effect of women in management positions on corporate strategies and decision-making (Adhikari et al., 2019; Zou et al., 2018). Based on the gender self-schema approach (Crane & Markus, 1982) and gender identity theory (McCabe et al., 2006; Spence, 1993), these studies analyse how women and men differ in their psychological traits (e.g., risk preferences, altruism), values, and leadership styles (Adams & Funk, 2012; Alonso-Almeida et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2016), observing that, as managers, women tend to be more risk-averse, altruist, empathetic, sensitive to ethical issues, and socially-oriented than men (McGuinness et al., 2016); these characteristics all result in women managers being more highly oriented towards corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Adams & Funk, 2012; Larrieta-Rubín de Celis et al., 2015; Lu et al., 2020; Malik et al., 2020), thereby influencing their company CSR policies (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2015; Soares et al., 2011). Indeed, empirical studies document that women managers have an overall positive effect on a firm's CSR engagement (Ardito et al., 2021; Calabrese et al., 2018; Glass et al., 2016; Larrieta-Rubín de Celis et al., 2015; Zou et al., 2018). The great majority of studies have focused on women in top management positions (i.e., chief executive officer –CEO– and directors), however, and few studies have analysed the effect of women in middle management positions. This suggests an important gap in the

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literature, given that, as Kassinis et al., (2016, p. 408) point out, “it is not only gender diversity on the board that matters for sustainability but diversity throughout the organization”. A broader approach is therefore needed to achieve a more complete understanding of the effect of gender diversity on CSR (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2015).

This paper aims to fill this gap in the literature by examining the effect of women managers on labour practices, decent work, and human rights (LA&HR) performance and reporting. Firms face a wide array of challenges related to labour and human rights, such as those involving occupational health and safety, discrimination, child labour, forced or compulsory labour, and the right to collective bargaining (Ehnert et al., 2016; Hess, 2019) which have received increased stakeholder attention (Tsalis et al., 2018), mainly as a consequence of notorious accidents (O’Neill et al., 2016; Rahman et al., 2018) or severe violations of human rights (Alawi & Belfaqih, 2019; Cahaya & Hervina, 2019; Islam et al., 2017). Companies thus have to develop initiatives to enhance their employee working conditions, knowledge, and skills, as well as guarantee and promote respect for human rights, as part of their CSR agenda (Cahaya et al., 2015; Koskela, 2014; Tsalis et al., 2018), and CSR reports should therefore include information about such initiatives (Alawi & Belfaqih, 2019). However, relatively few studies on CSR reporting have been specifically focused on labour practices, decent work, and human rights disclosures (Kent & Zunker, 2013; Koskela, 2014; Searcy et al., 2016), and consequently knowledge about what drives firms to report on these issues is limited (Kent & Zunker, 2017).

Considering that gender diversity favours corporate transparency and enhanced CSR disclosure (Birindelli et al., 2019; Fernández-Feijoo et al., 2014), and that women managers tend to be more empathetic and sensitive to ethical concerns than their male counterparts (Adams & Funk, 2012; Alonso-Almeida et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2016; Larrieta-Rubín de Celis et al., 2015; Zou et al., 2018), we posit that a higher proportion of women in management teams increases commitment to labour and human rights, as evidenced in the adoption of practices aimed at improving employee working conditions, knowledge, and skills, as well as the protection of human rights by their companies. In turn, according to the economic theories of voluntary disclosure (i.e., the proprietary cost theory), this higher commitment to labour and human rights will favour corporate transparency with regard these issues (Evangelinos et al., 2018), given that those companies with a higher CSR performance tend to disclose a higher volume of information in order to make their efforts visible to stakeholders, and thus obtain competitive advantages (García-Sánchez et al., 2020a).

Specifically, the aim of this paper is to analyse the effect that a greater presence of women in management teams

has on business behaviour in relation to labour and human rights, and the mediating role that a greater performance in regard to these issues has on corporate transparency. The results from a sample of 1243 international firms for the period 2013–2017 (corresponding to an unbalanced data panel of 5693 observations) show that gender diversity in management teams is positively associated with performance in relation to labour and human rights, and that such a performance acts as a mediating factor by fostering a higher disclosure of information regarding these issues.

Our study contributes to the literature in several ways. Firstly, we extend research on the relationship between gender diversity and CSR by addressing two topics (gender diversity in management teams, and performance and disclosure on labour practices, decent work, and human rights) that have not been previously analysed. While most studies on gender diversity have focused on the role of women in top-management positions (i.e., CEO and/or directors), we adopt a broader approach, by considering the presence of women in management teams, thereby extending the focus to women in middle-management positions which provides a more complete picture of the effects of gender diversity on corporate strategies and outcomes. We also consider specific elements of a firm’s CSR agenda (labour practices, decent work, and human rights), which, despite the important challenges that companies face in this regard and increasing stakeholder interest, has not been sufficiently analysed. In examining the effect of women managers on LA&HR performance and reporting, we further extend the increasing literature on gender diversity to a new field, and at the same time add empirical evidence to the more limited literature about the possible determinants of labour practices, decent work, and human rights performance and disclosure by identifying a new driver whose effect has not been studied. Our findings support the role of women in management teams as a driver of LA&HR performance and reporting. We thus enhance current understanding about how companies can improve their CSR performance and stakeholder orientation, and open a new research line.

Secondly, our study also contributes to research into the effects of gender diversity on CSR reporting. Specifically, we analyse the effect of gender diversity in management teams on LA&HR reporting, both directly and indirectly, through its effect on LA&HR performance. By analysing the mediating role of LA&HR performance in the relationship between gender diversity and corporate transparency, we add novel empirical evidence to research into the moderating factors in the relationship between gender diversity and CSR (Amorelli & García-Sánchez, 2021), as well as to studies on the mediation effects of CSR performance. Specifically, we demonstrate that female managers do not play a direct role in LA&HR reporting, but exert their influence indirectly by affecting LA&HR performance.

Thirdly, from a theoretical viewpoint, we use a “meta-theoretical” approach which allows us to study the effect of gender diversity on LA&HR performance and report from a holistic perspective, combining several theoretical frameworks broadly used in the CSR literature. We draw on psychological (i.e., gender identity theory) and managerial (i.e., upper echelons theory, resource dependency theory, and stakeholder theory) theories to explain the relationship between gender diversity and CSR, and combine them with an economic-based theory of voluntary disclosure (i.e., proprietary costs theory) to analyse the effect of LA&HR performance on corporate transparency, which provides a broader theoretical perspective for interpreting findings regarding the direct and indirect effect that gender diversity has on LA&HR reporting. Our findings support gender identity theory by showing that, in line with their gender stereotypes (e.g., caring inclination, altruism, sense of ethics), women managers are more likely to favour greater corporate responsibility in relation to labour practices, decent work, and human rights. Consistent with resource dependency theory and upper echelons theory, our findings indicate that women in management teams provide unique skills, knowledge, and experiences, with a positive impact on strategic decisions related to labour and human rights. We also inform stakeholder theory demonstrating that, given that women managers are more stakeholder-focused, their presence in management teams benefits stakeholder engagement with a direct positive effect on the company’s social performance and indirectly favouring corporate transparency. This finding also confirms the positive association between CSR performance and CSR reporting posited by proprietary costs theory. Taken together, our results indicate that the presence of women in management teams provide firms with gender-relevant values that favour enhanced social responsibility, so that gender diversity in management teams is beneficial for employees, stakeholders, and society as a whole.

