

Challenges Met by Women Administrators in Public and Private Agencies

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the challenges met by women administrators in public and private agencies. Specifically, it sought to: (1) determine the profile of the respondents that posed challenges in their workplace; (2) find out the work-related challenges met by women administrators on (a) promotion issues, (b) sexual and mental harassment, (c) family care issues; and (d) community involvement. A purposive sampling method was applied involving floating questionnaires and conducting face-to-face interviews to collect data. The respondents consisted of 124 public and 124 private agencies and women administrators in the 5th district of Pangasinan province, Philippines. Findings showed that most of the respondents belong to early adulthood, are married, with lesser children, and all hold a bachelor's degree, are now in their corresponding positions, and continue to improve and develop their expertise by attending seminars and training for best job performance. The majority got the promotion on a merit basis, with equal time, and performed work as much as their colleagues. Most did not experience sexual and mental harassment issues such as sharing sexually inappropriate images or videos, anecdotes, gestures, lewd jokes, and touches. Most of them are not granted workplace privileges such as benefits for full maternity leave, and special leave, also some turned down promotions, are not permitted an official time for travel or pass slip when a medical check-up is scheduled during working days, and to reduce their work hours to care children/family members and to attend to their activities. Most are productive by dedicating their time to their jobs, depriving them of the opportunities to engage in various community activities such as job-related events, membership to registered organizations, livelihood, and non-government programs, and clean-up drives.

Keywords: promotion, sexual-mental harassment, family-care, community involvements

INTRODUCTION

The role of women has changed dramatically in the past years. Women now seek and obtain the highest leadership roles in education, professions, and business. Global companies are making some progress in getting more women into senior leadership. The report shows that the countries leading the way across the globe are France, Iceland, and Norway, with more than 30-40% female representation on company boards [4]. Yet, discrimination faces female leaders, many still struggle to keep leadership positions. That is why, it is necessary to determine the challenges met by women administrators in the workplace to have a solution to these complications without fear of oppression and exploitation.

The Philippines enacted the Magna Carta of Women in 2010, “a comprehensive women’s human rights law that seeks to eliminate discrimination through the recognition, protection, fulfillment, and promotion of the rights of Filipino women.

The act pledges “to promote all human rights and fundamental freedoms of women, especially marginalized women, in the economic, social, political, and cultural fields without distinction or discrimination on account of class, age, sex, gender, language, ethnicity, religion, ideology, disability, education, and status” [13]. In addition, the Philippines as a United Nations member have committed to ensure that the rights and privileges afforded to all citizens are the same through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and

the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In a survey of businesses across different countries, the Philippines ranks among the highest in the proportion of senior management team roles held by women at 40 percent. But the evidence of equity in the promotion process ends at supporting roles at the senior management level (e.g., a human resource officer and chief financial officer). Unfortunately, the proportion drops at the level of corporate executives and memberships on boards. Citing World Bank data, that between 2009 to 2015, the proportion of companies with females as top managers dropped from 32.7 to 29.9 percent [11]. Current statistics reveal that Filipino women remain greatly underrepresented in the highest positions, both in the Philippine government and private agencies on female representation in key leadership positions.

In the recent policy note titled “Filipino Women in Leadership: Government and Industry,” the Philippine Institute for Development Studies [25] presented the following to improve female representation both in government and industry: a) Set a target of 40 percent representation across high-level government offices, b) Place more incentive schemes which will encourage women to run for office, as well as make workplaces less hostile, c) For appointees in certain government posts, adopt “soft quota and specific affirmative-action-type policies” which will ensure that a fair proportion of these appointees are women, d) Create more in-depth research on the constraints women face in their respective workplaces, particularly issues surrounding culture, childcare, family-related benefits, and gender stereotypes, which will allow businesses to decide what kinds of strategic interventions they need to do, e) policies concerning equity in hiring, retention, and promotion should be reviewed, taking into consideration women, especially working moms.

With these issues at hand, this study is imperative. The following parameters are considered that provide information on the challenges met by women administrators in public and private agencies which affect and influence their administrative position.

