

RESEARCH REPORT

WOMEN EXECUTIVES IN A UNIVERSITY SETTING: THE CASE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES AT DILIMAN

Victoria A. Bautista

Background

It has been contended that women's involvement in the workplace has been limited to the performance of functions that are extensions of mothering roles. They are often engaged in such activities as teaching, sales and service work (Rodriguez,1990:23). However, in positions entailing major decision-making functions, men figure prominently. Thus, males tend to dominate key executive roles in the workplace.

The case of the University of the Philippines, a primate state university, validates these observations about gender roles. A study conducted on the status of women in the main campus of this university at Diliman in Quezon City (Bautista,1991) in 1990 revealed that male faculty members have occupied key management positions in spite of the fact that female faculty members were more dominant in number. In 1990, 56.8% of the total of 1,367 faculty members were constituted by females. However, only 46% of the total number of its executives were of the same gender.

A more peculiar feature is the tendency of males to occupy higher posts in the hierarchy of executives notwithstanding the fact that female faculty members have a slight edge over the males in terms of level of educational attainment. Female faculty members comprise a total of 72.5% with a master's degree or better. On the other hand, only 67.2% of their male counterparts have achieved this educational standing.

· Top executive posts in 1990 numbering twelve in all were constituted by the President, the Chancellor of the Diliman Campus, the vice presidents and vice chancellors. These were occupied by ten males out of 12.

In the middle level positions, composed mainly of deans or directors of academic programs and research centers, males also figured prominently with 61% of 90 posts held by them. The lowest rung of the hierarchy of executives composed of heads of various programs in each college or research center were mainly dominated by females numbering 54% out of 103.

A question that has persisted since then is: has there been an improvement in the representation of females in executive positions since the Decade of Women was formally launched in the Philippines in 1975? This inspired us to pursue another research endeavor addressing this query. In addition, this research also focuses on the profile of top and middle level female executives in terms of: the gender influence on the length of time needed for the completion of their highest educational attainment and the place where their highest degree was obtained; their involvement in domestic chores; their husband's involvement in domestic chores, if married; their husband's reaction to their involvement in an executive function; gender implication on other professional and civic involvements; advantages or disadvantages of being a female executive; and, reactions of males they interact with in the workplace.

Methodology

Secondary data. These include changes in the distribution of males and females in executive positions which were based on the listing of key executives in the Commencement Exercise Program after every five years, since the Decade of Women commenced in 1975. Thus, such years as 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1990 were reviewed. We have also included here information for the current year, 1992.

The primary focus in the study are the top and middle level executives based or affiliated with the U.P. Diliman Campus. Middle level executives considered are the deans of degree-granting institutions, excluding research centers.

The leadership of four presidents are therefore included in this review. The first is Dr. Onofre Corpuz for the year 1975; Dr. Emmanuel Soriano, 1980; Atty. Edgardo Angara, 1985; and Dr. Jose Abueva, 1990 and 1992. Dr. Corpuz became the thirteenth president of the university and served for the years 1975-1979. Dr. Soriano followed and became the president for the years 1979-1981. Subsequently, Atty. Angara was installed in 1981 until 1987. The current president is Dr. Abueva who is to serve until 1993.

Interviews. In order to determine if gender issues surfaced in the personal life and professional career of executives, interviews were undertaken with female executives totalling thirteen in all. Eight respondents represented the middle level executives. Five constituted the top executives.

Eight out of the ten female middle level executives were chosen on the basis of the criterion that the total number of male faculty in their units do not fall below the 20% mark. This rule was formulated in order to enable the respondents to relate their experiences on male reactions to female executives.

Five of the seven top level executives interviewed were those who were available.

Interviews were pursued in September 1992 and were conducted for a variable length of time ranging from half an hour to one-and-a-half hours.

Highlights of Findings and Analysis

Distribution by Gender in Executive Positions

■ **Top Level Posts.** A review of sex distribution in top level posts in the university revealed the continuing dominance of males almost two decades after the launching of the Decade of Women in 1975. However, it is remarkable that improvements in representation of females may be noted starting in 1985. Three out of 12 top level posts were occupied by females in 1985. A slight decline may be discerned in 1990 during the early years of Pres. Abueva's term when males totalled 10 out of 12 posts. However, female representation has peaked at present with a total of

seven posts being occupied by them or more than half of the total number of posts. (See Table 1.)

