

A Woman in Politics: The Journey of Ms. X

Shied Faisah M. Lanterna¹, Fatima Glen S. Rosas²,
Marian Ecelle B. Delfino³, Rufina C. Rosaroso, PhD⁴

Department of Public Governance, College of Arts and Sciences, Cebu
Normal University, Philippines

shiedlanterna@gmail.com¹, fatimaglenrosas2017@gmail.com²,
mhgiedelfino@gmail.com³, rosarosor@cnu.edu.ph⁴

Date Received: March 11, 2018; Date Revised: July 4, 2018

Asia Pacific Journal of
Multidisciplinary Research

Vol. 6 No. 3, 25-30

August 2018

P-ISSN 2350-7756

E-ISSN 2350-8442

www.apjmr.com

CHED Recognized Journal

ASEAN Citation Index

Abstract – *This is a case study research which featured the journey of a woman in politics. It aimed to describe her beginnings, the challenges she encountered and the initiatives she applied in her plight as a public servant. Interviews were conducted in the conception of Ms. X's necessary and relevant information on her political career. Ms. X's life experiences, as well as her character and personality guided her to have a successful political career enhanced with passion, dedication and the genuine desire to serve. Difficulties and complications that came across concerning her major advocacies viz. women, children and tourism did not discourage her choice to still pursue on politics and continue her advocacy towards women empowerment and participation in politics. Her means to stretch out, team up and strengthen women groups alleviate the dilemma and discrimination of women in her Province. The journey of Ms. X in politics entails that issues arising specifically on women inequity can be lessened through programs that intensifies women involvement and participation in enhancing their capabilities in different fields, particularly, in politics.*

Keywords – *women representation, empowerment, public servant, politician, gender equality*

INTRODUCTION

Gender stereotypes and hurdles to equal political participation were very rampant bygone. Women, in particular have so much to say in their historical struggles for equal conduct toward politics. These endeavours occurred around the globe and that includes, the Philippines.

Filipino women at the rear of their key struggle to political representations are nonetheless considered to have played significant roles in Philippine politics springing from the Spanish era until the present time. It is patent that more women are emerging to acquire political power and recognition. The celebrated women in history, namely: Melchora Aquino, Gabriela Silang, Gregoria de Jesus were manifestations of women representations and empowerment in the past. Contemporarily, the names of Corazon Aquino, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Leni Robredo are best examples of women participation in the realm of politics for having been elected on high executive positions in the country.

The Philippines is noticeably recognizing the vital role of women in the society. Equality between men and women is significantly observed. The country gives high recognition to the special roles Filipino women have contributed and continue to act as partners in nation-building. This recognition offers a message to

everyone that the old-style outlook of women being just plain housewives doing household chores is erroneous. Women are more than that since Filipino women are far beyond what the society perceives of them. Moreover, women involvement in policy-making, both in public and private sectors are given emphasis to strengthen their roles as agents of change in the society. This move motivates the government to offer more seats for women who are capable to formulate, implement, and evaluate policies, plans and programs for local, regional and national development [1]. In addition, observance of women's rights is strictly observed in the country. Legally-binding standards and principles for recognizing and realizing women's rights are likewise implemented in response to this thrust. These along with other laws, statutes, and ordinances concerning the heightening of women representation and gender equality in politics have imparted considerable guarantee on equal footing for both men and women in the society.

According to Smee and Woodroffe (2003), gender equality is referred as a parity for both gender male and female, with the inclusion of their chances to assume electoral seats in the government [2] The increase of female political leaders across the globe is an evidence that gender equality is highly observed. Thus, women public servants are seen to bring about diverse and fresh takes on political and social matters that can

impressively contribute to policy-making principally on the aspect of gender equality. While the world has achieved progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment under the Millennium Development Goals (including equal access to primary education between girls and boys), women and girls continue to suffer discrimination and violence in every part of the world.