In this study, the socio-demographic profile of the respondents is defined operationally as personal characteristics such as age, civil status, number of children, educational attainment, length of service, and seminars/training attended. The results of previous studies indicate the relationship of individual characteristics to women’s leadership. Previous findings prove that individual characteristics have a relationship with women’s leadership. According to a survey conducted to 128 women in top management positions. A woman must have the appropriate characteristics to be a leader [31]. However, based on other findings age, marital status, and work duration are not related to women’s leadership. This is because the leadership of women in a company does not focus on age, marital status, and work duration. Women whose young age or long-term employment experience still can become a leader if they have the right capabilities for the company [26].

Originally, ageism was understood to be prejudice, stereotypes, and discriminatory behavior targeted at older employees. But with an increasingly diverse and multigenerational workforce, age bias now occurs across the career life cycle — especially for women. As women age, they are often not seen as valuable. Thus, many women suffered from this “never-right” age bias. On the other hand, many younger women also experienced credibility deficit, which occurs when women’s statements and expertise are not believed while middle-aged women between ages 40 and 60 fared no better than their younger or older counterparts. Moreover, the research found no age was the right age to be a woman leader. Any age can be stigmatized by supervisors and colleagues to claim that the woman is not valued or is not fit for a leadership role [12].

Both married and unmarried women leaders can become leaders if they have high leadership qualities. Married women leaders can produce high leadership because of the support of the closest people such as husband and child [31]. A woman who has a high education level will be calculated to occupy a position because in accordance with the requirements determined by the company with the consideration that the higher education she has then, there is a tendency for better knowledge and skills. Other studies have also

revealed similar results. The level of education will make a woman in accordance with the quality standards to become a leader in a company [16].

A research survey also finds that the public is divided over whether a woman with leadership aspirations is better off having children early on in her career (36%) or waiting until she is well established (40%). About one-in-five (22%) say the best option would be to not have children at all [23]. Likewise, several studies provide evidence that women with children are evaluated more negatively as compared to women without children regarding their job commitment, agency, or likeability. Impressions that mothers lack competence can extend from job-related abilities to parental competence and effectiveness [22]. Moreover, motherhood biases can result in decreased interest in hiring, promoting, or educating women who have children [30].

On the other hand, creating a meaningful women's leadership program is beneficial to everyone involving women, and the company itself. Learning events dedicated solely to women allow them to learn and share best practices. Women are facing unique challenges in the workplace, as women are promoted to the upper ranks, they need other skills development. Without such training, an employee who's good at her job can fail in a leadership role. To prepare for those higher levels of leadership there are some basic skills needed, thus, training and seminars attended play a significant role in enhancing administrative functions [2].

On promotion issues, despite women's ongoing empowerment, their presence in the highest leadership and decision-making positions continues to lag. As of 2012, only 52 women have held cabinet-level positions in U.S. history [10] and a petition by the Women's Media Center urged President Barack Obama to appoint the first female chair to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) [8]. Yet, in the Philippines, there are only 11 women in cabinet-level positions from 2010 to 2020 [28]. Regarding the workplace, studies show there's a sexual gap in hiring and promotions to the top jobs in business and government. There is a disconnect, however, between these public perceptions and what people experience in their workplace. Very few say these sexual gaps exist where they work [24].

On the other hand, sexual harassment is prevalent for women supervisors. This pattern holds in the three studied countries – the United States, Japan, and Sweden – where women supervisors are between 30 to 100 percent more likely to have been sexually harassed in the last 12 months. Among supervisors, the risk is larger in lower- and mid-level positions of leadership and when subordinates are mostly male. Findings showed that harassment of women supervisors happens despite their greater likelihood of taking action against the abuser and that supervisors face more professional and social retaliation after their harassment experience. Thus, sexual harassment is a workplace hazard that raises the costs for women to pursue leadership ambitions [14].

