

DISCOVERING THE MAZE: WOMEN PRESIDENTS OF STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES OF REGION 12

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Abstract: Women presidents of state run universities and colleges in Central Mindanao are seldom found. This is a phenomenon that has been long observed in the region with diverse culture, religion, and customs, where patriarchal system dominates.

This study aimed to discover and describe the leadership experience of women presidents of state universities and colleges. It utilized the qualitative method and employed the phenomenological design.

The participants were the three women presidents of state universities and colleges in Central Mindanao. The instruments used were the interview questions reinforced by participants' curriculum vitae, the demographic profile, their written outputs and the researcher's journal where interviews were recorded.

The findings reveal that as women in power, all of them attested that their parents played a key role in the formation of qualities which made them effective leaders. As to their productivity as women leaders in the academe, the three of them averred that their leadership knowledge and skills were developed through education, training and experience. Regarding the challenges they encountered while serving as presidents, they asserted that they view them with a positive outlook as they consider themselves as proactive leaders.

The results of the study led to the conclusion that the success of women presidents as leaders is greatly influenced by their parents' caring attitude, support in their endeavors, and guidance in valuing education. Another conclusion drawn is that the "interiority" embedded in the personal and professional attributes, the intrinsic motivation and the passion to serve has a positive impact in bringing these women leaders to the highest position in the structure of state universities and colleges.

One major recommendation which connects to the findings of the study is that educational institutions should conduct continuing leadership trainings and activities to enhance the capabilities and skills of the teachers, especially the females who are potential leaders, to prepare themselves to accept leadership roles.

The passage to leadership for government higher educational institution in Central Mindanao has a complicated and confusing system, but these women have discovered the maze; their personal and professional attributes brought them to the highest post in the patriarchal dominant milieu: firm but flexible, undisturbed, and directed.

Keywords: discover, maze, women, president, state universities and colleges, Central Mindanao, journey, attributes, experiences, personal, professional, patriarchal, siblings.

1. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The Philippines, though democratic government, is a patriarchal governed country. Key positions like administrant, chief executive, and president are mostly occupied by men. It is seldom that we can find a woman who occupies a top position either in the government bureaucracy or in educational institution.

Regardless of opposing anticipation, men have still the monopoly of top positions in an educational administration. Men have still the preponderant influence and authority in this cybernetic age even in the management and operations of

educational institutions. Women who most of the times perform the difficult and complex bulk of works, are in sedentary vertical and horizontal positioning and tagging.

In our country, the paper of Professor Khatharya Um and Jonathan Marshall published by The McNair Research Journal that focused on our two women country's presidents, Corazon Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, stressed that despite the Philippines' patriarchal institutions, narrow elite class, and repression of women, other social variables such as family ties, the Catholic Church, corruption, and gender symbolism have provided an opening for women to enter into the male-dominated political arena. True indeed that we had two women presidents in our history but then the question remain how are they acceptable to machos and "masculados" (a symbol of man's strength and physique) of a patriarchal organization which is still strong in our nation.

Philippines is second to Russia with Thailand and Botswana, in the list of countries in which the numbers of women engaging with executive functions are increasing and this commonly refers to as "C-Suite".. This is called by Dumlao as "O-suite" that refers to Chiefs of offices or its equivalent functions and roles in firms and businesses.

In Mindanao, as to the presidents of state colleges and universities, we can already name few. In the article Philstar Cites Rebollos One of Prominent SUC Women Presidents (July 11, 2012), enumerates a number of "women who have risen to prominence in the country's tertiary institution because of their outstanding achievements as academics and scientists." It mentions further different women executives, from Luzon, Visayas, and Minadanao, who were given due recognition because of their admirable leadership.

The region which is the focus of the study was formerly named as Central Mindanao before the creation of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, and was also assigned as the seat of Region 12 which was formerly composed of Lanao del Sur, Lano Del Norte, Maguindanao and North Cotabato.

Since time immemorial, women presidents of state colleges and universities are very few. This is somehow due to the dominance of masculinity culture that predominantly exists among different tribes. Region 12 or Central Mindanao is known in history as the site where the Muslim faith was introduced. Considering its geographical location and history, women can hardly climb to the steep ladder of presidency of state universities and colleges. But somehow, a few manages to be on top of the hierarchical order and became effective leaders in academic institutions.

This study is the researcher's form of admiration to the women who are successful in portraying their leadership role in school especially in a state - run universities and colleges of the Philippines, in the midst of complexities of political harassment, diverse practices, customs, culture, religions, and even gender biases. With awe, the researcher finds it proper to conduct a study in order to discover women's leadership mystique and describe lived experiences of women presidents of state colleges and universities in Region XII, Philippines. The findings of this study will serve as an inspiration as well as an awakening to all women who aspire to be in the top echelon of academic institutions.

Philosophical Stance

This study utilizes the glass ceiling theory which states the presence of imperceptible impediment in hindering women to ascend into executive leadership post. This glass ceiling is considered as global phenomena, wherein, women remains to occupy a lower leadership post compared with men (Powell & Graves, 2003 cited in Torne, 2013). As the women presidents moved toward the presidency position there could have been barriers that prevent them from gaining the position. The ways they overcome such barriers can be vital indications of their strengths and capabilities to move up in the hierarchical structure.

