

Leadership of Woman President in the Philippine State Universities and Colleges

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Abstract

Leadership is the action of the leading group of people and an organization. This phenomenological study aimed to describe and narrate the leadership journey of a woman president of the State Universities and Colleges in the Philippines. An in-depth interview was conducted to describe and narrate the leadership journey and experiences of the women university president using narrative data analysis to create a story of the leadership journey of the women president. The results of the study revealed that the woman presidents were destined to be a leader because their leadership starts from the grassroots to the top management position. As president, their position is unpredicted but destined. They win the trust and respect of their subordinates being transformative leaders. They encountered challenges in institutional status, people, and infrastructure. Strong personalities and determination as transparent leaders made them win the trust and respect of their people. They promote equality and equity, and their decision is collaborative. At the end of their storyline, they want to be remembered as simple and humble presidents that make sounds leadership and significant changes for the people and the university. A new model of women's leadership was developed out of their storyline. This model describes them as women who provide Love, Equity, Action, Direction, Empowerment, and Reform because they were indeed woman leaders.

Keywords: Woman leadership, State Universities, and Colleges, Phenomenological Study, Narrative Analysis, Philippines

Introduction

Women have increasingly moved toward greater gender equality at home and in the workplace. Yet, women are still underrepresented in leadership roles, especially within universities of higher education. This claim drives the researcher to study the leadership of women presidents in the State Universities and Colleges in the Philippines context. Several studies have identified the aptitude, and professional and administrative effectiveness of women, which may be more important than men. However, due to the unequal representation of men and women in administrative positions in the university, women's professional and leadership status still suffers from large disparities (Al-Jaradat, M. K. M. (2014).). For instance, the awareness that women are less likely to succeed in leadership can

undermine women's performance in the leadership-related task such as decision-making and motivating people. (Tellhed & Bjorkland, 2011)

In examining differences between how men and women lead, it is often less what they do than in the different experiences they face when they lead. The idea of what is leadership is a part of this phenomenon. Leadership is often easy to identify in practice, but difficult to define. Given the complex nature of leadership, there is no concrete and widely accepted definition of leadership that may never be found (Day & Antonakis, 2012). Leadership can emerge in an instant, as in an emergency, or it can be developed over time.

Leadership can emerge in a variety of situations, and it can be adaptable and responsive to change over time (Keohane, 2016). It is a broad concept with numerous theories and leadership styles (Lahti, Elsi 2013).

Women's leadership is just one branch of this concept and can also be defined in different ways. Some understand women's leadership as the fact that they can be and are leaders. New interests focused on women and leadership emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Judy Rosener argued in the Harvard Business Review in 1990 that women leaders in second-wave feminism no longer needed to emulate the "command and control" model of organizational leadership. Rosener argues that these women are "transformational" in their leadership nature, socialization, or gender role (Ibid, 120).

Similarly, there are various types of leaders. A leader can be defined by the position, personality or charisma, moral authority, power, or intellectual contribution a leader provides. Since leadership comprises three aspects; people, goals, and influence. Leadership is people-driven and the ability to inspire people helps to achieve a set of goals of an organization (Daft & Kendrick & Vershinina 2010,565). Leaders must act on their vision because their actions, not their words, are used to judge them (Hannagan, 2008, 40). Different leadership styles result from different ways of motivating people, different types of goals, and the nature of the organization (Hannagan 2008,40).

Furthermore, when people are asked about leadership, they frequently overpower the performance of toughness or greatness. In practice, leadership is frequently easy to identify, but it is difficult to define (Day & Antonakis, 2012). Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the status of women leaders in the workplace. There is some evidence to suggest that women's workplace status has improved in recent years (Carli, 2010). Even though the number of women in leadership positions and in management has steadily increased, progress is slow (Barsh & Yel, 2012). The issue for women leaders arises when gender expectations do not align with general public expectations for leadership behavior, resulting in negative judgments of women as leaders (Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie, Richard, 2008). However, some scholars believe that women in general are better suited to leading a complex organization (Ritt, 2004). Women's leadership is increasingly being sought to manage and address the world's growing socio-political challenges. It responds to the long-standing preference for more masculine leadership styles, which have frequently resulted in less-than-desirable outcomes. There have been some discussions about women's ability to lead in some cases. Individual characteristics reinforce a heroic leadership model and divert attention away from the growing realization that leadership is a process that becomes more effective when a diverse mix of skills and perspectives are represented and capable of working well together. According to some issues, there are fewer women at the top because fewer women wanted to be there to succeed in higher leadership.