On family care issues, according to Professor Jean Lee, the biggest challenge for women in leadership who also want to be parents is the Chinese deep-rooted traditional belief that 'women should take care of the family while men should earn a living for the family' is still perpetuated, even though female participation in China's labor force participation is one of the highest in the world at around 60%. Regardless, the primary responsibility of family and childcare still largely lies on women's shoulders [21].

However, for women leaders' sustainable development and leadership meant, linking these two concepts explicitly to their feelings of empowerment. They felt empowered by their capabilities around education, leadership, value, action, and community service/participation [19]. Yet, recent feminist practices in development projects have noted that a women's role in sustainable development is hindered by a focus on women's work and well-being [17].

This research was conducted to find out the challenges met by women administrators in public and private agencies. Specifically, it sought to: (1) determine the profile of the respondents that posed challenges in their workplace; (2) find out the work-related challenges met by women administrators on (a) promotion issues,

(b) sexual and mental harassment, (c) family care issues; and (d) community involvement.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

A case study design was employed in this research. It is a research design consisting of a detailed investigation, often with empirical material collected over a period from a well-defined case to provide an analysis of the context and processes involved in the phenomenon [29].

Sampling Method

A purposive sampling method was applied in selecting the respondents. The reason for purposive sampling is the better matching of the sample to the aims and objectives of the research, thus improving the rigor of the study and the trustworthiness of the data and results [27].

Respondents

Women administrators were the respondents of this study. Composing the respondents were 124 in public and 124 in private agencies in the 5th district of Pangasinan province, Philippines with a total of 248 women administrators.

Instrument

Interview schedule was the main tool used as a source of data. The instrument was constructed and pre-tested to twenty women administrators who were not included as respondents. After pre-testing the instrument was modified and revised based on the result of the pre-testing activities. The interview schedule was administered personally by the researcher to each of the respondents. The instrument was composed of 2 parts. Part 1 dealt with the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. Part 2 dealt with the work-related challenges met by women administrators with respect to promotional issues, sexual harassment, family care issues, and involvement in the community.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data gathered were tallied, tabulated, and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and tables generated by SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Demographic Profile

Age. Findings of this study revealed that most of the respondents belong to early adulthood, ranging from 26-35 years old and those with more than 50 years old registered the least (Table 1). The result shows that women occupying administrative positions decline as they get older. According to the findings of a study, this may indicate the higher likelihood of women withdrawing from the labor force for marriage, childbirth, and childrearing [9]. In a recent open-ended survey research of 913 women leaders from four United States industries, conceptions of young, middle, and old age are often based on perceptions and vary between workplaces and contexts. Older women in this research expressed that they were deemed unworthy of advancement [12]. On the other hand, the result confirms that there are certain ages where some people are better leaders than others because age does play a role in leadership effectiveness. The youth of today is different from the youth of yesterday. The new generation is made up of open-minded, proactive, and

transparent people who want to make a difference in their lives and in their communities. A younger leader is more likely to be full of energy and enthusiasm than an older leader [15].

Table I. Age of The Women Administrators

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
26-30	69	27.82
31-35	43	17.34
36-40	39	15.73
41-45	37	14.92
46-50	37	14.92
More than 50 years old	23	9.27
Total	248	100.00

Civil Status. The majority (127 or 51.21%) of the women administrators are married while only 5 (2.02%) are widows (Table 2). Findings show that being married is not a hindrance to administrative positions in the workplace. This opposes the result of a previous survey finding that career interruptions related to motherhood may make it harder for women to advance in their careers and compete for top executive jobs [23]. However, relatively few adults in the new survey point to this as a key barrier for women seeking leadership roles [6].

Table 2. Civil Status of The Women Administrators

Civil Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	109	43.95
Married	127	51.21
Widowed	5	2.02
Separated	7	2.82
Total	248	100.00

Number of Children. Most of the women administrators (63 or 25.40%) have two children and 3 (1.21%) respondents have 6 as the highest number of children (Table 3). This shows that most of the respondents prefer to have fewer children for better job progression. Based on the result of a study a woman with leadership aspirations is better off having children until she is well-established with leadership roles [24].