Further, it states the assertion of the popular glass ceiling theory especially on the effect of disadvantages that are stronger in the hierarchy than at the lower level. This detriment takes a turn for the worse on women's career (Cotter & Hermsen 2015). As to this study, the leadership experiences of women presidents in Region 12 will determine the culture of the organization as to gender sensitivity, equity and equality.

The leadership experiences of the women president in terms of their interpersonal relations with the subordinates may be supported by the Tri-Dimensional Leadership Effectiveness Model that Hersey and Blanchard's (1993) Tri-Dimensional Leadership Effectiveness Model. This model explores the work's environment relationship behavior, task behavior and the readiness of the people. The interaction among the leader and followers are basis of this model. The maturity, ability and readiness level of followers blended with the level of support given by the leader are the made forms of interaction.

According to Hersey and Blanchard as cited in Shahmandi, et al., (2011), the situational leadership are the interaction among the following constituents: (1) the task behavior that a leader directs or simply, the sum of counsel and supervision; (2) the amount of assistance in terms of socioeconomic that a leader gives; and (3) the level of readiness that henchmen possess in carrying out particular job, role or specific activity or aim as a whole.

Domain of Inquiry

The purpose of the study is to discover and describe the leadership experiences of women presidents of state colleges and universities in Region 12, Philippines. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following essential questions:

1. What are the personal and professional attributes of women presidents?
2. What are the leadership experiences in terms of training, mentoring, and educational opportunities that led to successful administration?
3. What are the significant challenges, professional relationships, and experiences that they have encountered during their term/s as state college/university presidents?

2. METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative design which involves describing and explaining the human phenomena. In line with this, the researcher will be employing the phenomenological design to understand and describe the nature and meaning of the experiences of the participants. It is data and hypothesis-free and is not concerned about population or sample. He will virtually narrate an event, a problem, or an experience.

The process of phenomenological research reflected starts with identifying a topic or issue of concern, and then conceptualized a problem for investigation. The researcher may be presenting this in a generic two-part style, a general problem and specific problems. The first step involves conversations with well-selected individuals with profound experience of the phenomenon. This is called empathetic analysis. This first task of the researcher is to listen deeply and resonate with the co-researcher or his assistant. An activity figuratively described as feeling their shoes.

The second step involved syntax analysis. This is a process of making primary sense of what you have heard and providing a coherent articulation in narrative form. It is non literal transcription nor is it an analysis. The narratives are then given back to the co-researchers for critique, corrections, revisions, and ownership.

Environment

The research study was conducted at the three State Universities and Colleges in Central Mindanao formerly, in which part of the provinces of Autonomous Region for Muslims Mindanao and the whole of Region 12 belonged, and where the three (3) women presidents are the subjects/informants. Region 12 is now popularly known as SOCCSKSARGEN. It is an abbreviation region's foursome territories and its urbanized cities, namely South Cotabato, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani and General Santos City. Koronadal City is designated as the regional seat of government of these provinces. Ironically, Cotabato City is a component of SOCCSKSARGEN, wherein its geographical location, it belongs to Maguindanao, in which, is part of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. The three (3) State Universities/Universities are:

Cotabato City State Polytechnic College is a state college situated along Sinsuat Avenue, Cotabato City, Region 12, Philippines. Its mandates is to provide professional and advanced vocational instruction and training in agriculture, fisheries, forestry, engineering and industrial technologies. It adheres to its vision and mission to serve and to be a proactive change-agent of its stakeholders in Central Mindanao and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. This state college is moving towards realizing its becoming a university after more than 27 years of existence as a State College. The majority of the students come from the Provinces of Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat and nearby municipalities of the province of North Cotabato. It still continues to push its aim of becoming self sustaining in terms of development and provision of quality service through education.

Participants

The participants of this study were the women presidents of state universities and colleges (SUC) in Central, Philippines. To be included, a participant must (a) be holding a presidential position in any SUC in Central Mindanao, Philippines; (b)

have at least occupied the presidential post; (c) be willing to be interviewed, audio-recorded, and video-recorded; shadowed for one or two days; and share her curriculum vitae or resume, her written works, and works written about her (Rosario, 2014).

Instrument

In this study, the author used the following instruments : (a) interview questions which are formulated based on an extensive review of the literature and other related instruments, to be reviewed by two experienced leadership researchers, and will be modified based on the feedback of the reviewers; (b) the participants' curriculum vitae or resumes; (c) demographic profile survey; (d) written outputs of the participants such as biographies, books, monographs, and others and works written about them; (e) the researcher's journal, where observations will be recorded during the 2-day shadowing period (Rosario, 2014).

On the other hand, to test the reliability of the responses, the researcher obtained detailed field notes by taking minutes of the discussion and employing a good quality voice recorded to capture the details of the interview to be interpreted by an outside evaluator, listening to the tape recorded narratives for accuracy of the responses/answers of the participants as mentioned in the validity of the research instrument (Chua, 2009 cited in Pilar, 2010).

Data Gathering Procedures

To collect data, the participants were identified based on the criteria. The researcher sent a letter to the Dean of the Graduate School asking permission to conduct the study. After receiving the positive reply from the Dean, he then sent a letter and the informed consent form was given and explained. Then, a schedule for the face-to-face interview and shadowing was set. During the two-day interview which lasted one hour per day, and considered as the shadowing period with a participant, the researcher conducted the interview, which in some cases was split into two sessions (Rosario, 2014).