Higher education has a significant impact on the quality of leadership in today's society. Today's rapidly changing and diverse global society reflects in our institutions of higher education, posing challenges to how we prepare and educate students today to be tomorrow's leaders. A fundamental shift is taking place in higher education, necessitating more and different types of leadership at all levels.

Women have made great strides in higher education, and they now outnumber men in degree attainment. However, women continue to lag in top academic leadership; they are underrepresented in the ranks of tenured faculty and full professors. This underrepresentation as tenured limits their opportunities to advance to higher levels of leadership in universities (Hill, C., Miller, K., Benson, K., & Handley, G., 2016).

Women continue to be concentrated in mid-level administrative positions, low-level positions, or positions on the outskirts of promotion to central administration (Amey & Eddy, 2002).

According to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2018, only 34 of the top 200 institutions are currently led by women. This is a decrease from last year when female leaders were found at 36 of the top universities. However, the current number one institution (the University of Oxford) is led by political scientist Louise Richardson, and half of the prestigious Ivy League institutions in the United States have female leaders, including Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, Cornell University, and Brown University. In this context of women's leadership, the researcher focused on women who have successfully reached president positions in their universities, to understand their leadership experiences and challenges on their journey as women university president.

This study focused on a woman university president's relevant leadership experiences, career in non-presidential positions, desire to become president, preparation, the challenges they have faced, promotion of equality, the use of power, and the legacy they wish to leave in the university

Objectives of the Study

This study was conducted to describe and narrate the leadership journey/experiences of the women president in the State Universities and Colleges (SUC) in the Philippines.

Methodology

The phenomenological research method was employed to describe the leadership journey and experiences of the women university president. The participants were women university presidents. Two of them are currently holding presidential positions and one was retired. To understand the essence of the leadership journey and experiences of the women presidents, a phenomenological research approach was the best method for this type of study (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

According to Creswell (2013), the Phenomenological approach to qualitative research focuses on the commonality of the lived experiences within a particular group. It permits the researcher to describe the phenomenon from the perspective and viewpoint of the participant (Moustakas, 1994).

This study used narrative data analysis of the qualitative study. Narrative analysis about telling the stories of participants' leadership experiences. According to Patton (2012), the last part of the phenomenological study is writing the storyline out of the transcribed result of an in-depth interview.

The researcher took into consideration the ethical aspects of conducting research such as courtesy, honesty, trust, and confidentiality. Courtesy is a basic guideline in conducting interviews. Honesty is to listen to the participants' sharing and bias is not manifest in treating the participant's responses.

Ethical research practice is a dynamic process and should be monitored throughout data gathering, analysis, and reporting (Smith et al., 2009). The consent of the participants on the research documents and others was reviewed by the participants. They were also allowed to ask a question before the conduct of research, they can also request to skip any questions that they do not wish to answer. Pseudonyms were required to give to the participants to protect their identities. The utmost confidentiality of the research findings must observe. Integrity is also a practice in conducting this study as the researcher makes sure

that the objective of the study will be answered with quality. In ethical consideration, the principle of beneficence which connotes the act of kindness, charity, and a state of humane must also observe due to the moral obligation of the researcher that the participants would prevent possible harm in this study

Results and Discussion

Narrative of the Participants

1. Why do women become presidents of universities? How do they describe their experiences as a women president in terms of leadership?

All of the women described their journey as somewhat the same. They began as a successful faculty member who was chosen for administrative positions fairly early in their career. They became dean, director, chairperson, and vice president before they become a university president. In those positions, they discovered how to manage people and practice leadership. They described themselves early as their careers in no-presidential positions a very hard matter who enjoys acting both inside and outside the box; content as a faculty member; content as a second person; they were organized and able to articulate aspirations for the larger group. But, all of them didn't see themselves as president. They said the presidency is never in their dreams, never in their plan, and never in their life interests. In short, the presidency is unknown, it is unpredicted but destined.