From 1975 to 1980, males monopolized the top executive positions. They were six in all in 1975. They were composed of the President, the Chancellor of the Los Baños Campus, the Executive Vice President, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Vice President for Administration and the University Secretary.

In 1980, there was a reduction in size from six to five. Then Pres. Soriano abolished the position of the Executive Vice President and installed the position of the University Registrar. The position of Chancellor of Los Baños was no longer considered a part of the Diliman Campus.

From 1985 until the present, a total of 12 top level posts were installed in line with the decentralization move of the university which began in 1983 (Bauzon,1985). Satellite campuses began to experience greater autonomy in managing its own affairs.

Sex	1975	1980	1985	1990	1992
Males	6	5	8	10	5
Females	0	0	3	2	7
Unoccupied			1		
Total	6	5	12	12	12

Seven executives were then constituted as part of central administration. They are responsible for overseeing the different satellite campuses of the university, including the flagship campus of Diliman. These were the President, Executive Vice President, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Planning

and Finance, Vice President for Public Affairs, University Registrar and University Secretary.

For the flagship campus, five positions constituted top level administration, namely: Chancellor, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Vice Chancellor for Community Affairs, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Vice Chancellor for Administration.

In 1990, the position of Executive Vice President was abolished. But a new one was installed: Vice President for Administration and Development.

■ **Middle Level Posts.** How about indications of improvements in the middle level posts of executives? A cursory glance at Table 2 reveals the continuous dominance of males over time. However, a slight increase in the representation of females may also be noted since 1975.

Table 2.
Sex Distribution in Middle-Level Posts in
the U.P. Campus

Sex	1975 No. (%)	1980 No. (%)	1985 No. (%)	1990 No. (%)	1992 No. (%)
Males	17 (63)	15 (60)	15 (55)	17 (65)	14 (56)
Females	10 (37)	10 (40)	12 (45)	9 (35)	11 (44)
Total	27 (100)	25 (100)	27 (100)	26 (100)	25 (100)

In 1975, 63% of the males occupied a total of 27 positions in degree-granting institutions affiliated with the Diliman Campus. Their representation slightly declined in 1980 to 60%, and in

1985, to 55.5%. In 1990, there was an increase by about ten percent since the total number of male deans came up to 65%. Two years later, close to a ten percent decline was experienced paralleling the sex distribution in 1985. (See Table 2.)

In comparing female representation in top and middle level management, it is noticeable that women have merely converged in the middle level position over time. A remarkable change is noted only in the current year when females dominate top level posts. This drastic edge may perhaps be attributed to the conscious effort of the current president to involve as many females as possible in top administrative positions.

In President Abueva's message before the Policy Advocacy Workshop on the Status of Women in U.P. Diliman last July 17, 1991, he stated that it has been his policy to "extend preferential treatment to women in university positions" (Abueva, 1991). He even said that a chance should be given to a woman to serve as president of the university which had in the past been monopolized by males. He further stated that he was responsible for inducting into office the first female chancellor of the Diliman Campus. It may be worth mentioning also that it was during his term that the University Center for Women's Studies was established.

The Women Executives

■ **Selected Characteristics.** The thirteen executives interviewed have a mean age of 49 years. Most of the respondents fall within the age bracket of 40 to 59. Only one falls below the 40 mark. Two others are between 60 to 63. Compared to female faculty members with Ph.Ds. in U.P. Diliman, the women executives are older by two years since the former average 47 years old. (See Table 3.)

Female executives have served the university longer than the average female faculty members with Ph.Ds. with a mean number of service of 21 years for the former. The latter have served close to twenty years.

The general rank of the female executives are higher than the average faculty with Ph.Ds. Female executives average grade 26 as against grade 23 among the latter.

Grade levels follow the scale adopted by the Department of Budget and Management. Grades 26 to 30 are professors in rank while grades 22 to 25 are associate professors. Assistant professors fall within the range of grades 19 to 21. Instructors are within grades 14 and 17.

Hence, most of the female executives have attained the status of full professor while the average faculty member with a Ph.D. has achieved an associate professor rank.

Characteristics	Executives	Faculty (Expressed in Mean Level)
Age	48.8	46.7
Length of service in U.P. in number of years	21.38	19.62
Current DBM rank	26.4	23.05
DBM rank upon integration in U.P.	13.15	15.55
No. of grades promoted in U.P.	13.2	7.81
Rate of promotion: 1 grade to total no. of years	1.6	2.5
No. of years to attain current educational attainment	17.2	16.69

In comparing the initial grade level when both groups had been integrated in the university, the initial rank of the female ex-

executives is lower compared with the average female faculty. The female executives started with grade 13; the average female faculty with a Ph.D., grade 15.5.