This paper contains six sections. After this introduction, the next section briefly outlines labour and human rights. The third section presents the development of the research hypotheses in which we first discuss the effect of women in management teams as a driver of LA&HR performance and reporting and then analyse the mediating role of LA&HR performance in enhancing corporate transparency. The fourth section sets out the empirical framework, after which we present and discuss the main findings of the study along with some complementary analysis. Finally, in the last section the main conclusions of the study are drawn, the implications of the findings are discussed, and some topics for future research are suggested.

## Labour and Human Rights

In 1948 the United Nations (UN) issued its “Universal Declaration on Human Rights” which establishes the core “rights inherent to all human beings” regardless of their race, gender, nationality, place of residence, religion, “or any other status” (UN, 1948). Fifty years later, based on this historical landmark, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) set the essential labour rights (ILO, 1998) and, subsequently, in 2011 a set of Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights were endorsed by the UN, stressing the responsibility of companies in this regard (Islam et al., 2017; McPhail & Adams, 2016). At the European level, the Green Paper of the European Commission (EC, 2001) encourages companies to develop initiatives to improve their employees’ working conditions as part of their CSR agenda, and asks them to go beyond legal requirements. More recently, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) established by the UN in 2015 also addressed issues related to labour and human rights, and set specific targets to be reached, e.g., good health and well-being –(SDG3)-, quality education –(SDG4)-, and gender equality –(SDG5).

Although serious abuses and violations of human rights have been still documented in developing countries and “conflict areas” (Cahaya et al., 2015; Islam et al., 2017), companies have generally assumed their responsibility and taken action to support labour and human rights (Hess, 2019). According to Alawi and Belfaqih (2019), reporting on labour practices, decent work, and human rights (LA&HR) improves corporate transparency and allows companies to demonstrate their social responsibility. In this sense, LA&HR reporting is a key element of a firm’s CSR disclosure policy.

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) developed a set of indicators to measure and report company performance in relation to labour practices and decent work (LA), and human rights (HR). However, despite this initiative, empirical studies found that the level and quality of LA&HR disclosure is low (Alawi & Belfaqih, 2019; Bowrin, 2018; Cahaya & Hervina, 2019; Cahaya et al., 2017; Koskela, 2014; Searcy et al., 2016; Tsalis et al., 2018), which limits the ability of stakeholders to assess corporate social performance (Dixon et al., 2019). Indeed, Cubilla-Montilla et al. (2019) found that firms disclose less than 50% of the GRI indicators related to human and labour rights, and Cahaya et al. (2017) reported that a lower percentage of listed companies disclose information regarding organisational health and safety.

Researchers have also observed that these disclosures are affected by a firm’s institutional/legal environment, and specific characteristics such as firm size, industry

membership, and internationalisation (Alawi & Belfaqih, 2019; Bowrin, 2018; Cahaya et al., 2017; Tsalis et al., 2018). Researchers have also showed that LA&HR reporting has been used by companies to address a legitimacy crisis (Evangelinos et al., 2018; Kent & Zunker, 2017), respond to stakeholder demands (Cahaya & Hervina, 2019; Kansal & Joshi, 2015), and obtain competitive advantages, such as higher value market (Kaur et al., 2016), reduced cost of capital (Bowrin, 2018), improved image and reputation, and increased customer loyalty (Evangelinos et al., 2018; Kent & Zunker, 2017).

## Hypotheses Development

### Team Management Diversity and Labour Practices, Decent Work, and Human Rights Performance and Reporting

As stated earlier, the proportion of women in top and middle management positions has increased greatly over the last decade (UN, 2020; Calabrese et al., 2018; Furlotti et al., 2019; Birindelli et al., 2019) positively affecting their firm's CSR engagement (Larrieta-Rubín de Celis et al., 2015; McGuinness et al., 2016; Zou et al., 2018). Several theories have been used to explain the relationship between gender diversity and CSR. According to gender identity theory (McCabe et al., 2006; Spence, 1993), female managers have several characteristics, such as risk-aversion, altruism, and ethics of care (Chen et al., 2016; Zou et al., 2018), which affect their working attitudes and decision-making. Women managers are thus expected to behave according to female self-schema (Furlotti et al., 2019), and therefore be more sensitive to social concerns (Calabrese et al., 2018) and more prone to promoting initiatives aimed at reducing discrimination and improving working conditions in their companies (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2015; Jamali et al., 2010; Lu et al., 2020; McGuinness et al., 2016). In this sense, gender diversity is associated with better relations with employees (Larrieta-Rubín de Celis et al., 2015).

Gender stereotypes also affect a manager's leadership style so that female and male managers tend to assume different leadership styles (Bass et al., 1996; Reuvers et al., 2008). According to the typology of leadership styles proposed by Bass (1985, 1999), two leadership styles can be identified: transactional and transformational. The former refers to "the exchange relationship between the leader and follower to meet their own interests", while transformational leaders are able to move followers "beyond their immediate self-interests" motivating them to reach broader organizational and societal objectives (Bass, 1999, pp. 10–11). In line with their gender-relevant values, women managers would tend to adopt a transformational leadership style, whereas

their male counterparts would exhibit a transactional leadership style (Bass et al., 1996; Reuvers et al., 2008; Stempel et al., 2015). However, empirical evidence shows that both leadership styles are similarly adopted by women and men managers and their use is contingent upon the composition of management teams (homogeneous versus mixed teams) and the work context (Martinez-Leon et al., 2020). In this sense, given that the implementation of initiatives in supporting labour and human rights that go beyond legal requirements implies "transformative changes" in organizational management, it would be favoured by transformational leadership and, consequently, based on the homophily perspective, a higher presence of women in management teams would promote the introduction of such changes, leading to enhanced social performance.

Drawing on upper echelons theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), other studies posit a key role of gender diversity with regard to CSR (Malik et al., 2020; Orazalin & Baydauletov, 2020). In this respect, several studies show a positive association between having a female CEO and a firm's CSR performance (Birindelli et al., 2019; Borghesi et al., 2014; Manner, 2010). Similarly, the positive effect of board diversity on CSR performance has been documented (Bear et al., 2010; Hyun et al., 2016; Orazalin & Baydauletov, 2020). Some researchers have found that a critical mass of women on board positions is necessary in order for women directors to exert a significant influence on corporate strategies and policies (Amorelli & García-Sánchez, 2020; Birindelli et al., 2019; Fernández-Feijoo et al., 2014; Furlotti et al., 2019; Kramer et al., 2006; Wei et al., 2017). Other authors argue that the effects of the presence of women in a company's top management positions on corporate strategies are stronger when other women also occupy other leading posts in the same company, given that, from a homophily perspective, "gender-based affinities" among them favour their empowerment and, hence, their ability to influence corporate strategies (Berger et al., 2013; Birindelli et al., 2019). In this regard, some studies have showed that the combination of female CEOs and female directors is positively associated with environmental performance (Birindelli et al., 2019; Glass et al., 2016) and equity (Berger et al., 2013; Glass & Cook, 2017).