Data Analysis

The main bulk of the data was collected through in-depth interviews. The following steps were taken after the interview was conducted (Madsen, 2007b cited in Rosario, 2014): (a) the interviews were transcribed verbatim. (b) key ideas and phrases were highlighted. (c) key ideas and phrases were categorized according to themes. (d) recurring themes or patterns of meaning explicating significant people and life events were identified and quoted. (e) The participants reviewed what researcher has written about them and was provided additional insights wherever gaps were found so that the final report would reflect accurately the stories of each participant. Triangulation was done by using data from other sources such as the curriculum vitae or resume of the participants, the works of the participants and those written about her, the researcher's journal, and data from the demographic profile survey (Rosario, 2014).

3. THREE WOMEN IN POWER

Super woman may also be called woman in power. Most people cannot just avoid respecting, valuing and admiring great leadership especially if it refers to woman who may have just simple background or perhaps may have all the wants and golden spoon in life, if one does not have the knowledge what makes or pushes her to become a great leader of an institution. In this changing time, in the midst of machos, more women are being transported into leadership roles, in Central Mindanao; they are called the three women in power.

President 1: An Aphorism and Subtleness of a Dynamic and Compassionate Leader

President 1 rose from a well off family; both parents had their own business to manage. They graduated in high school as valedictorians but did not pursue the intermediate education because they already enjoyed a comfortable life of economic prosperity. Her mother was a successful entrepreneur in business, while her father was a farm landowner who ventured in rice production and poultry production during day time.

Her passion for literature, bible studies, and efficacy in the English language were deeply influenced by her parents, especially her father who used to write poetry during night time. Part of herself was molded by her father who imprinted in her consciousness the values of frugality, decency, and honest living, while her mother taught her discipline, orderliness, and cleanliness which is traditionally, culturally and practically, what required of a woman to be, even in this time of modernization where technology and gadgets inhabited in the life of the human beings.

Because of the training, guidance, and the observation of the daily routine of her parents' life, she possesses a positive mental outlook about life; she is happy, calm, humble, and contented, and has a strong sense of empathy, fairness, and understanding towards others; and trust in God's wisdom and love that peace and security will always prevail her being and in relationship with people. These characteristics define her character in her daily existence and in the performance of her moral duty to her family, fellowmen, and country. It is these characteristics that have stamped her moral obligation as an educational leader to serve the Institution and the stakeholders to the best that she can, in the name of genuine public service dedicated to God's Divine Providence.

She had been with public service for 43 years as an educator and leader in varied capacities, 21 years as a Vice President for Academic Affairs during the stint of three (3) college past presidents and 12 years as Dean of Graduate College.

She earned BSEd major in English from a Catholic University in Central Mindanao and Master of Arts in School Administration at the same school. She also equipped herself with laws as she lasted for two years in studying Legum Baccalaureus (LLB) or Bachelor of Laws. Her foreign studies as scholar awarded her a Diploma in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. With her unstoppable quest for knowledge, she acquired the Doctor of Education major in Educational Management.

A lady president who is more concerned with orderliness and human relationship which carries with it a great respect for people and their rights regardless of tribe, religion, education, position, economic standing; as the foundation of justice and love for the constituents she had governed and lead.

Objectively, as an observer of her existence, farther and closer scrutiny, Participant 1 is a symbol of a maturity, a life of humility, simplicity, spirituality, compassion, and moral responsibility. She may appear so common and ordinary woman but she is an aphoristic of dynamics and subtleties of a leader's personality.

President 2: Domestically and Scholarly Honed and Polished of Faith and of Antiquity Leader

She may be the opposite of President 1 because she was deprived of economic and financial capability. She was raised in remote rural area where farming was the only source of living and mode of transportation was back-breaking.

Her parents were elementary graduates only and they worked as tenants or laborers in their barangay. They were categorized as indigent family, thus, their siblings were trained to work hardy for their future. The value of having positive attitude in life, and the importance of education was stressed to them by their parents. In order for them to finish a course so that they could have better lives, she was employed as a working student in other places for her to go to school and finish her study.

Despite the fact that they were less than adequate in economic and financial sources, however, their family members, especially her parents, trained them to be religious and spiritually learned and readied. Perhaps, this was only the riches that they possessed; their relationship with God, respect for each other, love of family (parent, brothers, sisters and children), love of neighbor, positive attitude towards works/ lives, becoming responsible, humble and kind, love and value for education.

Because of the domestication to accustom them to household life and affairs of what they would be in the future, she struggled hard and graduated with honors during primary to elementary education. She also graduated as salutatorian and a recipient of Jerry Roxas Leadership Award.

She also earned a baccalaureate degree that lead to the care and protection of the agricultural land and farming, Bachelor of Science in Agriculture major in Soil Science. In addition, because of the love for education as inculcated to her by her parents, she also took up and finished the Bachelor of Secondary Education at a state university and a private college, respectively, in Region 12.

As she quested for higher learning, she applied for scholarship for graduate study and has the title of Master of Science in Agronomy (MSA) minor in Extension Education at a state university in North Cotabato. She attained the Doctor of Education major in Educational Management at a prestigious post graduate school in Region 11, with her own expenses and financial and moral support of her loving husband.