However, it is noticeable that the rate of promotion of the female executives is faster compared with the average faculty. The former were promoted for a total of 13 grades since they were integrated in the university. The latter moved by close to eight grades. Hence, the rate of promotion for the former is one grade for every one and a half years. The second group took an average of two and a half years for every grade. Yet, the pace for attaining the Ph.D. is a bit faster for the average faculty by close to half a year.

Thus, career mobility in the university is enhanced by being involved in management positions. It is also possible that female executives have manifested other professional outputs which could have contributed to their attainment of managerial positions in the university. One thing is clear: that women executives are achievers; that they may be highly motivated women and have thus ventured into other career opportunities than teaching in the university circle.

■ **Length of Time to Accomplish Highest Educational Attainment and Place where Obtained.** One of the salient issues raised about women executives concerns the length of time it took them to achieve their highest educational attainment, which in most cases is a Ph.D. degree. Did being a woman figure as a factor in achieving this level of education? How about the place where this degree was pursued?

Being a married woman with children was the major factor which led to a slow pace in the completion of a doctorate. Six of the nine women who got married before obtaining their Ph.Ds. openly claimed difficulties in balancing their responsibilities as teacher, administrator, housewife and mother. Four of the six pursued their degrees in the university even if they had opportunities to go abroad. The other two were accompanied by their husbands who pursued their respective careers.

Two of the single executives and two women who married after completing their doctorate did not consider gender as a factor in the pace of and place in pursuing their doctorate.

■ **Performing Home Responsibilities.** Do U.P. administrators still have time to perform home chores? Do their husbands share in their domestic responsibilities?

All but one of the administrators claimed having a share in domestic chores even if they have relatives or hired helpers for assistance. Half or more are engaged in each of the following activities: going to the grocery or market, cooking and tutoring their children. An average of 20% of their waking time is devoted to domestic responsibilities.

Of the eleven married administrators, only two claimed having a husband who assumed at least half of the wife's time for domestic chores in helping perform these responsibilities.

Most of the assistance extended by the husband at home pertain to repairs in the house and gardening.

■ **Advantages of Being a Woman Administrator.** Do women executives have an edge over their male counterparts in performing administrative responsibilities?

Only two of the executives argued that gender is not an issue in terms of one's performance. The rest mentioned some outstanding characteristics of a female as an administrator. One most commonly mentioned is the capacity of a woman to manifest care for the personal concerns of subordinates. Nine mentioned this. They claimed that women are more sensitive to the needs of others and are more caring because these reactions are typical of the "mothering role." As one respondent said:

Women executives can easily draw her subordinates to express what they would like to say. This is because the subordinates feel that their administrator is interested in their personal concerns. It is easier for subordinates to say what they feel and what problems beset them because it is like talking to their mothers.

Another one claimed: "A woman is ready to put her heart in her work. Hence, it is not difficult for her to be compassionate with the grievances of people. She is more sensitive to their needs."

Another edge of the female is her concern for the smallest details of administration. For example, when there are training programs undertaken by the college, women take care of the physical arrangements, the food to be served and even the time when these would be distributed. Six mentioned this characteristic.

■ **Difficulties of a Woman Administrator.** If women have an edge over their male counterparts, do they experience difficulties or weaknesses in performing an executive's role?

Eight of the thirteen administrators mentioned some disadvantages of being a woman. Five of the eight said it is important for women administrators to exert extra effort compared with males to be able to gain the recognition of their subordinates and peers. This is because a "double standard" is applied when male and female performances are compared. One respondent claimed: "If a woman will accept the offer to serve this position, it is expected that she perform flawlessly. On the other hand, a male who commits mistakes is not lambasted. People are more harsh on a woman administrator."

One even added, that it is important to manifest that you are "strong and firm" like a man so you can gain "people's support and respect" immediately. She even added that the female executive should assume a "castrating stance" to put "men in place." They put you to a test if you are "sweet and coy" to see "how far you can go."

It may be worthy to mention the experience of an executive since she was the lone female faculty in her college. This college caters to the study of an ethnic minority and is noted for being patriarchal. She avers having obtained her peers' recognition maybe because of her family's reputable experience in the field of administration in her region.