All of the women presidents said that they have no preparation, for being a president, but they took advantage of professional development opportunities and educational advancement. They are an active member of different organizations and they have attended seminars and training related to leadership.

One president said that preparations are having trust in God's Providence because God prepared everything. All of these women stated that they received encouraging words and messages as they began their presidencies, but they have known that part of their journey is some expectations about women presidents.

Their leadership ability to collaborate and engage people is a common expectation of the people in the university. Trust is the way to meet expectations. It is obvious that any responsible leader, regardless of gender, will face some difficult decisions. Another significant issue in women's leadership was the challenges that they encountered as women presidents, these created a serious problem for their presidencies. Common challenges to all women presidents are institutional status, university performance, CHED requirements, SUC leveling, and board examination rating, according to them as a president they need to be efficient and effective in their preparation to achieve Institutional Recognition. They said that those requirements are important to meet their ambitions to become a prestigious university and be known as a university that provides quality and excellent education. The universities under the leadership of the women president participants are all ISO certified and have programs with the Center of Excellence. Further balance in health and family was also a challenge for them. They experience less time for health and quality time for their family, due to the biggest responsibility as president. They sometimes experience health abuse and sacrifice of the family. Improvement of school facilities and the promotion of vibrant school culture were as well challenge for the president, they need to balance the need of the university and make changes to the status quo.

The one-woman president said that the basic war in leadership is how you manage the people because as president, she needs to take care of the entire system, and it is not easy for a big university. For her, teamwork is the most significant key to managing the people in the university. Teamwork because as

a president, she provided direction and leadership that could inspire the people; but for her experience, she believes in the saying that "no one can please everybody."

Part of the leadership challenge for the women president is how to solve the huge problem that they encountered because there are people who questioned some policies, and there are politicians who support their demands. Common to their experiences, to resolve the huge problem as president, they need to present remedies to the problem and develop sound policies to mitigate issues and concerns. A study on personality and the determination as women to solve the huge problem proved that they deserved to be women presidents that could face the different trials and pressure in their leadership.

Women presidents in this study promote equality, one of the women presidents says that "It is not equality but equity." In her university, she promotes equity, not equality because the core values of the university are coined from the word equity. For her, you need to give more to someone who needs more. One of the remarkable answers of one of the women presidents when asked about equality in choosing people in her administration; said "R.A. 6764 and their university code states that giving designation is a prerogative of the president, and for her, she chose people to work with her based on their attitudes and values and those who support her vision for the university. "How can you designate somebody that does not like you?" she uttered.

All of the women presidents describe their strong listening abilities. If the president's ability to listen improves her ability to make an informed decision, she improves her ability to serve the institution and develop a good rapport with their subordinates. The three women presidents in this study describe their relationship with their subordinates as a "mother" because in their university they were family. They all said that they are always open to them. They gave them the right and opportunity to voice out their opinion and listen to them.

Another notable leadership experience of the women president is their journey on the use of their power as president, and the gist of the interview with the women presidents; they describe their power as linkage and partnership. One of the women presidents said that inherent in your position is your power and authority, but she never uses her power, one best example that she shared is when her vice president suspended a faculty member, the faculty asked for help to cancel the given suspension of the vice president, but I never do it. I never override the power of the vice president. Power demands changes and implies movement which is the idea of the women president. Women presidents as a leader are all transformative. They describe themselves as collaborative leaders; they demand transformative changes and were never on the status quo. As a president, they wanted to leave a legacy for the university. They wanted to be remembered as the presidents who make changes happen, presidents who lead by example and respect each other's culture and beliefs. A leader that developed the next line of leaders that will take care of the future of the university and a leader who is open-minded and listens to the needs of every people in the university because they have imbued value and love for work.

2. Thematic Reflections on stories of the Woman University Presidents

Thematic analysis refers to the process of recovering structures of meanings that are embodied and dramatized in human experience represented in a text, the study had developed themes. The themes that transpire from the participants' stories were pieced together to form an inclusive picture of their mutual leadership experiences as woman presidents of State Universities and Colleges.

Theme 1: Destined to be a leader

Common to all women university presidents were designated in different positions before they became university presidents. Their leadership is manifested from the grassroots to the top position,

accompanied by their designated position and professional growth and academic advancement because all of them have excellent educational qualifications. Their achievement professional and academic dictated that they were destined to be a women leader.