She passed the four government professional examination and a Civil Service Professional Examination. She started working as a student laboratory assistant, when she was still schooling, and afterwards, as a classroom teacher in a

government secondary school. To practice her other course, she worked at the then Ministry of Agriculture office as an ordinary employee who started at low rank, from field work as a technician, specialist up to earning a better rank.

Education seemed to be haunting her, after just two years of promotion from the latter agency or office; she transferred to a state college and became director of a research office for quite long years. In year 2000, she was designated as Vice President for Research and Extension, and five years after, she was reassigned to another office and was given a task to become the Vice President for Production and Business Affairs.

Who would anticipate then that this once was a barrio girl became the president of the newly chartered state university in Central Mindanao after just almost five years of management from the recent office of the same state university for two consecutive terms that were equivalent to six years. But, when a state university president in Region 12, in early of 2013 faced turmoil, because of the different/interconnected conflicts, she was placed as Office-In-Charge of that school while still having her responsibility with the other one. Currently, she earned the highest rank as university professor.

The life of this woman, may be described metaphorically in the eyes of the observer as going or passing through the eye of the needle; she has learned the craft of leading, managing, creating, transforming, learning, teaching, collaborating/networking, transcending, advancing and above all praying to God, the giver of all things that man's needs.

Indeed, this woman leader enjoys challenges, and defines meaning and purpose from the different ecclesiastes of life, such in a situation where she was forced to deal directly with a problem and when opportunity knocks on.

President 3: A Genealogically Trusted Arbiter Elegantiurum of Denomination, Ethnicity, and Literacy Leader

The matter of the woman's traits has an avant-garde portrayal in acknowledging the woman of creed and of religion. Her woman's character as portrayal of an image of feminist is a product of her experiences and exposures to where she rose. It deduced the different opinions and uncovered its mental outlook in respect of other affairs of the woman. It's a fact, in short, that substantiated and critical issues such as women's rights, social awareness, morality, religious practices and conformation with, like wearing of "hijab" (veil) and finery is very significant part in the execution of her function as a woman leader who belongs to a tribe and religion whose training and practices are conservative and "value guarded."

This participant's parents and even the family name are already popular. They are present and active in both social and political affairs of the region. The members of her clan are exposed to the different services and functions whenever they are called for. Generation after generation, since the time of the creation of the local government unit in the province where they hailed, their family name seemed a note in musical composition that can never be missed.

She has all the accords in life from financial, emotional, social and even spiritual supports though rose in conservative faith and tradition, was able to make herself shine in academic and extracurricular activities during her school days in school from primary to secondary education run by Catholic nuns.

Her college life was also gained from a reputable Catholic university in the nearby city and in Luzon, where she also finished her graduate and post graduate study at the latter, with admiration and awards. She courageously attended trainings and additional post graduate studies and certificates in ASIAN countries and Europe.

A very determined person in her soft spoken voice, she, with others, spent seven years in sketching out their vision-that is to lift up the state university under her steward to become a pioneer tertiary institution in the province that can globally compete. Her devotion, dedication, commitment and effort to her profession and function, added with servant type of leadership as public figure, the institution she heads, has been notably admired here and abroad.

President 3 is a prominent; an avant-garde artist and writer, a revolutionary who is defending and raising her community's struggles for better education and lighter future. She is determined to arbitrate in the world's limited notions of what woman should be who emerged in patriarchal culture and practices, is capable of doing. She is premier woman leader who is fighting for women and girls' rights, marginally out casted students especially indigenous groups of Muslims, Christians, and Tiduray who have the ambition to become educated and professional so to alleviate their family and loved ones from poverty and ignorance.

She believes that her religion can empower women as she is a testimony, among many others, who strived to trudge the road of professionalism, financial security, and awareness to the different social issues in cognizance to catching the drift of religion that is pious with dogmatic conformity. As for those sisters in faith women, they can be inspired and be trained

so they become empowered to magnify their beliefs, strength, knowledge, skills, and confidence to participate in the different opportunities leading to be economically efficient and academically rationale, without secluding themselves from their religion's orientation.

4. THE SECRETS TO PRESIDENCY: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS

This section presents the women leaders who have understood the meaning of endurance, patience, regeneration and recreation. They are tough and unafraid of the grit in life because they can conquer mountains, cross turmoil rivers and fight the good fight to achieve what is valuable and beneficial to their flocks. What they stand for is the conviction that they know is a guided truth for existence. They always ready to test their concepts and ne plus ultra or paragon, for they believe they are not perfect neither the society where they belong.

The secrets of their productivity are not the mystery of their origins and orientation but the attributive feminism leadership that they already have, honed and sharpened with time. These themes are categorized into three: The People behind the Success, The Road to Success and Women as Proactive Leaders.

The People Behind the Success. Wherever they are, at the abode of the family or with the industry and firms they manage, they signify the glue and adhesive which keeps the matters intact; this is what we called as privileged information that is the revelation of their great leadership. Burluson in his article first published online (February 12, 2003) states that the well being of a person is product of the emotional support of the people who close to the persons. The studies suggests further that the most sensitive emotional support is the determinant of the person's character and attributes, this establisher their comfort and contentment.

Personal Relationship and Experiences.

Perennial personal relationships refer to the relationships the woman leader had as a child and as an adolescent. These relationships may be with her father, mother, siblings, relatives, and other persons outside the family. Astin and Leland (as cited in Madsen, 2007b) claimed that "leaders emerge from the critical interplay of personal values and commitments, special circumstances or historical influences, and personal events that motivate and mobilize people's actions."