Two executives mentioned the difficulty of being a married woman because their professional commitments are restricted by their home responsibilities. Married males are not burdened by these concerns and can go "all the way" in terms of involvement without worrying about domestic responsibilities.

Only one cited the biological implication of the menstrual cycle.

■ **Discriminatory, Preferential or Equal Treatment.** After weighing the strengths and difficulties of a female administrator, how would they assess the males' response towards them?

The general assessment is they get a "fair treatment" from the males in the workplace. Six of the thirteen said that qualification is what matters. However, close behind is the perception of five that stiffer requirements are imposed on a female executive compared to her male counterpart.

Only two felt that they were given "preferential" treatment since males go out of their way to treat females in a special way. Males talk to them in modulated voices even if they are known to be quite "harsh" with other males. Sometimes, males even "open doors" for females.

■ **Involvement in other Professional Activities.** Among the married executives, five of the eleven expressed difficulty in engaging in professional activities other than teaching. Some restrictions were imposed on them regarding the place, the length of time and sometimes, even the persons they interact with when they engage in activities pertinent to research, consultation and administrative work. One said she limits her work within the "official time." Another said that field activities can only be engaged in "for about two weeks at most" unless it is held in a place where the husband happens to be assigned too. The same respondent also mentioned that field work could only be pursued with female companions and not with a male.

■ **Husbands' Perspectives.** A husband's perspective has a substantial influence on a wife's opportunity to enhance her career. Two of the husbands who may be considered "liberals," did not only assume domestic chores to ease the load of their wives in their professional careers; they also did not impose restrictions on their wives in pursuing their professional commitments.

Two of the husbands may be considered "conservative." They imposed restrictions on the professional advancement of their wives and did not share in their domestic chores. It was very hectic for one executive whose husband did not have any apprecia-

tion of her professional commitment because she would compress all her workload within the official time.

Another highly motivated woman ended up being separated from her husband when he not only failed to appreciate but also to cope with the ambitions of his wife.

Majority of the husbands may be considered "moderates" (seven in all) since they did not contest their wives' educational pursuits, administrative responsibility, and other professional activities. However, balancing their career and home chores was difficult because their husbands did not engage in even half of the time devoted by their wives to the domestic front.

Two of the seven moderates initially started as "traditional." Wives of these men claimed they were patient and diligent in convincing their husbands of the importance of their careers.

Experiences of Selected Executives

It may be worth comparing the experiences of the executives whose husbands have differing perspectives to find out how their respective careers have been influenced.

■ **Case of One with a Liberal Husband.** This is one of the two executives who may be considered to have the most "liberal" husband. She said her husband inspired her to pursue a doctorate degree. As far as she was concerned, a master's degree was already sufficient. Her husband convinced her that she had the aptitude to pursue a more advanced degree. Hence, both of them decided to go abroad to further their education.

She claimed it was quite easy for her to cope with the demands of academic work abroad. Her husband shared equally the chores that she did at home — going to the grocery, cooking, cleaning the house and doing the laundry. In fact, they did most of these chores together.

When their first and only child was born abroad, they took turns in taking care of the baby. She normally spent the daytime doing her library work. Her husband went to the library in the evenings. The following day, she would wake up with her lunch already packed.

This pattern did not change at all when they returned to the Philippines; they did many activities together. Domestic chores were not the only ones equally shared. She was often included in "beer drinking" sessions of her husband with some of his colleagues while discussing political and academic issues.

■ **The Experience with a Traditional-Turned-Moderate Husband.** This is the case of a dean who initially found difficulty in convincing her husband that pursuing her master's degree was important to her professional growth. Her life was quite hectic when she started to go to school because she compressed all her workload as a teacher and as a student during the regular office hours. She did convey to her husband that he would not be able to tell the difference between the period when she was only performing the duties of an instructor and the time when she pursued an advanced degree. She said: "I would go home early so I could prepare the dinner for the family and help my children in their homework."

Over time, she was able to make her husband realize that she was really committed to what she was doing. He even helped in the reproduction of her thesis.

When she was first considered to serve as the director of a program in their college, her husband was again hesitant about it. He said that performing the duties of a teacher was enough to keep her hands full. But then she was interested in giving a share of her time to this activity. She once again promised that this additional load would not hamper her duties as a wife and a mother.

Through hard work and patience, she was able to make her husband appreciate her professional commitments, especially when she started to be involved in political activities. This involvement even necessitated attending rallies and marching for a cause in the streets.