"...I started as a plain accountant clerk and through the years, I was designated as director, dean, chairperson, vice president, and dean of the graduate school." ^{Hillary}

"...Before I became president, I became the first woman dean of the college of agriculture then become the vice president for academic affairs." ^{Miriam}

"...I only have one employer, I was assigned as a substitute junior instructor and became a director of research for 7 years before I became president." ^{Corazon}

Increasing knowledge, and skill, in education through access to training was won one of the most frequently cited strategies for building leadership skills. (Hopkins, O'neil & Bilimonia, 2006).

Theme 2: Unpredicted, but destined

All of the woman presidents' answers revealed that they have no interest in the bigger picture of being a university president. The presidency is never in line with their interest. The presidency in their situation is unplanned, it occurs in situations dictated by the unknown.

" No, never in my dreams, never in my plans. I never considered myself being a president." ^{Hillary}

"...I am not interested to become president. In fact, I never imagine myself as president." ^{Miriam}

"...Honestly, even you open my heart right now; I really did not in for that, because even my career was not really planned." ^{Corazon}

Leadership willingness is strongly associated with interest and personal development opportunities, current leadership experience, and previous leadership training. (White, et al, 2016)

Theme 3: Professional Growth and Educational Advancement

In recalling about preparation to become a university president, women university presidents recalled that they have no preparation for it. But unconsciously the women university president prepared themselves because they observed the practical professional growth and educational advancement.

"...I don't think I had a preparation because even in my experience as a plain faculty member, I've been active in my professional organization. I'm an active member of a different professional organization." ^{Hillary}

"...I don't have preparation. Maybe those leadership training and seminars that I had attended must be considered as preparation." ^{Miriam}

“...I did not aim to become president. But you know my having as research director for 7 years is an advantage and preparation.” Corazon

Professional and academic degrees are required to advance to a position of high leadership. This is why academic credentials are valued by both employees and policymakers. Training and acquiring leadership skills can also help you develop your leadership abilities (Hardjono, T., & de Klein, P. 2004)

Theme 4: Institutional recognition, school culture, and infrastructure

A leader's abilities and abilities are constantly tested by the demands of leadership. These challenges are a stepping stone to the next level. To put yourself to the test and improve in the process, as well as to demonstrate that you can accomplish something that appears difficult, if not impossible. (Leadership-Idea). As women presidents, challenges are a part of their position. Some of the reflected answers of the women president, they have encountered a challenge in the preparation of university advancement. The requirements to uplift the sustenance of university status and performance are an utmost challenge for them. Efficient and effective preparations are important to maintain the status and good performance of the university.

“...As president, you're focused on the students, faculty members, non-teaching position, human resources plus the requirements of CHEd, SUC Levelling, Accreditation, and board passing rate, those are requirements to survive as the prestigious university.” Hillary

The interaction between people in an organization determines whether a culture is strong or weak. There is a lot of overlapping and cohesive interaction in a strong culture, so knowledge about the organization's unique characteristics – and what it takes to thrive in it – is widely spread. (Schultz, 2006).

One time, I talked to my supply officer because somebody was asking for my bank account number. He said he will deposit money in my account when I asked why, he said: "Ma'am, that's your share on the approved project” Mirriam

Leadership occurs throughout the organization and not in terms of hierarchical position. President was more likely to convince good leadership within the university (Benzimon, 1989).

As a president, you are dealing with people, you provide them direction, provide leadership and inspire them to strive for excellence.” Corazon

Infrastructures are a common challenge encountered by women presidents.

“...As a president, I need to prioritize the facilities and environment of the university. In my term, the university has some new building construction.” Mirriam

“...First, I really need to improve the working environment of the faculty, renovations of the faculty room, student CR and cleanliness are some of my priorities. We are really doing anything on infrastructure.” Corazon

Women face challenges in finding leadership positions as society reinforces strict expectations of what women can and should do with their time and energy (Hoyt, 2010).

Theme 5: A Catalyst of change

A leadership catalyst is someone who can influence others to commit to achieving a common goal or objective and—at the same time—improve the ability of those others to do the same with others. (Zachery, K.M., 2011).