Few studies have focused on the effect that the presence of women in middle management positions has on CSR (Larrieta-Rubín de Celis et al., 2015), despite the fact that they tend to be in charge of "soft managerial areas" such as human resources or CSR (Calabrese et al., 2018). Indeed, as noted by Calabrese et al. (2018) more than 50% of CSR departments are run by women, which makes CSR "a gender-virtuous field of management" (p. 459), although this was not found to be positively related to CSR performance. In contrast, Larrieta-Rubín de Celis et al. (2015) document the opposite finding. Specifically, they showed

that having a woman in charge of the CSR department is positively associated with the development of gender equality initiatives related to local communities, human rights, business partners, suppliers, and consumers. They found that the presence of women in other middle management positions is positively related to the development of gender equality practices both internally (i.e. initiatives related to human resource management) and externally (i.e. initiatives related to local communities, human rights, business partners, suppliers, and customers). Soares et al. (2011) demonstrate that women in middle management positions have a positive effect on CSR.

These findings can be explained from the perspective of resource dependency theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). According to this view, female managers provide firms with human and relational capital (Orazalin & Baydauletov, 2020) which brings corporate management a different viewpoint (Calabrese et al., 2018) and favours creativity and innovation (Furlotti et al., 2019; Larrieta-Rubín de Celis et al., 2015). Given their different psychological features, attitudes, backgrounds and leadership styles, female managers bring valuable knowledge and skills to their companies, such as altruism (Adams & Funk, 2012; Zou et al., 2018), a sense of ethics (Chen et al., 2016), empathy (Larrieta-Rubín de Celis et al., 2015), and stakeholder orientation (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2015), which have a positive effect on a firm's CSR orientation (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2015; Calabrese et al., 2018; Larrieta-Rubín de Celis et al., 2015; McGuinness et al., 2016; Soares et al., 2011; Zou et al., 2018).

This positive effect of gender diversity on CSR also extends to CSR reporting. Several studies have found that the presence of women in top management positions is positively associated with CSR reporting (Fernández-Feijoo et al., 2014; Frías-Aceituno et al., 2013; García-Sánchez et al., 2020b). According to stakeholder theory, corporate transparency is beneficial in demonstrating accountability to stakeholders (Alawi & Belfaqih, 2019; Bowrin, 2018; Malik et al., 2020), and thus gaining their support (Kansal & Joshi, 2015; Rahman et al., 2018), and, consequently, female managers, who are more stakeholder-focused (Adams & Funk, 2012; Alonso-Almeida et al., 2015; Glass et al., 2016; Larrieta-Rubín de Celis et al., 2015; Orazalin & Baydauletov, 2020; Williams, 2003), would be beneficial to a company.

Based on the above arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1** More diverse management teams favour greater corporate responsibility in relation to labour practices, decent work, and human rights.

This hypothesis can be split into two sub-hypotheses:

**H1a** There is a positive association between gender diversity in management teams and a firm's performance in relation to labour practices, decent work, and human rights.

**H1b** There is a positive association between gender diversity in management teams and the disclosure of labour practices, decent work, and human rights.

## The Mediating Role of LA&HR Performance

According to proprietary costs theory, there is a positive association between CSR performance and CSR reporting, so that better CSR performance leads firms to disclose more CSR information in order to make stakeholders aware of that performance, and thus obtain competitive advantages, whereas firms with a low CSR performance avoid disclosing CSR information to hide their situation (Prado-Lorenzo & García-Sánchez, 2010). Prior empirical evidence, however, has mainly focused on the environmental dimension of CSR, and is not conclusive, providing mixed results (García-Sánchez et al., 2020a).

In line with the arguments discussed in the previous section, and according to proprietary costs theory, firms with more diverse management teams will have better LA&HR performance, and will disclose more complete and comparable information in this regard (i.e., LA&HR indicators), which allows them to obtain competitive advantage (Evangelinos et al., 2018; Hess, 2019; O'Neill et al., 2016; Rahman et al., 2018). For example, O'Neill et al. (2016) notes opportunities to attract investors interested in social performance, and Evangelinos et al. (2018) stresses the benefits associated with improved image and reputation, and increased customer loyalty. Tsalis et al. (2018) found that the quality of a company's OHS disclosures is higher when such a company has obtained OHSAS 18,001 certification.

Conversely, firms run by less diverse management teams will have lower LA&HR performance, and will consequently, avoid disclosing LA&HR information, which may be detrimental. Cahaya and Hervina (2019) contend that a low level of disclosure about human rights issues may indicate that companies are hiding negative acts such as child labour or compulsory labour, and Tsalis et al. (2018) note attempts to avoid disclosing information related to work accidents in order to protect corporate reputation.

We propose that LA&HR performance will act as a mediating factor by improving corporate transparency on labour practices, decent work, and human rights. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2** Greater LA&HR performance acts as a mediating factor that improves corporate transparency on labour practices, decent work, and human rights.

Figure 1 depicts the hypothesized research model.

## Methodology

### Population and Sample

In order to test the working hypotheses, a target population was used consisting of large listed multinational enterprises whose corporate information is available in the Thompson Reuters EIKON database. Companies that disclose non-financial information on the social and environmental impact of their activity in a sustainability report, integrated report or any other format statement, were identified. After eliminating the companies that did not present the necessary

and Japan. Companies operating in the industrial, financial and real estate sectors stand out. These sample characteristics are similar to those used in previous studies, and are a consequence of the sample selection being based on criteria representative of the international business world (García-Sánchez et al., 2020b).

### Empirical Models and Variables

The models set out in Equations [1] and [2] were designed in order to test the proposed hypotheses. Equation [1] is designed to identify the effect of the independent variable, female managers (Female\_Managers), on the mediating variable, LA&HR performance (LA&HR\_Perf), including the necessary control variables to avoid biased results.

$$\{LA\&HR\_Perf\}_{i,t} = \varphi_0 + \varphi_1 Female\_Managers_{i,t} + \varphi_2 Size_{i,t} + \varphi_3 ROA_{i,t} + \varphi_4 Leverage_{i,t} + \varphi_5 Internacio_{i,t} + \varphi_6 Cash_{i,t} + \varphi_7 DLoss_{i,t} + \varphi_8 Accruals_{i,t} + \varphi_9 Cov\_Ana_{i,t} + \varphi_{10} B\_Indep_{i,t} + \varphi_{11} CSR\_Comm_{i,t} + \varphi_{12} B\_Women_{i,t} + \varphi_{13} DLawsuits_{i,t} + \varphi_{14} NCSRPI_i + \varphi_{15} ICSRPI_i + \varphi_{16} Country_i + \varphi_{17} Industry_i + \varphi_{18} Year_t + \epsilon_{it} + \eta_i \tag{1}$$

information available to estimate the proposed empirical models, the final sample of analysis was an unbalanced data panel consisting of 5693 observations from 1243 companies for the period 2013–2017. The period selected was

Equation [2] analyses the effect of the independent and mediating variables on corporate disclosure practices related to labour practices and decent work and human rights (LA&HR\_Discl).