Six points sprung from the personal relationships and experiences of the participants. Their personal relationships were those with their parents and other significant persons. Their personal experiences focused on both the pleasant and the unpleasant events that happened during their childhood and adolescence.

Positive Relationships with Fathers and Mothers. All of them attested that their parents provided them love during their childhood and adolescent days, supported them in their studies, and disciplined them when they needed guidance. Throughout the participants' childhood and adolescent days, all of them said their life is beautiful. President 1 summarized the early years of her life stating that her parents were her inspiration in her quest for good education, in search for the meaning of the true, the good, and the beautiful life at early age. Both of her parents were valedictorians during their high school days, but they did not pursue higher education degrees since they enjoyed a comfortable life of economic prosperity. President 2 has almost similar experiences with Participant 1. She stated that her parents were elementary graduates only and they worked as tenants or laborers in their barangay. They belonged to an indigent family, thus, she was trained by her parents to work hard for their future, have positive attitude in life, and value education in order for her to finish a course so that they could have better lives in the future. The positive relationships and guidance they enjoyed with their parents extended to their relationships with everyone in the workplace. They exhibited warmth and loving concern toward their subordinates and a collegial attitude toward their peers and superiors. President 3 shared that her family's support and examples of service to the people to their area became her security and comfort.

Because of their strong sense of security, the participants did not feel intimidated by the discrimination they encountered in the workplace. Instead, as Eagly and Carli (2007) described, these people provided inspiration and encouragement and a nurturing attitude toward others. Cassidy and Shaver (as cited in Davis, 2003) revealed that adults who experienced secured childhood relationships are better able to relate well with others, find solutions to complex problems, and adjust to new situations.

Equal Impact of Mothers and Fathers. All the participants affirmed that their mothers and fathers equally made an impact in their lives. Madsen (2007b) who explored the childhoods of these women presidents led to the same result that both parents hermitically influenced the women's advancement to maturity. The participants in this study acknowledged

the role of their parents in the formation of the qualities which made them effective leaders. One of them even mentioned that even she studied as a working student in other places, her parents still advised and encouraged her when at home especially during night time, after dinner, of weekend since they worked in the farm during daytime. "They trained (their children) to work collectively and care for each other. They allowed us to decide for ourselves but provided us with inspiration and guidance by working hard for our studies, giving advice and loving us unconditionally," as she narrated.

President 1's parents were her inspiration in her quest for good education, in search for the meaning of the true, the good, and the beautiful life at early age. Both of her parents were valedictorians during their high school days, they did not pursue higher education degrees since they enjoyed a comfortable life of economic prosperity as mentioned. Her mother was a successful entrepreneur in business, while her father was a farm landowner who ventured in rice production and poultry production during day time and poet writer during the night hours. They had their ups and downs in life which intrigued her probing mind in the early years of elementary schooling as to the whys of circumstances and experiences. Her passion for literature, bible studies, and efficacy in the English language were deeply influenced by her parents. Her father imprinted in her consciousness the values of frugality, decency, and honest living, while her mother taught her discipline, orderliness, and cleanliness. These, she considered her lifetime practical education and experiential in her daily existence. She admitted that she also encountered bitterness, cruelty, selfishness from nearest kins and other people.

Influence of other Significant Persons. Aside from their parents, the presidents drew inspiration and guidance from other family members such as grandparents, siblings, uncles, aunts, cousins, children, and husbands. They were also positively influenced by their teachers. The women respondents in the study of Stephens (as cited in Madsen, 2007b) testified to the positive influence of an aunt in their lives. In addition, the women in the studies of Cuomo (1999) and Madsen (2007b) revealed that they had teachers who provided them love and guidance. These significant individuals imbued to them the passion for reading, appreciating and practicing good values, and beliefs and confidence in their abilities. Their interaction with these significant people has inculcated them with a sense of purpose of life, love, service, determination and value for education.

The Road to Success.

The thoroughfare to reaching one's goals is not only a straight path or lone highway that you have to trudge but may also be crossroads that require one to decide which way to take. The three women presidents have made these crystal clear with their own journey to the alley of success: professional relationship and experiences, happy childhood and adolescent experiences, uncongenial experiences, passion for reading, and high academic qualifications.

Professional Relationships and Experiences. There are many continual themes in the professional relationships and experiences of the participants that contributed to their development as women presidents. The classification of these professional relationships and experiences are based on what happened in their school life and in their career life.

Happy Childhood and Adolescent Experiences. Most of the presidents' childhood and adolescent experiences were happy ones as implied with their interviews. In fact, two (2) of the three (3) participants were well off. They could buy the things they wanted when they asked from their parents. Every time they reminisced it centered on incidents they spent with their parents and siblings and extended family members. President 3 even admired her parents being surrounded with people of their tribes who had asked for their assistance in terms of financial, settlement of disputes and even asking for guidance.

Uncongenial Experiences. Some of the presidents underwent cold, unfriendly, and probably ill-suited experiences. As children, they also encountered bitterness, cruelty, selfishness from nearest kins and other people. They had their ups and downs in life which intrigued their probing mind in the early years of elementary schooling as to the whys of circumstances and experiences. All the participants who underwent negative experiences, however, declared that those experiences turned out to have positive effects on them. Werner (1995) disclosed that women leaders who showed concern for others and maximized their potentials had encountered painful experiences in childhood. The personal experiences of the participants, both positive and negative, proved important to their development.