Table 3. Number Of Children of The Women Administrators

Number of Children	Frequency	Percentage
1	41	16.53
2	63	25.40
3	26	10.48
4	4	1.61
5	2	0.81
6	3	1.21
Total	248	100.00

Educational Attainment. The highest are bachelor’s degree graduates (161 or 64.92%) followed by with master units (44 or 17.74%) and master’s degrees (27 or 10.89%). This shows that these women administrators both in public and private agencies are educationally qualified for their position. The result of this study is supported by the findings that the acquisition of a diploma increases the likelihood of a female’s participation in the labor market with the most significant uptake observed for those who have completed a college education [17].

Table 4. Educational Attainment of The Women Administrators

Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage
BS Degree	161	64.92
Masteral Degree	27	10.89
Doctoral Degree	8	3.23
Masteral Units	44	17.74
Doctoral Units	8	3.23
Total	248	100.00

Length of Service. Most of the respondents are administrators for 1-5 years (Table 5). This means that being new to their corresponding administrative positions did not affect their job effectiveness. This corroborates with the result that success in one’s work or in any administrative position may not be directly attributed to the length of time that one indulges in her chosen career [20].

Table 5. Length Of Service of The Women Administrators

Length of Service	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 5 years	116	46.77
6-10 years	50	20.16
11-15 years	23	9.27
16-20 years	18	7.26
21-25 years	13	5.24
26-30 years	12	4.84
More than 30 years	16	6.45
Total	248	100.00

Seminars/Training. As to the seminars/training attended by the respondents, these rank from the highest to the lowest: regional, local, national, provincial, and international seminars/training (Table 6). The result implies that being in an administrative position is a vital factor to their situation to be well-rounded in their field for best job performance. This agrees with the result of a study that the respondents are committed to upgrade their knowledge and skills to enhance further their capabilities as administrators [20]. Many are interested in improving their leadership ability by becoming more knowledgeable in leadership and attending leadership development programs [1]. A recent study on women leadership, on more than 3,000 professional women in the US, identified confidence building and leadership training, along with the ability to network with women leaders, as key elements to expanding women’s leadership in the years ahead [25].

Table 6. Seminars/Trainings Attended by The Women Administrators

Seminars/Trainings		Frequency	Percentage
International	1-3	129	69.35
	4-6	49	26.34
	7-9	5	2.69
	10 and above	3	1.61
National	1-3	136	54.84
	4-6	71	28.63
	7-9	21	8.47
	10 and above	20	8.06
Regional	1-3	17	6.85
	4-6	36	14.52
	7-9	93	37.50
	10 and above	102	41.13
Provincial	1-3	37	14.92
	4-6	42	16.94
	7-9	58	23.39
	10 and above	111	44.76
Local	1-3	5	2.02
	4-6	12	4.84
	7-9	18	7.26
	10 and above	213	85.89

Challenges Met by Women Administrators

Promotion Issues. The respondents mostly got the promotion to the same position with equal time, on a merit basis, they worked and handled jobs as much as to their male counterparts and counted themselves as powerful bosses (Table 7). This is due to some considerations in the promotion process such as employees' experience and capabilities, especially in management positions. According to studies, several factors impact the eligibility of a person for a promotion to the job: years of service, gender, age, education level, job performance, and others [18] and [3].

Table 7. Challenges Met by Women Administrators on Promotion Issues

Promotion Issues	Category	Frequency	Percentage
How long did it take for you to get promoted in comparison to male counterparts of the same position?	Equal time	157	63.31
	Longer	46	18.55
	Earlier	45	18.15
Did you get your promotion on a merit basis?	Yes	177	71.37
	No	24	9.68
	Can not say	47	18.95

Do you work as much as your male counterparts?	Yes	122	49.19
	No	82	33.06
	Can not say	44	17.74
Are you given easier jobs at work as compared to male counterparts?	Yes	45	18.15
	No	168	67.74
	Can not say	35	14.11
How is your attitude as a boss?	Powerful	142	57.26
	Neutral	106	42.74
	Passive	0	0