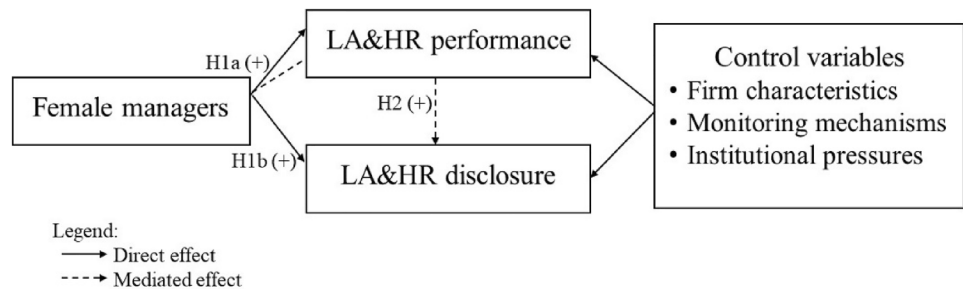
$$LA\&HR\_Discl_{i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Female\_Managers_{i,t} + \beta_2 LA\&HR\_Perf_{i,t} + \beta_3 Size_{i,t} + \beta_4 ROA_{i,t} + \beta_5 Leverage_{i,t} + \beta_6 Internacio_{i,t} + \beta_7 Cash_{i,t} + \beta_8 DLoss_{i,t} + \beta_9 Accruals_{i,t} + \beta_{10} Cov\_Ana_{i,t} + \beta_{11} B\_Indep_{i,t} + \beta_{12} CSR\_Comm_{i,t} + \beta_{13} B\_Women_{i,t} + \beta_{14} DLawsuits_{i,t} + \beta_{15} NCSRPI_i + \beta_{16} ICSRPI_i + \beta_{17} Country_i + \beta_{18} Industry_i + \beta_{19} Year_t + \epsilon_{it} + \eta_i \tag{2}$$

determined according to the availability of a company's corporate reports on their website, which was necessary to determine, through content analysis, the information disclosed in relation to LA&HR.

Table 1 depicts the frequencies that determine the composition of the sample by sector, country and time period. Although distribution over time is fairly homogeneous, there is a geographical bias in favour of countries such as the USA

LA&HR\_Discl is a dummy variable that takes the value 1 if the company discloses all the indicators of labour practices and decent work (LA) and human rights (HR) proposed by the GRI + UN + SDG Compass, taking value 0 otherwise. This approach has been used in studies such as that of García-Sánchez et al. (2020b) for the disclosure of information on gender issues. Panel A in Table 2 gathers all the indicators on labour practices and decent work

Fig. 1 Research model



**Table 1** Sample description

## Panel A. Geographic description

Country	%
AUSTRALIA	3.57
AUSTRIA	0.21
BELGIUM	0.74
BRAZIL	2.39
CANADA	4.11
CHILE	0.40
CHINA	3.32
COLOMBIA	0.40
CZECH REPUBLIC	0.11
DENMARK	1.26
FINLAND	1.67
FRANCE	4.02
GERMANY	3.30
GREECE	0.46
HONG KONG	2.32
HUNGARY	0.16
INDIA	2.02
INDONESIA	0.63
IRELAND	0.54
ISRAEL	0.33
ITALY	1.42
JAPAN	13.84
ERSEY	0.05
KOREA (SOUTH)	3.67
KUWAIT	0.07
LUXEMBURG	0.32
MALAYSIA	1.16
MEXICO	0.88
NETHERLANDS	1.00
NEW ZEALAND	0.21
ORWAY	0.83
PHILIPPINES	0.63
POLAND	0.49
PORTUGAL	0.33
QATAR	0.11
RUSSIA	1.09
SAUDI ARABIA	0.07
SINGAPORE	0.74
SOUTH AFRICA	6.73
SPAIN	1.62
SWEDEN	1.86
SWITZERLAND	2.18
TAIWAN	5.23
THAILAND	1.09
TURKEY	0.51
UNITED KINGDOM	9.13
UNITED STATES	12.77

**Table 1** (continued)

Panel B. Sector description	
Sector	%
Oil and Gas	5.39
Basic Materials	13.02
Industry	21.52
Consumer goods	13
Health	4.06
Consumer services	10.05
Telecommunications	2.97
Public services	5.66
Financial and Real State	19.09
Technology	5.25
Panel C. Time description	
Year	%
2013	18.62
2014	20.97
2015	20.17
2016	21.83
2017	18.41

(LA) and human rights (HR) considered in the definition of the dependent variable.

In order to obtain complementary results, following Parsa et al. (2018), we will use an ordinal variable, LA&HR\_OrdDiscl, which takes values between 0 and 2, identifying whether the company does not disclose the indicators of labour practices and decent work (LA) and human rights (HR) proposed by the GRI + UN + SDG Compass (0), does so partially (1), or discloses all the recommended indicators (2).

LA&HR\_Perf, is a score that takes values between 0 and 16, computed from the sum of the items related to labour practices and decent work (LA) and human rights (HR) described in Panel B in Table 2. These items were selected considering both the usual CSR practices developed by the companies, as well as those related to the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda that they have begun to implement. The score created through the sum of different items is free of bias and is as effective as other calculation approaches (Amor-Esteban et al., 2020).

The independent variable proposed to test hypotheses H1 and H2, Female\_Managers, represents the diversity of the management team through the percentage of female managers.

To avoid biased results, and following the previous literature (e.g. Amorelli & García-Sánchez, 2020, 2021; Birindelli et al., 2019; Bowrin, 2018; Cahaya & Hervina, 2019; Frías-Aceituno et al., 2013; García-Sánchez et al.,

2020a, 2020b; McGuinness et al., 2016; Orazalin & Baydauletov, 2020; Wei et al., 2017), we included several control variables that represent firm-specific characteristics, monitoring mechanisms, and institutional pressures that may affect the development of CSR practices. Panel C in Table 2 shows the description of such variables (measurement and expected sign) as well as references to some studies that have employed them. We also control for the country, industry and time effect using the Country, Industry and Year variables.