This scenario paved the way to strengthen gender equality not only in the Philippines but worldwide. As Roller posited, gender equality is having impartial access in all aspects of human endeavors from basic to complex [3]. These endeavours include equal admission to education, health care, suitable workplace and involvement in both political and economic activities [4].

Gender equality is not only an ultimate human right. Further it is an essential component in a progressive society to attain peace and harmony among the citizenry. This situation promotes a sustainable society, one of the global thrusts which every nation keeps on working for [4].

Modern democratic societies aim to achieve equality for both men and women among their members in terms of status and gender equality and must be promoted in all phases of life [5]. There were prominent women leaders whose advocacies were still remembered and followed. Among them were Corazon Aquino, Indira Gandhi and others.

Today in the field of politics, sex doesn't matter but it does on success, effectiveness and decision making [6]. Thus, regardless of gender, anyone can run into office as long as he/she is genuine on his service to protect the general welfare, he/she has effective decision making styles which would generate in the government and he/she could essentially contribute to the achievement of the common good.

The field of politics and public policy is probably one of the workplaces where it is obvious that women are most clearly outnumbered by men. [7] Ahmed emphasized that the adoption of national gender policy area in stressing gender representation in the political system is also an administrative tool in empowering and enabling women to develop their constituency. [8] This entails that the moment a woman runs for office, it is a clear manifestation of women representation in the society as well as the leeway that they could become great leaders carrying boundless chances for a successful government, through the robust and appropriate advocacies and strategies a woman official could vitally contribute.

Women are definitely rising and setting their rightful place politically. Conferring to Siobhan Corria, they are not just merely women – who work for the public's common interests and encourage women to stand in public office but they are as well entitled to a purpose of emboldening and changing other women's lives in taking a genuine concern in political decision-making. [9] In addition, women leaders are considered as agents in gender inequality reduction and eradication, they are grasped to be catalysts of addressing political encounters which would pave way for them to strongly put forth their relevant insights and elucidations on matters that mainly affect the welfare of womanhood and the country, as well. Nevertheless, given women's experience in discrimination and stereotyping, female leaders are expected to exert double effort to present their ideas [10].

Nevertheless, while men and women are fundamentally equal, the fact cannot be contested that women are in a few conditions depreciated in some electoral positions internationally and locally. The Philippines in particular, is still referred as a male dominated bureaucracy, even with the exerting efforts of the government in beholding the essential part of women in the society. With that, it is likewise quite comprehensible to note how women showed beyond doubt their potentials as excellent leaders of the world, over the course of time.

With all the previous studies presented, it is somehow evident to note that the notion of women immersing in the political arena and in all public fields, is perceived to be significant. Further, with the employed effort in the advocacy for gender equality, women's roles are likely to be more recognized in the society.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to gaze and describe Ms. X's journey as a 'Woman in Politics,' her beginnings, the challenges she encountered, her advocacies and achievements as a public servant and lastly, her message to her constituents.

Further, the researchers perceive the importance of keenly upholding women's political participation; hence desire to help improve the conventional notion on gender and equivalent involvement in politics.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a case-study research design, which gazes into the life of a sole individual informant. Stake emphasized that a case study can either be a single or a

multiple case. In this study, a single-case is used where the focus is a detailed description of the case, the individual key informant [11]. For Yin, a case study is an all-inclusive case design, where a single unit of analysis is concerned with a particular individual [12] aimed for learning more about an unresolved situation [13]. Moreover, Willis reiterated that a case study is an in-depth scientific investigation which looks into the present research problem [14].

Moreover, Zamal pointed out that a case study is an in-depth analysis of people, events, and relationships, bounded by some unifying factor. [15] It excels at bringing the readers to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. [16]

Consequently, this study presented the case of Ms. X of Cebu Province, in her representation and participation in politics and targets to provide a gist of how women participated and brought up empowerment in politics, especially in the modern times – in the means of studying and delving into Ms. X's journey in politics.