Common to the answer of the women presidents that people under their leadership have no expectation, they never experience that people have something to expect of them as women president, but on the highlight of the interview, they said that common expectations for them are to bring changes in the university through their leadership. As a woman president, they need to make changing patterns of thoughts and reasoning for the promotion of an ideal, just, and humane system.

Modesty aside, I'm a person that may bring out changes. I always shake the status quo.” Hillary

“...I have to set direction.” Corazon

“...I consult people, I consider their opinion before I decide.” Mirriam

Leadership can emerge in a variety of situations, and it can be adaptable and responsive to change over time (Keohane, 2012).

Theme 6: Strong personality and determination

Powerful women dare to take a risk, learn from failure, deal with criticism, and fight for what they believe in, never giving up no matter how difficult the challenge. Women from the YEC.

In handling a huge leadership of the women president, they used their strong personalities and determination; they face the problem and prove that women leaders are people-oriented and task-oriented. They were a symbol of power and influence; they can resolve the problem and tried to settle the conflict.

“...When you are in a position, especially president, there is a group of people who wants to put you down. One time, there is a group of people and students rallied outside the gate of the university, it is about the issue of the university's transnational education program. I talked to them, I faced them, I told them to let us sit and settle the problem, let us compromise and I will listen.” Hillary

“...Politics and politicians are some causes of a huge problem at the university. Politicians are trying to manipulate some of the problems of the university, but as a woman president, I think it is an advantage because they will be careful about how to talk with me. After all, I am promoting the black-and-white policy. I lead by example and do what is right.” Corazon

Theme 7: Fairness and equity

Women president described their way of promoting equality in terms of fairness and equity. They said as a leader, they must be fair and just in allowing their people.

Giving everyone what they need to succeed is what equity is all about. Equality means treating everyone equally. Equality seeks to promote fairness, but it can only succeed if everyone starts from the same place and requires the same assistance (Amy Sun, 2014 - Every Feminism Magazine). This theme is based on the investigation of Taxman F. S. J. A. Gordon and J. A. Gordon, (2000). A positive work environment was more likely to occur in their study when people had a moderate to a high sense of equity, which influences factors such as acceptance of change, a strong commitment to the organization, and better understanding and agreement with organizational goals.

"...Leadership promotes equality, not equity, the core values of our university were coined on the word equity. It is giving more to someone who needs more. Through the years of my experience in the university, we choose to promote equity, not equality." Hillary

"...Equality in the university is giving people the opportunity to talk and join in the discussion. As a president, I always see to it that everything is fair and just, equal treatment, no favoritism." Mirriam

"...Everybody must be treated equally especially the students. We practice gender balance. When I choose my team, I did not consider whether they are male or female. What is important is their values, commitment, and willingness to serve." Corazon

Theme 8: Building a relationship with subordinates

Common to the answer of the women president, when it comes to maintaining rapport to their subordinates, they said that they treat them as members of their family. They always listen and give them appreciation for every remarkable performance that they have done.

Building a relationship with subordinates may seem hazardous, but developing the right rapport could benefit the organization. Solidifying working relationships by sharing respect and appreciation for the good things done by subordinates is a measure of a good relationship that exists in the organization (Monica Patrick, 2018; Small Business Chronicles).

"...I treated them as a family and my colleagues. I appreciate them, I rewarded them for even the small things they have done. After every big event in the university like accreditation, ISO certification, graduation, I always give them a free day, team building and bonding." Hillary

"...I always listen to them; my office is always open to them. I listen to their problems and gave them advice. I accept their suggestions. As a president, I see to it that the praise committee is active to give recognition and awards for the faculty and even in the non-teaching positions." Mirriam

"We are family in the university; we always work for the common good. We develop a friendship. In our university, they called me Mama." Corazon

Theme 9: Leadership is empowered, and power is transparent

This theme emerged based on the answer of the women president. The condensed meaning of their answer explained that power demands change and implies action. The use of authority to improve corrective measures in an organization must be transparent.

Empowerment is a strategy for involving the team in decision-making, giving them a participatory role that capitalizes on their expertise and judgment, and increasing their sense of both individual work and commitment to the organization (Huntoon, D. 2012).