Given the censored nature of the dependent variable LA&HR\_Perf in Equation [1], a Tobit regression for panel data will be used. Given the dichotomous nature of LA&HR\_Discl, a logistic regression for panel data will be used, but in the case of the variable LA&HR\_OrdDiscl an ordinal regression is the most correct approximation. In both,  $\eta$  controls for unobservable heterogeneity and  $\epsilon$  denotes the disturbance. The explanatory variables are lagged by one period to correct for potential causality problems.

## Results

### Descriptives and Correlations

Table 3 summarises the descriptive statistics for the variables proposed for the empirical analysis. Twenty-seven percent of the companies report all the LA&HR indicators

**Table 2** Description of main variables analysis

Panel A. Indicators LA&HR\_Disc1

- LA1. Total number and rates of new employee hires and employee turnover by age group, gender and region
- LA2. Benefits provided to full-time employees that are not provided to temporary or part-time employees
- LA3. Return to work and retention rates after parental leave, by gender
- LA4. Minimum notice periods regarding operational changes
- LA5. Representation on health and safety committees
- LA6. Injuries, occupational diseases, and work-related fatalities
- LA7. Workers with high incidence or high risk of diseases related to their occupation
- LA8. Health and safety topics covered in formal agreements with trade unions
- LA9. Average hours of training per employee by gender and by employee category
- LA10. Programs for skills management and lifelong learning that support the continued employability of employees and assist them in managing career endings
- LA11. Percentage of employees receiving a regular performance appraisal and career development review, by gender and by employee category
- LA12. Composition of governance bodies and breakdown of employees per employee category according to gender, age group, minority group membership, and other indicators of diversity
- LA13. Ratio of basic salary and remuneration of women to men by employee category, by significant locations of operation
- LA14. Percentage of new suppliers that were screened using labor practices criteria
- LA15. Significant actual and potential negative impacts for labor practices in the supply chain and actions taken
- LA16. Number of grievances about labour practices filed, addressed, and resolved through formal grievance mechanisms
- HR3. Total number of incidents of discrimination and action taken
- HR4. Operations and suppliers identified in which the right to exercise freedom of association and collective bargaining may be violated or at significant risk, and measures taken to support these rights
- HR5. Operations and suppliers identified as having significant risk for incidents of child labor, and measures taken to contribute to the effective abolition of child labor
- HR6. Operations and suppliers at significant risk for incidents of forced or compulsory labor, and measures to contribute to the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labor
- HR7. Percentage of security personnel trained in the organization's human rights policies or procedures that are relevant to operations
- HR8. Total number of Incidents of violations involving rights of indigenous peoples and actions taken
- HR12. Number of grievances about human rights impacts filed, addressed, and resolved

Panel B. Items of LA&HR\_Perf

- KPIs1. The company claims to provide flexible working hours or programs that promote a work–life balance
- KPIs2. The company has a diversity and equal opportunity policy
- KPIs3. The company has a policy for maintaining a well-balanced membership of the board
- KPIs4. The company claims to favor promotion from within
- KPIs5. The company has a policy to support the skills training or career development of its employees
- KPIs6. The company has a competitive employee benefits policy or ensure good employee relations within its supply chain and the company has a policy for maintaining long-term employment growth and stability
- KPIs7. The company has a policy to improve employee health & safety within the company and its supply chain
- KPIs8. The company reports on policies or programs on HIV/AIDS for the workplace or beyond
- KPIs9. The company claims to provide its employees with a pension fund, health care, or other insurance
- KPIs10. The company claims to provide a bonus plan to most employees
- KPIs11. The company claims to provide daycare services for its employees
- KPIs12. The company reports or show to use human rights criteria in the selection or monitoring process of its suppliers or sourcing partners
- KPIs13. The company has a policy to guarantee the freedom of association universally applied independent of local laws and the company has a policy for the exclusion of child, forced, or compulsory labor
- KPIs14. The company shows to be ready to end a partnership with a sourcing partner if human rights criteria are not met
- KPIs15. The company has a policy to respect business ethics –ethics code, codes of conducts, compliance policies, etc.—or has signed the UN Global Compact or does it follow the OECD guidelines
- KPIs16. The company has a commitment towards being a good citizen or endorse the Global Sullivan Principles

**Table 2** (continued)

Panel C. Independent and control variables			
Variable	Definition	Studies	Expected sign
Female_Managers	Percentage of female managers	Dadanlar and Abebe (2020); Larrieta-Rubin de Celis et al. (2015); Soares et al. (2011)	+
Size	Natural logarithm of total assets	Amorelli and García-Sánchez (2020); Bowrin (2018); Cahaya and Hervina (2019); McGuinness et al. (2016); Orazalin and Baydauletov (2020)	+
ROA	Return-on-assets ratio	Amorelli and García-Sánchez (2020); García-Sánchez et al. (2020a); Orazalin and Baydauletov (2020); Parra-Domínguez et al. (2021)	+
Leverage	Proportion of debt with respect to total assets	Amorelli and García-Sánchez (2020); García-Sánchez et al. (2020a); McGuinness et al. (2016); Orazalin and Baydauletov (2020)	–
Internacio	Percentage of investments in assets made in other countries	Cahaya et al. (2017)	+
Cash	Liquid money and other means that can be readily converted into money	Aibar-Guzmán and Somohano-Rodríguez (2021)	+
DLoss	Dummy that takes the value 1 if the company has obtained losses in the financial year, and 0 otherwise	García-Sánchez and García-Meca (2018)	–
Accruals	Total accruals scaled by cash flow from operations	García-Sánchez et al. (2021)	+
Cov_Ana	The number of analysts following the company	Amorelli and García-Sánchez (2020), García-Sánchez et al., (2019, 2020c); Parra-Domínguez et al. (2021)	+
CSR_Comm	Dummy that takes the value 1 if there is a CSR committee on the board of directors, and 0 otherwise	Amorelli and García-Sánchez (2020); Birindelli et al. (2019); García-Sánchez et al. (2020b)	+
B_Indep	Percentage of independent directors on the board	Bowrin (2018); Frías-Aceituno et al. (2013); Furlotti et al. (2019); García-Sánchez et al. (2020a)	+
B_Women	Percentage of female directors on the board	Ardito et al. (2021); Birindelli et al. (2019); Frías-Aceituno et al. (2013); García-Sánchez et al., (2020a, 2020b); Williams (2003)	+
DLawsuits	Dummy that takes the value 1 if the company operates in lawsuit-prone industries, and 0 otherwise	Dadanlar and Abebe (2020); Wang et al. (2018)	+
NCSRPI	Level of orientation towards the stakeholders of the firm's country of origin (Amor-Esteban et al., 2019)	Cubilla-Montilla et al. (2020); García-Sánchez et al. (2020c); Parra-Domínguez et al. (2021)	
ICSRPI	Aggregate indicator of institutional pressures at the sectoral level (Amor-Esteban et al., 2018)	Cubilla-Montilla et al. (2020); García-Sánchez et al. (2020c); Parra-Domínguez et al. (2021)	

recommended by GRI + UN + SDG Compass, and 36% partially incorporate the required content. These findings confirm previous empirical evidence regarding the low level of disclosure on these issues (Alawi & Belfaqih, 2019; Bowrin, 2018; Cahaya & Hervina, 2019; Cahaya et al., 2017; Cubilla-Montilla et al., 2019; Tsalis et al., 2018).