An interview guide was formulated by the researchers. The said interview guide was scrutinized and approved by the Research Professor. This guide was utilized throughout the formal interview with the individual key informant of this study. Moreover, a cellular phone was used in recording all the verbatim accounts the individual key informant provided aside from the field notes which other research team members collected. The recorded conversations were then transcribed from Visayan dialect to English for further analysis.

Aside from interviews, observations were also conducted by the researchers. The individual key informant's facial expressions, gestures, manner of talking and other observable mannerisms were also recorded. All of these data were gathered which came out naturally.

Documents in the form of newspaper clippings and other materials on file were also scrutinized as additional data of the study. These further validated the verbatim accounts which the researchers collected.

Triangulation was also used as another method for data analysis. Interviews, observations and documents were validated to countercheck the consistency and reliability of data.

Prior to data gathering, an informed consent in the form of a formal letter signed by the Research Professor was given to the Governor's Secretary. Such letter

allowed the researchers to have their site entry where interview schedules were furnished. Other pertinent documents were also requested from the office for an easier access to all data needed in the study.

After a day or two, the researchers received a call from the Secretary of the Governor's Office. This call was a signal to start collecting data. A convenient schedule to document everything was provided for a smooth data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A Leap of Fate: From Nutrition to Administration

Growing up, Ms. X never dreamed of entering into the realm of politics. As a matter of fact, her first love was really nutrition. She acquired a bachelor and baccalaureate degree in nutrition and she definitely had a very good education, even earned her masters and doctorate degree in the States. She was basically living a luxurious life, being raised in a very rich family which can suffice her needs and yearnings. However, she remained compassionate and humble.

Whilst she belongs to a family of businessmen and politicians, the thought of being a politician or a public servant never crossed her mind as she was very in love with the field of nutrition. Nevertheless, fate brought her to where she is right now - in the public office, genuinely rendering her whole heart and service to the populace.

Ms. X as a "Woman in Politics"

As a woman, Ms. X is naturally passionate and strong. She is also a great mother to her children and a loving wife to her husband. As she grew in world of politics as a woman public servant, she is much more driven and hardworking in rendering service to the people. Ms. X, instead of pursuing her nutrition degree where she studied, worked and concentrated hard, chose to enter into politics and bestowed her time in helping her constituents, principally the women and children in the society. She is a woman who functions as a forerunner to every other woman. She has a solid and firm principle and believes that every woman should have an equal opportunity in all of the fields in the government, especially in politics.

Ms. X's journey in politics commenced in 1972, at the age of 29 for she became a Vice Mayor of a particular city in the Province of Cebu. She was entitled as the youngest Vice Mayor in the whole Philippines at that time. Ms. X truthfully admitted that during that phase in her life, she actually had no idea of what

politics is all about yet what really driven her to run in public office was the utmost desire of her family to serve the City as it is their locality. In 1992, she became the Board Member of the 5th district of the Province where she was the lone lady board member during that time. Later on, she became the Vice-Governor of the Province.

From being an amateur in politics, Ms. X grew both as a woman and a public servant as she continued her journey in politics. As a Woman in Politics, Ms. X refers “service” as her concept of politics. She always wanted to be called a public servant and not a politician. She is basically a public servant leader. For Hanson, a servant leader takes the responsibility of improving those he/she serves while motivating them to offer quality service to others [17]. The concept of serving others first is the philosophy of a servant leader who makes each and every one showcase his/her best work [18].

As the interview continued, Ms. X said:

“To be a politician is to be a public servant.”

As to Ms. X, the only purpose for her existence now is to serve the people - nothing more, nothing less. As a leader, she ponders herself as transparent and a keen observer of integrity. Her leadership style is simply to “work hard, do good and serve the public.” For her, leadership has to do with good service and setting a good example for others to follow because when you do good and become a good example, everything else will follow. That is where she measures her triumph as a leader, “when others follow her footsteps.” She likewise stresses out that to be a leader is to be a real servant, and that leadership and service should at all times go hand in hand.