Passion for Reading. All the presidents were avid readers. President 2 said she read anything in sight. The participants read as students; they still read as leaders. President 1 convincingly revealed that education from extensive readings of literature and books in philosophy, religions, sociology, psychology, political science, economics, biology and humanities is an invaluable experience of mental interaction with deep thinkers and authors about the meaning of human existence of

one's relationship with the world. The study of Agnes Ovayioza Enesi and Hanna Onyi Yusuf (2011) factually concluded that the leaders of the present day have formed the habit of reading. This states further that a leader enjoys and finds values in reading. The dimension of a better and productive leadership is rooted on the forming of habit in reading and getting hold of skills in reading.

High Academic Qualifications. All of the presidents in this study were doctoral degree holders from leading and reputable learning institutions in the country and abroad. They recognized the impact of their educational background. The three valued their training in educational management and administration as relevant to their administrative work.

On Challenges as Ingredients to Good Leadership

The good leadership may not be conceived and imparted without the challenges that these presidents had met. These are considered to be the nutrients to forming good decisions; at first, difficult at the end may be considered as easy as falling off an X. According to President 1 and 3, policies and structures are in place in an educational institution. Managing people in a government tertiary institution is the most challenging aspect of governance. A fragment culture in higher educational institutions is common even in highly developed foreign higher educational institutions, considering their exceptional expertise and independent thinking. Most challenging likewise are confronting enduring negative attitudes which are culture-based, product of mediocrity, and moral insensitivity to public service.

The challenges of the two presidents were affirmed by President 2. She irritably exposed that immature and irrational employees, limited knowledge and skills on the job, dishonest, corruption, counting the time only, individualism, work for a pay only, poor communication skills, and limited concern for service and students are challenges that she always did face during her presidency.

Women as Proactive Leaders. The most successful women leaders when in the midst of dynamic conflict that signify a symptomatic quandary and that which does not accomplish an intended purpose, they enjoy taking charge before occurrences results to clinch fist. They are the ones that protect and nurture the family and cultural traditions from wavering threats of recent development. They provide the leadership for the workers that have the assurance of the heritage as its stalwart through proper orientation on right nutritive values and elements.

When faced with problems and negativities, they always take them as challenges in which they can learn and pick some superb ideas and strength for solving and curing future similar problems, and even atrocities created by those who are dissatisfied with leadership due to curtailing their businesses and caprices in the seating of women presidents.

As President 2 shared, when you do good and you will make the path straight, it is always expected that enemies, reactionists, Jacobins and demagogue will either come out into the open or will be stabbing you at the back. In this situation, she called them up and talked to them in a nice way so they would not be embarrassed. As proactive presidents, the chance to grow and reform for those who are antagonists or problematic employees and teachers, are always the first recourse or even the second.

President 1 has maintained a healthy working relationship with the employees through directors, deans, chairmen empowerment, punctual payment of salaries and benefits, visibility, dialogic encounters, and ocular inspection of what is going about in every college in terms of improvements and carrying out diurnal tasks. She convincingly believes in the truism that each person has his own time in history when it is due, it is due; indeed a mark of forethoughtful leadership.

Love for Learning Institution. The presidents' intense interest, their concentrated focus and single-mindedness of purpose enabled them to excel. They graduated with honors in elementary and high school. In college, one of them received leadership award and the two graduated as Cum Laude. The participants' excellent performance in class translated into trust and confidence of their teachers and classmates. The three of them were given leadership opportunities in school because they excelled in class. All of them served in different leadership positions in clubs and organizations.

Love for and fear of God. The three presidents during the interviews really reiterated their relationship with God that make them strong and guide them in the execution of their functions. President 1 shared that her characteristics positive mental outlook about life; am happy, calm, humble, and contented, and have a strong sense of empathy, fairness, and understanding towards others; and trust in God's wisdom and love that peace and security will always prevail her being and in relationship with people. She believes that these characteristics define her character in the daily existence and in

the performance of moral duty to her family, fellowmen, and country. While President 2, aside from being surrounded with siblings and uncles and aunts who instilled in her the love for God, she divulged that in her life, she is an abider and follower of God's laws. She stated further that she is presently active with the church activities. In her paper Diane J. Chandler (2011) David during his time submitted himself to God wholly without any reservation. His trust and dependency to the immeasurable love and faithfulness of God was the source of his strength in leading his people. Likewise, during the period of discouragement and critical periods, in times when others assail their personality and leadership, these faithful leaders, submit these weights on their shoulders to God as David had shown and practiced.

Informal mentorship. The participants acknowledged to have been mentored informally. Being observant and discerning, they then caught the lessons that helped them in their leadership responsibilities. The mentors of the women in this study were both male and female. Participants' 2 and 3 had male mentors because their field was male-dominated. This phenomenon is not new. Even the participants in the study of Astin and Leland (1991) were mentored by men. These male leaders, according to Astin and Leland (1991), "were particularly conscious of training women. They believed that it was the women who were going to make it". With this mindset, they gave the women "good training and opportunities".