The companies also have unbalanced management teams in terms of gender, since, on average, only 24% of their members are women. There is significant variability, with a standard deviation of 15%. Again, this result is in line with prior evidence. Specifically, according to the UN (2020, p. 37), “in 2019, women represented 39 per cent of the world’s workers and half of the world’s working-age population, but only 28 per cent of managerial positions”.

Finally, with regard to business practices in the areas of LA&HR, they reach a value of 9.28 out of 16 points on average.

Table 4 summarises the bivariate correlations, and the coefficients and their significance demonstrate that there are no multicollinearity problems between the variables considered in the empirical analysis.

## Main Findings

Table 5 shows the results obtained by estimating Equations [1] and [2], designed to empirically test the proposed hypotheses. In Panel A, the results of the Tobit estimations of Equation [1] show, in the first and the second columns, the

**Table 3** Descriptive statistics

Variable	%	
LA&HR Full Disclosure	0.27	
LA&HR Partial Disclosure	0.36	
DLoss	0.06	
CSR_Comm	0.66	
Dlawsuits	0.15	
Variable	Mean	Std. Dev
Female_Managers	0.24	0.15
LA&HR_Perf	9.28	2.77
Size	17.99	2.80
ROA	5.12	8.43
Leverage	0.25	0.17
Internaci	0.19	0.24
Cash	11.80	0.66
Accruals	10.83	0.48
Cov_Ana	16.11	9.55
B_Indep	0.46	0.30
B_Women	0.14	0.12
NCSRPI	1.65	8.79
ICSRPI	0.57	3.03

regression coefficients and the elasticities of the independent and control variables.

In relation to Hypothesis H1a, in which we posited that the presence of female managers is positively related to a higher commitment to better LA&HR, we observe that the variable Female\_Managers has a statistically significant positive effect ( $\varphi_1 = 0.0290$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This result is robust to resampling and the consideration of a lagged endogenous regression model, and results are reflected in the second and third columns in Table 5. We used the bootstrapping technique to obtain bias-corrected confidence intervals (Ender, 2011), identifying a higher standard error in the coefficient which, however, does not lead to changes in the level of significance of the variable, confirming the robustness of the results achieved in the initial estimation of Equation [1]. The inclusion of the lag of the dependent variable reduces the effect of the Female\_Managers variable ( $\varphi_1 = 0.0122$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), maintaining its significance in the same terms.

The effect of the presence of women in the management team indicates that companies are more responsible towards their employees and respect human rights to a greater extent, results that allow us to accept Hypothesis H1a. These results are in line with those obtained by Jamali et al. (2010), Marquis and Lee (2011), Soares et al. (2011), Larrieta-Rubín de Celis et al. (2015), and McWilliams et al. (2006).

The results for Equation [2], estimated by logit regression, are presented in the first column of Panel B. As can be

seen, the effect of the LA&HR\_Perf variable ( $\beta_2 = 0.278$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) is positive and statistically significant. The effect of the Female\_Managers variable ( $\beta_1 = 0.00917$ ,  $p > 0.10$ ), although positive, is not significant. Accordingly, Hypothesis H1b cannot be accepted. This is in line with results obtained by Furlotti et al. (2019), who found that the fact that a woman occupies the position of CEO is not significantly associated with the disclosure of gender policies by Italian firms, and Bowrin (2018), who found no statistically significant association between board diversity and the extent of human resource disclosure in a sample of firms from Caribbean and Southern Africa countries. Nevertheless, this finding contradicts those obtained by Furlotti et al. (2019) and García-Sánchez et al. (2020b) regarding the positive influence of female directors on the voluntary reporting of gender issues. These results are robust to sample change specifications using bootstrapping techniques and the inclusion of lagged endogenous, as reflected in the second and the third columns of Panel B in Table 5.

Although the direct effect of the Female\_Managers variable on LA&HR\_Discl is not statistically significant (which does not allow us to accept H1b), this should not be considered a necessary condition to establish a mediating relationship (Hayes, 2013). In Panel C in Table 5 the result of the indirect relationship between the presence of female managers and the disclosure of all GRI+UN+SDG Compass indicators on LA&HR is statistically significant ( $\zeta = 0.010$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and this effect takes place through the

**Table 4** Bivariate correlations (\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.1$ )

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	LA&HR_Discl	1							
2	Fema_Mang	-0.02	1						
3	LA&HR_Perf	0.39***	0.13***	1					
4	Size	0.13***	-0.15***	-0.09***	1				
5	ROA	0.01	0.14***	0.06***	-0.11***	1			
6	Leverage	0.05***	-0.03	-0.03***	0.02	-0.15***	1		
7	Internacio	0.08***	-0.03	0.15***	-0.22***	-0.07***	-0.02	1	
8	Cash	0.08***	-0.15***	0.01	0.41***	-0.01	-0.02	-0.09***	1
9	DLoss	0.00	-0.07***	-0.01	-0.04***	-0.30***	0.13***	0.11***	-0.01
10	Accruals	0.00	-0.02	0.00	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02	0.00	0.00
11	Cov_Ana	0.25***	0.07***	0.37***	0.22***	0.05***	-0.05***	0.07***	0.13***
12	B_Indep	-0.03***	0.12***	0.18***	-0.19***	0.05***	0.05***	0.07***	-0.03***
13	CSR_Comm	0.21***	0.02	0.35***	0.03***	0.00	0.03**	0.02	0.00
14	B_Women	0.04***	0.18***	0.27***	-0.22***	0.07***	-0.01	0.03**	-0.10***
15	DLawsuits	0.07***	-0.03*	0.11***	-0.03**	0.05***	-0.08***	0.07***	-0.01
16	NCSRPI	0.04***	0.05***	0.10***	-0.33***	0.00	-0.10***	0.25***	-0.09***
17	ICSRPI	0.06***	-0.48***	0.04***	-0.09***	-0.10***	0.11***	0.17***	0.01
		9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
9	DLoss	1							
10	Accruals	0.00	1						
11	Cov_Ana	0.01	-0.02*	1					
12	B_Indep	0.01	-0.02	0.13***	1				
13	CSR_Comm	0.01	0.02	0.06***	0.04***	1			
14	B_Women	-0.04***	0.00	0.05***	0.32***	0.13***	1		
15	DLawsuits	0.04***	-0.03**	0.16***	0.08***	0.04***	0.00	1	
16	NCSRPI	0.03**	0.02	-0.17***	-0.02	0.05***	0.15***	-0.02*	1
17	ICSRPI	0.10***	0.01	-0.05***	-0.01	0.01	-0.08***	0.05***	-0.07***

implementation of practices related to these issues -variable LA&HR\_Perf-. The confirmation of the mediating effect therefore allows us to confirm Hypothesis H2. This is in line with results obtained by García-Sánchez et al. (2020a), who found that CSR performance plays a mediating role in the relationship between a CEO's ability and corporate transparency.