Her usual strategy was to "open lines of communication" between the two of them. She explained the importance of every activity that she engaged in. She avoided being adversarial in her strategy. Her biggest success was in inspiring him to join some of her political involvements.

However, since she is one of those with the most number of children, the pace of her completion of her doctorate as well as

the length of time she was able to devote to being an administrator were quite restricted. While she has served the university for a total of 30 years, her stint as administrator came quite late in her career. She has rendered a total of eight years of service as an administrator. She took 35 years to complete her doctorate since her bachelor's degree was obtained.

When she is compared with another administrator who is about her age, with nearly the same number of years of service in the university and with about the same number of children, the latter has a richer experience in management. Because the latter had completed her doctorate before she got married, in addition to having a husband who is quite liberal in outlook, she has had a very rich experience in management. She has spent about 26 years of her life in the university serving as an administrator. This amounts to 81% of her length of service in the university.

■ **An Administrator with a Traditional Husband.** This is the case of an administrator who is already close to retirement. While she completed her doctorate even before she got married, her contribution as an administrator did not flourish as much because of her restrictions at home. It took some twenty years after her first stint in the university before she was able to assume an executive function. During the early years of her career in the university, she served as a teacher mainly because her hands were full with the social activities of her husband who was a businessman. There was a ten-year disruption in her service to the university as she had to accompany her husband in his business venture in the province.

Upon her return to Manila, she decided to rejoin the university although her husband preferred that she remain a plain housewife. However, she argued that she is not the kind who "would enjoy whiling her time away playing mah-jong or going on a shopping spree." He finally acceded.

Then the invitation came for her to serve as administrator. Her husband once again resisted. But because she felt committed to making this contribution, she assured her husband that she would confine the completion of her tasks during the regular office hours.

Conclusions and Research Agenda

This study has been able to indicate improvements in the representation of women in top and middle level management in the university since the Decade of Women was launched in 1975. However, the fact remains that male executives have dominated top and middle level posts, with the top being primarily vested in the hands of males. A reversal in representation in the top post was a fairly recent occurrence with the current president openly espousing the importance of increasing opportunities for women in management (Abueva,1991).

It is inspiring to witness the motivations of women executives to venture into new career opportunities in the university setting. While it has been quite difficult for married women to balance their duties as wife, mother, teacher, and their other professional commitments, they have willingly assumed new tasks as an administrator.

The restrictions imposed by some husbands did not block some of the women in nurturing their professional commitments. In fact, the women found these restrictions a challenge and instead searched for ways to cope with the requirements of their husbands.

Division of labor in the homes of women executives of U.P. still tends to maintain the traditional gender roles. Female executives assume the usual tasks of mothering — cooking, marketing and taking care of the needs of the children. Husbands have very little involvement in domestic chores except in very limited instances. Husbands often assume the traditional role of undertaking or supervising repair jobs in the house. Only two husbands have taken on at least half of the time devoted by their wives to domestic responsibilities.

The edge women executives have in performing management tasks has been attributed to the tendency of the woman to manifest her "motherly touch." The women executives consider themselves as excelling in their concern for the official and personal welfare of their subordinates. They relate with their subordinates as a "total person," and not merely in their official capacity.

They also perceive that their eye for the “details” required of management is another asset of a female manager.

However, they view being a woman as disadvantageous because of the “double standard” applied in assessing the qualification for and the performance of the woman on the job. Some have the impression that stiffer requirements are imposed on the woman executive in comparison to her male counterpart. This was mentioned by five of the thirteen respondents.

The capacity of the woman executive to program her professional ambitions is largely influenced by whether or not she has children and by the openness of her husband to her pursuit of these ambitions. Being a mother and having a husband who is “traditional” limit the potential growth of the woman.

Some of the questions that have remained unanswered and constitute an agenda for future research, as the following:

- Are husbands of female executives more supportive of the professional commitments of their wives compared with the husbands of the average faculty member?
- What served as the motivating circumstance for women executives with “traditional” husbands to further their professional careers? What is a wife’s response to a husband who imposes restrictions on her career opportunities? What happens to the husband whose wife has persisted in pursuing her ambitions in spite of the fact that restrictions have been imposed on her?
- How many females did not even consider being nominated into management functions because of restrictions imposed by their husbands?
- What is the perception of the male faculty of their female counterparts? Of their wives? Are male faculty members of the university more progressive than non-U.P. male faculty?
- How do women fare in other sectors of the organization?
- What is the implication of being a full-time career wife on the lives of the children?

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