President 1 expressed that experience is the best teacher but heavily anchored on moral/ethical practices and genuine knowledge of the social, cultural, sociological, settings of the organization. Successful leadership is a genuine personal relationship with people in the organization; a personal touch with due recognition of man's weaknesses, shortcomings, inconsistencies, idiosyncrasies, and social/family/culture-based problems. There is no perfect organization, no perfect leadership, no perfect man, and no perfect society.

Cultivation of Education. This signifies the importance or value of education. The three presidents were raised at homes that highly valued education. Though, Presidents 1 and 3 were already affluent and had enough in life when they studied, President 2 was in dire situation. But the value of education was inculcated to her by her parents when she was young. Both of parents were elementary graduates only and they worked as tenants or labourers in their barangay (place). Nevertheless, their parents' conviction would affirm that education would give them better opportunities to develop their potential, wider chances for employment and higher income, and greater prospects for a better life as a whole (Troupouis, 2004). Presidents 1 and 2 started to work with very menial jobs like a classroom teacher and office clerk, and family duties. Though, President 3's family had the influence, her beginning was still a classroom teacher. The mothers of the participants set them the example that they appreciated their femininity by valuing their roles as mothers and wives while at the same time having a career. As Presidents 1 and 2 revealed that their elementary teachers and high school teachers; some mentors and directors who gave them jobs while pursuing their college education; a circle of high school teacher-associates, professors in abroad; husbands and children; and siblings were all significant persons in their life journey for: personal development, social and intellectual development, spiritual development, and deeper understanding of harmony and balance with nature and human nature which were all accumulated as a fund of knowledge for practical application purposes to live a richer, meaningful and realistic existence.

President 1 disclosed that Education from extensive readings of literature and books in philosophy, religions, sociology, psychology, political science, economics, biology and humanities is an invaluable experience of mental interaction with deep thinkers and authors about the meaning of human existence of one's relationship with the world. The teachings of Jesus Christ; the philosophical thoughts of Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Kierkegaard, Sartre, Paulo Freire and Dewey; and leadership thoughts of John C. Maxwell, Stephen Coney, Stephen Robbins, and many others had a significant impact on lifelong education, a continuous, reflective, rational observation and optimism of the whys and how's in people's behaviors from all walks of life, in social interaction with them in informal and formal activities/occasions.

Careerism. The president's entry employment was as a faculty member and even office employee in the case of Participant 2, and they took an echelon at a time until they reached the top. They took the traditional career path with their trajectories focused on higher education. Their career path followed this pattern: from faculty member, to chairperson, to dean, to vice president or vice chancellor for academic affairs, then to the presidency. The study of Moore (as cited in Tiao, 2006) yielded the same result. The entry level of 72% of their participants who were female college presidents was as a faculty position. Regarding the post held prior to the presidential appointment, Tiao (2006) affirmed the findings of this study. Before becoming presidents, her participants served as vice presidents for academic affairs.

Strong Network Systems. All the participants had strong network systems with people they had worked with and with organizations that championed their advocacies and disciplines. All of them continued to connect with colleagues they

had worked with in previous assignments. Aburdene and Naisbitt (1992) attest that “networking continues to be women’s prime modus operandi in the work world.” Astin and Leland (1991) corroborated with Aburdene and Naisbitt (1992) that women leaders need a strong support system. All participants were officers and members of associations and consortia of colleges and universities and benefited from the cooperative exchange of ideas. Astin and Leland (1991) concluded that women who rise to top executive positions are those who have “consistently positive recollections about family interactions, admired role models, challenging encounters in school, work, and travel”. This observation was true of the participants of this study. Most of the time, their memories of their professional experiences and relationships were positive. There were few instances when they encountered unpleasant experiences and relationships but they resolved to learn valuable lessons and rise above their pain. Overall, the women leaders’ relationships and “experiences clearly helped to encourage and shape the development of leadership interests and talents”.

Gender Issues of Leadership. Gender is not a problem in being a president of an educational institution especially in Central Mindanao. The three participants stressed that a woman can be as equally good and smart as any man on earth to discharge the functions and develop the people and the institution. President 1 believed that it is easier to develop the physical structures and the legal frameworks than to develop people and nurture the tenets of morally/ethically-responsible organizational citizenship and practice of “A public office is a public trust.” It would take a life time to develop people to maturity. A lady president is more concerned with orderliness and human relationship which carries with it a great respect for people and their rights regardless of tribe, religion, education, position, economic standing; as the foundation of justice and love for the constituents you govern and lead.

President 3 is a representation of her culture’s evolution that you can already find in a thousand and one of professions; academia, medicine, court rooms, and boardrooms. She is indeed, as she convincingly asserted a flowing heritage of names and leadership inherited and made; a distinct heroine representation of her tribe female leadership. Gone are all those views and perceptions that men are superior to women. The generation in her workplace or in the institution that she rules, or even in the Central Mindanao and ARMM, view their women with in the new angle of perspective. They are not what they were as in the history of the past; they are not always the under dogs, or submissive beings who are always the victims of masculine world but rather they can be super women who are determined, staunch, resolute and tenacious.

While, President 2 was very affirming too that she said females can do multi-tasks, they can attend to several concerns at the same time, and thus, they can be more productive than their male counterparts. As a female, she acted like a mother to her people; listening to their concerns, compassionate to their needs but not at the expense of the university. She is considerate, kind and understanding but firm to her decision particularly in protecting the welfare of the students, faculty and staff, and in attaining the vision, mission and goals of the university. As cited in pewsocialtrends.org (January 14, 2015) on women and leadership revealed that the most of the people see no distinction, if not very minute differences between men and women in terms of leadership traits. Much of the population affirmed that men and women have equal mental capacities and abilities. majority had also seen no distinction in terms of honesty, decisiveness, and ambition.