Companies that operate in sectors which are more committed to CSR, and are followed by a greater number of analysts, have the best performance in terms of LA&HR, behaviour that can also be extended to corporate transparency. These effects are also observed for companies that have a higher presence of women on the board of directors and have higher investments in other countries as a result of their internationalisation strategy, although the effect is not robust to different specifications of Equation [1] as reflected in Columns 2 and 3 of Panel A.

## Complementary Analyses

In order to show complementary results for those companies that do not disclose all of the LA&HR indicators proposed by GRI+UN+SDG Compass but do so partially, we will again estimate Equation [2], replacing the dichotomous variable LA&HR\_Discl by the ordinal variable LA&HR\_OrdDiscl, which takes three values in order to differentiate between companies that do not disclose any of these indicators (value 0) and those that do so partially (Value 1). This classification also identifies companies that disclose all LA&HR indicators (Value 2).

The results obtained for the estimation of an ordinal regression for panel data allow us to observe that this distinction implies changes in the direct effect that the presence of female managers has on corporate transparency in terms of LA&HR. The Female\_Managers variable ( $\beta_1 = 0.0142$ ,

**Table 5** Basic and robust models of analysis

Panel A. Mediator effect (\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ )

	LA&HR_Perf		
	Equ. [1]	Coeff. Bootstrap	Robust
	Coeff. (Std.error)	Coeff. (Std.error)	Coeff. (Std.error)
LA&HR_Perf <sub>t-1</sub>			0.770*** (0.0191)
Fema_Manag	0.0290*** (0.00737)	0.0290*** (0.0119)	0.0122*** (0.00399)
Size	0.00268 (0.0508)	0.0027 (0.0679)	0.0478* (0.0261)
ROA	0.0178 (0.0110)	0.0178 (0.0183)	0.00678 (0.00732)
Leverage	-0.000127 (0.00528)	-0.0001 (0.0084)	-0.000759 (0.00284)
Internacio	0.00663* (0.00340)	0.0066 (0.0044)	0.00215 (0.00204)
Cash	5.68e-10 (3.93e-10)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (2.04e-10)
DLoss	0.142 (0.306)	0.1422 (0.5022)	-0.0607 (0.253)
Accruals	-0.000344 (0.00122)	-0.0003 (0.0022)	0.000683 (0.00121)
Cov_Ana	0.0839*** (0.0110)	0.0839*** (0.0168)	0.0182*** (0.00621)
B_Indep	-0.00387 (0.00243)	-0.0039 (0.0031)	-0.000981 (0.00172)
CSR_Comm	0.186 (0.140)	0.1863 (0.2253)	-0.603*** (0.111)
B_Women	0.0210*** (0.00602)	0.0210** (0.0094)	-0.00437 (0.00452)
DLawsuits	0.367 (0.272)	0.3674 (0.2746)	0.126 (0.129)
NCSRPI	-0.00393 (0.0119)	-0.0039 (0.0167)	0.000714 (0.00612)
ICSRPI	0.228*** (0.0471)	0.2280*** (0.0566)	0.0556** (0.0234)
Industry, country and year controlled			
Log Likelihood	-27.992.429	-27.992.429	-25.078.263
p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000

Panel B. Direct Effect (\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ )

	LA&HR_Discl		
	Equ. [2]	Coeff. Bootstrap	Robust
	Coeff. (Std.error)	Coeff. (Std.error)	Coeff. (Std.error)
LA&HR_Discl <sub>t-1</sub>			2.620*** (0.164)
Fema_Manag	0.00917 (0.0110)	0.0092 (0.0134)	0.00435 (0.00644)
LA&HR_Perf	0.278***	0.2782***	0.0973***

Table 5 (continued)

Panel B. Direct Effect (\*\*\*)  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ )

	LA&HR_Discl		
	Equ. [2]	Coeff. Bootstrap	Robust
	Coeff. (Std.error)	Coeff. (Std.error)	Coeff. (Std.error)
Size	(0.0518) 0.184** (0.0748)	(0.0757) 0.1838 (0.1248)	(0.0329) 0.0649 (0.0434)
ROA	0.0176 (0.0191)	0.0176 (0.0186)	0.00997 (0.0124)
Leverage	0.0212*** (0.00792)	0.0212** (0.0097)	0.0104** (0.00459)
Internacio	0.00396 (0.00532)	0.004 (0.007)	-0.000762 (0.00328)
Cash	1.75e-10 (5.43e-10)	0.000 (0.000)	1.29e-10 (3.14e-10)
DLoss	0.287 (0.535)	0.2869 (0.8759)	0.237 (0.391)
Accruals	-0.00125 (0.00265)	-0.0012 (0.005)	-0.000320 (0.00209)
Cov_Ana	0.0628*** (0.0171)	0.0628*** (0.02)	0.0301*** (0.0101)
B_Indep	-0.00591 (0.00412)	-0.0059 (0.0054)	-0.00269 (0.00277)
CSR_Comm	-0.0865 (0.272)	-0.0865 (0.3668)	-0.247 (0.187)
B_Women	-0.00806 (0.0107)	-0.0081 (0.0172)	-0.0104 (0.00744)
DLawsuits	0.473 (0.358)	0.4726 (0.4514)	0.146 (0.199)
NCSRPI	0.0428** (0.0167)	0.0428 (0.0326)	0.0191** (0.00967)
ICSRPI	0.152** (0.0669)	0.1523* (0.0812)	0.0366 (0.0379)
Industry, country and year controlled			
Log Likelihood	-6.156.365	-6.516.365	-56.226.907
p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000

Panel C. Direct and Indirect effects (\*\*\*)  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ )

Efecto	Variable		Effect
Direct Female_Manag	LA&HR_Perf	$\varphi_1$	0.0290***
Direct Female_Manag	LA&HR_Discl	$\beta_1$	0.00917
Mediated or indirect Female_Manag	LA&HR_Discl	$\delta = \beta_2 * \varphi_1$	0.010***
Corrected LA&HR_Perf	LA&HR_Discl	$\beta_2 - \delta$	0.268***