Sexual and Mental Harassment Issues. Only a few of the male co-workers of the respondents share sexually inappropriate images or videos, tell lewd jokes, and sexual anecdotes, and make inappropriate sexual gestures. Moreover, most of the male co-workers do not stare in a sexually suggestive or offensive manner, or whistling and make sexual comments about appearance, clothing, or body parts as well as they do not touch, pinch, pat, rub, or brush the women administrators (Table 8). This shows that women administrators exude power in their position, thus resulting in a very low incidence of sexual harassment. It is reported in a study that supervisors themselves are responsible for workplace policies to eradicate harassment. Moreover, workplace power insulates women from sexual harassment. This follows from the insight that “not all men” harass women [14].

Table 8. Challenges Met by Women Administrators on Sexual and Mental Harassment Issues

Sexual and Mental Harassment Issues	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Co-workers shares sexually inappropriate images or videos, such as pornography or salacious gifts	Yes	6	2.42
	No	242	97.58
Co-workers tells lewd jokes, or sharing sexual anecdotes, and make inappropriate sexual gestures	Yes	15	6.05
	No	233	93.85
Co-workers stares in a sexually suggestive or offensive manner, or whistling and make sexual comments about appearance, clothing, or body parts	Yes	5	2.02
	No	243	97.98
Co-workers inappropriate touch including pinching, patting, rubbing, or purposefully brushing you up	Yes	10	4.03
	No	238	95.97
Co-workers ask sexual questions, such as inquiries about sexual history or sexual orientation	Yes	1	0.40
	No	247	99.60

Family Care Issues. Most of the respondents are not granted workplace privileges such as special leave for attending children/family members’ activities, benefits for full maternity leave, also some turned down promotions due to family care issues, not permitted/granted an official time for travel or pass slip when medical check-up was scheduled during working days, and not granted a privileged to reduce their work

hours to care for their child or other family members (Table 9). Results show that many of the women administrators encountered challenges with family care issues. This is related to the findings that major constraints encountered by women school administrators originated from family responsibilities particularly the relationship with young children, and family responsibilities [20]. Moreover, women in senior leadership positions persistently struggled to balance their work and family life amidst rooted cultural traditions [7]. Furthermore, women managers perceive that their work interferes strongly and negatively with their family domain and causes difficulties in fulfilling family responsibilities [5].

Table 9. Challenges Met by Women Administrators on Family Care Issues

Family Care Issues	Category	Frequency	Percentage
I was not granted full maternity leave	Yes	8	3.23
	No	240	96.77
I experienced disapproval of using my special leave by higher authorities for attending the activities of my children and/or other family members	Yes	5	2.02
	No	243	97.98
I was granted a privileged to reduce my work hours to care for my child or other family members;	Yes	77	31.05
	No	171	68.95
I turned down a higher position to care for my child or other family members; and	Yes	29	11.69
	No	219	88.31
I was not permitted/granted an official time for travel or pass slip by higher authorities when medical check-up was scheduled during working days.	Yes	30	12.10
	No	218	87.90

Community Involvement. Table 10 shows that many of the respondents are not involved in various community activities such as joining clean-up drives, job-related events, membership to registered organizations, livelihood, and non-government programs. Most of the women administrators did not contribute to community activities due to the inability to balance work-family-community involvement owing to their desire to get promoted on a merit basis. They work hard as noted in Table 2. This corroborates with the statement [5] that a women’s role in sustainable development is hindered by a focus on women’s work and wellbeing.