The road to success of these women presidents are made up of many ingredients. As the book of cookery has, a certain viand cannot have its complete taste unless all ingredients are completed. The statistical figures present these women to have it all through different experiences; personal and professional made them up who they are and what they are as women presidents of state universities and colleges of Central Mindanao.

5. FINDINGS

The journey of women presidents was challenging that needed enduring values and qualities of a leader. They have undergone the process of conceiving their image first before discovering their potentials as leaders. These are not the aptitude and potency that strike like a lightning from the sky because the process of these went through the eye of the needle.

As to the three women in power, all of them attested that their parents played a key role in the formation of the qualities which made them effective leaders and in the realization to be of service in the academic world through education.

In the confrontation with challenges, women presidents would peep into the benefits and challenges they bring. Boundaries are limitless. They always see the whole thing, in numerous perspectives and angles. Water in the glass, though half, is considered to be half-full. They are always very optimistic in every encountered situation; opportunity that

knocks. This is because they were prepared to face them through their interaction with the significant people around during their formative years; their motivation, love, and guidance have made them strong for any leadership encounters they may have along the way. They see the value of the water and the glass in the performance of their duty and everyday life.

Women leaders are strategic. They can see what oftentimes others cannot. As one woman mentors said, “A woman’s lens of skepticism oftentimes forces them to see well beyond the most obvious details before them. They enjoy stretching their perspective to broaden their observations. Many women are not hesitant to peel the onion in order to get to the root of the matter.”

Traditions would look at women in the old forms as emotional and sensitive, but the author believes that they just strive for greatness and distinction which is their passion and ardent. Once things are not in order, they make sure that everything is fixed in a good array. These are attributed to their careerism and professional experiences here and abroad. They always take as guide the values of knowledge both from school and reality, in carrying out their responsibilities.

Their muliebrity makes them inordinately imaginative, creative and ingenious; they solve the puzzles and clear the sky to have better opportunity. Their entrepreneurial skills as part of their being, is the tool in approaching and taking the best opportunity for the organization. They always place 100% focus in the objective manner to the task; they dislike distractions and noise as they approach to obligations.

The author also found that these women leaders find joy in inspiring others to achieve. They are very much aware what it likes to be underestimated, slaves, and be bullied; they are very laborious in order not to disappoint their selves and others. They too had the grits and pains in life; this motivates them to have high standards which made detailed examiners that bring difficult for others to cut corners.

Nurturing nature is very visible in the majority of women leaders. They listen attentively when one opens and talks to them. They excel with networking and connecting with people, organizations, and government. Their network systems entails inter connectivity and facilitative character. She melds down the thinking and ideas of other as she creates ecosystems and supports a collaborative leadership style for the conception of a wider connection of influence and overall impact is another skill woman presidents have in Central Mindanao. They believe there is no perfect leader as there is no perfect society. They do not, therefore, have to be right all the time. Instead, they affirm that they have to harmonize themselves with others to become builders and have to be dynamic members of a team environment.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the study, it is concluded that the passage to leadership for government higher educational institution in Central Mindanao has a system replete with complications and perplexities, but these women leaders have discovered the maze; their personal and professional attributes, their leadership principles and skills brought them to the highest post in the patriarchal dominant milieu and they remained firm, undisturbed, and self directed.

The maze has been revealed: women leaders have their productivity secrets which are not necessarily aptitude and potency but the “interiority” connected to the passion to serve, the intrinsic motivation which they possess, and their personal and professional attributes and their leadership role being honed through education, training and experiences as their inspiration for operating well and good within the academic environment.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Women who aspire for executive positions should enrich themselves with social –emotional connections with the members of the family, associates, and even with marginalized members of the society, they should pursue continuous education and experiences in dealing with people and organization, and establish a stronger connection with the Almighty God.
2. Educational institutions should conduct continuing leadership training and activities to enhance the leadership capabilities and skills of the teachers, especially on females who are potential leaders so as to prepare themselves to accept leadership roles.

3. Since women leaders are more focus and have proactive attitude, school board should assign them in offices or agencies that entail challenges with male dominant reactive attitudes.
4. State universities and colleges should provide professional development on gender sensitivity and equality issues; assist and encourage instructors to make classrooms or learning institution more equitable and give equal attention to female and male leadership capability and responsibility.
5. Parents should promote affirming and supporting attitudes towards their daughters; have more on assisting and discovering than imposing, and instill God-fearing value.
6. Fostering Leadership: Conduct seminars, symposia, forum and the like to encourage and awaken leadership skills and capabilities of females and women through involvement in student government and other activities.
7. The state universities and colleges' personnel should be provided with the results of this study.
8. The results of this study should be published in a book form for the guidance and inspiration to those who are touched by the women leaders' life and trailblazing management.
9. Conducting a qualitative-quantitative research on gender issues; delve deeper into the perception and relationship of male employees to women administrators or leaders.
10. Further research should be conducted on the lived experiences of women presidents in government higher institutions, religious groups, industrial organizations, and other institutional types.

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