**Table 6** Complementary models results (\*\*\*)  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ )

Panel A. Results Eq. 2 for ordinal dependent variable

	Equ. [2]—LA&HR_OrdDiscl		
	Coeff (Std.error)	Coeff (Std.error)	Coeff (Std.error)
Fema_Manag	0.0178*** (0.00678)		0.0142** (0.00648)
LA&HR_Perf		0.175*** (0.0170)	0.144*** (0.0281)
Size	0.190*** (0.0472)	0.108*** (0.0266)	0.190*** (0.0449)
ROA	0.0143 (0.0105)	0.00478 (0.00604)	0.0119 (0.0101)
Leverage	0.0130*** (0.00482)	0.00909*** (0.00329)	0.0127*** (0.00461)
Internacio	0.000501 (0.00323)	0.00229 (0.00227)	-0.000270 (0.00311)
Cash	1.10e-10 (3.63e-10)	1.27e-10 (8.98e-11)	0.000 (3.48e-10)
DLoss	0.198 (0.290)	0.0733 (0.169)	0.181 (0.284)
Accruals	-0.00105 (0.00133)	1.75e-05 (6.15e-05)	-0.00111 (0.00134)
Cov_Ana	0.0438*** (0.0102)	0.0266*** (0.00663)	0.0301*** (0.0100)
B_Indep	-0.00119 (0.00229)	-0.00253 (0.00156)	-0.00126 (0.00222)
CSR_Comm	0.247* (0.132)	-0.0229 (0.0898)	-0.00519 (0.139)
B_Women	0.00155 (0.00567)	-0.00122 (0.00397)	-0.00479 (0.00566)
DLawsuits	0.288 (0.243)	0.249 (0.165)	0.246 (0.229)
NCSRPI	0.0101 (0.0109)	0.00627 (0.00718)	0.0112 (0.0103)
ICSRPI	0.159*** (0.0429)	0.0811*** (0.0274)	0.125*** (0.0409)
Industry, country and year controlled			
Log Likelihood	-1133.9549	-2134.587	-1121.1006
p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000

Panel B. Direct and indirect effects (\*\*\*)  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ )

Efect	Variable		Effect
Direct Female_Manag	LA&HR_Perf	$\varphi_1$	0.0290***
Total Female_Manag	LA&HR_OrdDiscl	$\beta_1 + \delta$	0.0147**
Direct Female_Manag	LA&HR_OrdDiscl	$\beta_1$	0.0142**
Mediated or indirect Female_Manag	LA&HR_OrdDiscl	$= \beta_2 * \varphi_1$	0.0005**
Corrected LA&HR_Perf	LA&HR_OrdDiscl	$\beta_2 - \delta$	0.1435***

$p < 0.05$ ) has a positive, statistically significant effect on the LA&HR\_OrdDiscl variable. This is in addition to the effect of the variable LA&HR\_Perf ( $\beta_2 = 0.144$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

A comparison of direct and indirect effects shown in Panel B in Table 6 with those in Panel C in Table 5 suggests that considering companies that make a partial disclosure of LA&HR indicators in the analysis allows us to determine that the role played by women managers is not limited to improving corporate commitment to more sustainable labour practices and human rights, but also acts as a very important driver in the early stages of adopting international standards of disclosure of information on these issues. However, the decision to disclose all the indicators proposed by the international organisations (i.e., GRI, UN, Global Compact) is a consequence of greater corporate responsibility and the desire to provide comparable information that favours comparison of the most sustainable companies in order to obtain economic benefits derived from such a commitment.

The results seem to suggest that women's decisions may be less oriented towards the pursuit of economic benefits as the main objective (Ibrahim & Angelidis, 1994), facilitating the continuous implementation of sustainability and corporate transparency strategies. Conversely, the findings seem to indicate that male managers may be more associated with radical changes with the final objective of creating economic value.

## Conclusions

The increasing proportion of women in top and middle management positions has encouraged research interest in the effect that the presence of women in management positions has on corporate strategies and decision-making. From a sample of 1243 international firms for the period 2013–2017 (corresponding to an unbalanced data panel of 5693 observations), this paper analysed the effect that a greater presence of women in management teams has on business behaviour in relation to labour and human rights, and the mediating role that a greater performance in regard to these issues has on corporate transparency.

The results show that gender diversity in management teams is positively associated with performance in relation to labour and human rights, and that such a performance acts as a mediating factor by fostering a higher disclosure of information regarding these issues. Specifically, we found that a higher proportion of women in management teams have a positive effect on the development of initiatives aimed at enhancing their company's working conditions, improving the employees' knowledge and skills, and promoting the protection of human rights. Our findings thus support the role of women in management teams as a driver of LA&HR performance and reporting and, to the extent that LA&HR constitute a major element of a company's CSR agenda

(Evangelinos et al., 2018; Koskela, 2014; Tsalis et al., 2018), gender diversity in management teams can be considered a key driver of CSR. Our findings extend the understanding of the role that gender diversity may play in improving a company's CSR performance and stakeholder orientation, and bring a fresh perspective to CSR research, which has mainly been focused on environmental concerns, and has overlooked the social aspects of CSR (Monteiro et al., 2021).

This study's findings have both theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical viewpoint, this study highlights the role that women managers play in improving their company's working conditions, improving employee knowledge and skills, and promoting the protection of human rights. We demonstrate that gender diversity in management teams has a direct positive impact on social performance, and indirectly favours the disclosure of more complete and comparable social information. The findings seem to indicate that the presence of women in management teams acts as a driving force for enhanced social responsibility.

As regards practical implications, given that companies face important challenges related to labour and human rights (Hess, 2019), and that LA&HR disclosures lack consistency and comparability (Kent Zunker, 2013; Dixon et al., 2019; Cahaya & Hervina, 2019; Tsalis et al., 2018), this study's findings suggest that companies, stakeholders, and society as a whole, would benefit from the greater presence of women in management teams. Those companies truly interested in complying with their social responsibilities should therefore incorporate a higher rate of women in management teams. Similarly, investors may interpret gender diversity in management teams as an "indicator" of a company's social commitment and stakeholder orientation. For policymakers, our findings highlight the importance of fostering women's participation in management teams in order to advance towards a fairer society.

Finally, it should be noted that the results and conclusions of this study are subject to limitations. Prior research (e.g., García-Sánchez et al., 2020a) has showed that managers' demographic and personality attributes may affect their decisions regarding CSR investments and reporting, however we have not analysed the influence of the aspects that may be associated with a female manager's personal values with regard to CSR (e.g., age, background, political ideology). Moreover, although a broad set of control variables was included into the models, other potential control variables that may affect the development of CSR practices by firms (e.g., ownership structure, industry membership) were omitted. We did not analyse whether and how the influence of women managers is moderated by the presence of women in other leading positions (e.g., CEO and board directors) or if there is a need for a critical mass of women managers. Finally, although the findings provide an international

perspective, it should be noticed that our sample shows a bias towards the USA and Japan.

Future studies could complete the analysis by including a broader array of control variables, and analysing how the profiles of female managers affect their role in relation to LA&HR performance and reporting. In line with the homophily perspective, future studies could also analyse the effect of the “interaction” between women in different management positions (Birindelli et al., 2019; Glass & Cook, 2017) as well as the extent to which the analysed relationships are conditioned by the existence of a critical mass (Amorelli & García-Sánchez, 2020; Furlotti et al., 2019). Moreover, future research could explore the leadership style adopted by women managers with regard to CSR. Lastly, future studies could consider both types of indicators separately (labour practices and decent work -LA- and human rights -HR), and analyse the effect of gender diversity on each category.

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## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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