Table 10. Challenges Met by Women Administrators on Community Involvement

Community Involvement	Category	Frequency	Percentage
I am an active member of a registered organizations in our community	Yes	87	35.08
	No	161	64.92
I involve myself in job-related events in our community	Yes	90	36.29
	No	158	63.71
I participate in any non-government programs in our community	Yes	71	28.63
	No	177	71.37
I participate for livelihood programs in our community	Yes	109	43.95
	No	129	56.05
I experienced joining clean-up drives in our community	Yes	57	22.98
	No	191	77.02

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are drawn based on the findings of the study:

1. Most of the women administrators belong to early adulthood, are married, with lesser children, and all of them hold a bachelor's degree, despite being new on their corresponding positions, they continue to improve and develop their expertise by attending seminars and training for best job performance.
2. With regards to promotion to the same position, the majority got it on a merit basis, with equal time, and performed work as much as their colleagues.
3. Almost all the respondents did not experience sexual and mental harassment issues such as sharing sexually inappropriate images or videos, anecdotes, gestures, lewd jokes, and touches.
4. On family care issues, most of the respondents are not granted workplace privileges such as benefits for full maternity leave, and special leave, also some turned down promotions, not permitted an official time for travel or a pass slip when medical check-up was scheduled during working days, and to reduce their work hours to care children/family members and to attend to their activities.
5. Women administrators dedicated most of their time to their jobs, thus they are deprived of the opportunities to engage in various community activities such as job-related events, membership to registered organizations, livelihood, and non-government programs, and joining clean-up drives.

With these results, formulation of relevant human resource policies specifically on workforce privileges of both public and private agencies must be based on the measures to promote women's leadership stipulated in the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) 2021:

Recruit Women Employees Actively

1. Recruiting women in various leadership positions both in government and industry on the premises of equal opportunity provisions is the first step to helping women rise to important positions. Organizations and sectors hiring people to work for them should issue meaningful equality plans to absorb women members in proportion to men.
2. Organizations should carry out a thorough analysis of their manpower composition and take immediate measures to maintain gender equality. Employee surveys should be used to detect inequalities. Equal opportunity planning should be based on concrete goals and measures as well as the follow-up on their success.
3. Organizations should look for requisite talents in women to occupy any positions. Gender should not be the sole criterion in selecting or rejecting a person while making appointments to decision-making positions. Emphasis should be laid on the skills and abilities the person possesses and if such skills and abilities are in tune with the requirements of the position.
4. Organizations should take an active interest in treating women applicants at par with the men applicants while selecting persons for higher positions. Women should not be ignored only because they are women.

Provide Training Opportunities

1. Providing training for women members is a powerful promoter of women's leadership. Training for gender equality is a transformative process and it aims to provide knowledge, techniques, and tools to develop skills and changes in attitude and behavior.
2. Targeted women's development programs conducted in a women-only environment enable women to increase their ability to navigate their own careers successfully. It also helps them identify and overcome personal and professional challenges and take responsibility for their growth and development.
3. Mentoring programs for new employees are also essential to develop the required skills and knowledge for personal and professional growth.

Encourage Women-friendly Culture

1. *Flexible Work Schedules.* Organizations should have flexible work programs to suit women employees. Flexibility in work schedules such as providing some days of remote work to employees is quite encouraging. In this case, when an employee needs to stay home to spend time with her children or family or sick parents, or engage in other productive activities, the company trusts that they will still get their work done.
2. *Equal Opportunity.* Organizations should make provisions for ensuring an equal status for women employees at par with their male counterparts. There should be no discrimination based on gender in the organization such as employment based on sex, race, sexual harassment and other grounds.
3. *An Effective Career Mapping for Women Employees.* Organizations should have an effective career mapping for employees after they complete their probation period. Development plans, stretch assignments, promotions, and networking opportunities should be equal for men and women who have been rated with similar capabilities.
4. *Provisions for Self-care.* This enables women to find balance and stay healthy. It encourages women to take up higher responsibilities.
5. *Provisions for Family Support.* The organization makes suitable provisions to create a stress-free environment for women. For instance, provisions for a working woman to maintain a good balance between her life at home and workplace like enable women employees with families to retain demanding positions without the worry of leaving their children at home. It reduces the choice women often make between family and work.

Policy Changes to Promote Women Leadership

- High quality and affordable childcare and elder care
- Higher wages and Paid maternity/paternity leave
- A right to request part-time job
- Comprehensive job protection for pregnant workers

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