"...The answer is clear, no one leads an organization or a university to success on their own. It is the collective excellence of many to build success." Hillary

"...I always tell them that all of us lead based on the considerable work of everyone on the team who has labored contributed and commitment to the same common goals." Mirriam

"...I am transformative in a way that I transform the university in a manner that is consultative at the same time. I listen to them, I gave them the right and authority to contribute to decision making, share their opinions, and work collaboratively." Corazon

Most studies on women's leadership contend that women usually use leadership style practices or approaches consistent with the transformational leadership approach (Northouse, 2010).

Theme 10: Sound leadership and significant changes

According to Peter of the Leadership Guy Magazine, as a leader, you have the opportunity to directly and positively influence not only the success of your organization but also the people who worked with you. One of the characteristics of a successful leader is that they are genuinely concerned about the growth and success of their people.

Women presidents in this study expressed sound leadership and significant changes in their leadership. They made some significant changes as they shared during the interview. As a woman president, they wanted to leave a legacy to the university, the legacy that they could remember as a woman university president.

"...I believe that the most important legacy of my leadership is I served the people with all humility and integrity for my eight years as president. I made big changes in the university not only on its physical aspect as well as the behavior and attitude of people in my administration. I treated them equally we developed teamwork and we work with the same common goals. Leadership is not like a bed of roses, it is not easy, sometimes as a leader, we get so bogged down in the day, today management is associated with the rules we take those bits practically impossible for us to implement the vision we would like. But what is important for me is people in the university will remember me as a transformative leader that led them to achieve the vision of the university." Mirriam

Develop the next line of leaders that would care for the future of the university. It's not the building; it's not about the improvement. It's really about the people. At the end of the day, you are proud because they become successful; you see them build good leadership and management even without you; because you make changes." Hillary

"...I want to be remembered as a president who makes change happen, a leader who leads by example, respects each other culture and beliefs and serves with a common good. The president has to make sounds and significant changes especially by providing good facilities and providing directions in the university to become a premier research university in Asia. I want to be remembered as a single, humble president who provided transformational leadership so that the university will soar high in research instruction, extension, and production." Corazon

"...I feel proud, I feel happy, I feel fortunate that even we are women, we excel at university president as far as male or even surpass the performance of the male president." Corazon

Conclusions

Leadership success has been found to have a positive impact on the success of the university where the women presidents in this study have had the opportunity to put their leadership knowledge and skills to use.

As they related the story of their journey as women presidents, different themes emerged to describe the journey. All of them commence from being amateur and innocent in leadership, but they blossomed into a great leader because they walk on the steps of the ladder to the top. Educational advancement and professional growth made them prepared for the journey of leadership. They faced many challenges to prove that they can move from one level of leadership to the next, they all managed those challenges because they developed teamwork among their subordinates. They became a catalyst of change to achieve the set goal and direction of the university. Their strong personality determination made them powerful women to handle a huge problems in their university. Fairness and equity are visible in their leadership; they are not authoritarian but transformational which in this type of leadership is identified to a woman. All of them are the transformational leader because they aspire to lead through their vision. They are open to suggestions and opinions because they believe that at the end of the day, they will have common goals that everyone shared and articulated. Their leadership journey as a women presidents is remarkable because all of them created sound leadership and significant changes not only for the people but for the university as well. They develop and create a new model of leadership in their own way.

This model describes them as women who provide *Love, Equity, Action, Direction, Empowerment, and Reform* because they were indeed woman leaders. In the end, they wanted to be remembered as leaders imbued with values and dignity, a leader that motivates and inspired people to soar high to attain the common goal of becoming a premier university in the country. With this conclusion in the leadership journey and experiences of these women, the president proved that in higher education leadership; a woman is equal to a man.

Recommendations

This study focused on the leadership experiences of women university presidents in their journey as women leaders. Using a phenomenological approach and a narrative inquiry design this research showed the participants' experiences. Although the women president provided extensive experience in leadership some recommendations were given:

1. Professional growth and academic advancement must be considered by those who wanted to become a university president.
2. Level three (3) university presidents must be considered the preparation of institutional requirements to attain the next level of institution status.
3. A positive work atmosphere and good relationships with the subordinate are recommended to achieve the success of the university.
4. More studies in women's leadership and other areas are recommended.

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