For her, the words “humble and “passionate” best set out her character as a public servant. She has always been humble of all the compliments she receives for her upstanding work in the office. She is even referred as one of the ideal women of the Province. To Ms. X, everybody should acquire the benefits they truly deserve, whether you are an ally or an opponent. She sees politics as winning the hearts of people, drawing them close to you and not the other way around. As a public servant, her compassion, competence and expertise are very much reflected in her leadership. She sees to it that the highest priority needs of her constituents are very much served [16].

Humps and Bumps: The Challenges Amidst Service

Ms. X encountered several hurdles in her sail in public service. One of her challenges, and which she well-thought-out as the biggest one, was when she acted as the Governor of Cebu Province. It was the period when the incumbent Governor was suspended for six months, because of some serious offenses. At this period, she had to balance her time because she has the acting capacity as Governor as well as she still holds the position as Vice Governor, plus she has other matters particularly on Women, Children and Tourism.

Ms. X, with this huge pressure put on her with the newly assigned duty, was bombarded with a lot of labor. There were many sleepless nights finishing different reports for the creditors, some of the project proposals were obstructed by other members of the Provincial Board, major legislations were pending, raid and rescue operations for women and children victims of all forms of violence and abuse were ongoing and she was having a tough time balancing the interest of the Governor and the Provincial Board, as well as balancing the movements inside the office. There were also different alleged anomalies being broadcasted over the radio and the television, media reporters were throwing baseless comments against the Capitol. There were even death threats sent to Ms.X, which really affected her health given that she is asthmatic. She was on the brink of giving up. Ms. X during that shaky time, has somehow uttered these words:

“Surrender nako oy!”(I want to surrender!)

“Paita oy, magtinarong ta ug trabaho naa man gihapon mag binuang nato.” (How difficult it is that even though you do good in your work, there are still people who continue to trouble you.)

Behind these waves of dilemmas, stress and anxieties, Ms. X managed to espouse the positive spirit, and persisted the hard job with her methodical strategy. She always sees things in order, and always confirms things first before doing any such necessary move. She is very passionate and committed to her service as a public servant. Hence, if you’re passionate and committed about a certain thing, you’re willing to suffer for it.

Ms. X as “Lady Lotus”: Advocacies, Achievements and Legacy

Ms. X centered her advocacies mainly on Women and Children. She lobbied the creation of the Committee on Women and Children and authored the Provincial Women’s Commission. In 2005, she authored the Comprehensive Code on Women or the Women Development Code of Cebu Province which recognizes and upholds protection of the rights and dignity of women in Cebu. In 2006, she likewise authored the ordinance which created the Children’s Code of Cebu Province. With these advocacies of Ms. X, achievements were indeed evident. In result, she won the 2016 election as Vice- Governor, and she felt grateful and appreciative to the Cebuanos who kept on trusting her. She even said:

“Ganahan pa gyud diay ang mga Cebuanos nako.”
(The Cebuanos still really like me).

Ms. X became more passionate and motivated with her service, given her flexibility and multitasking skills She can do the signing of pertinent papers and entertain visitors who wish see to her at the office at the same time. She goes to far-flung barangays of the Province only to see and check out what she could do to help. She also revolved more on her advocacy on Women and Children, considering it as one of her biggest accomplishments as a woman public official. Ms. X even uttered:

“Today, things have become a lot better for women.”

Going in the field of tourism, which is also one of her main advocacies, Ms. X drafted the Child Sex Ordinance which has specific provisions on punishing people who are uploading nude videos and photos in the internet. In addition, she said that we have to be vigilant on things like this because the Philippines is the 4th Sex Tourism Country – Cebu, in particular. Further, Ms. X was appointed by the Governor to handle the “Our Cebu Program” which is an excellent program. It was created way back 2008 carrying the main objective - to make Cebu a wholesome place to live, work, play and do business. She was even hesitant to narrate all of her achievements because as to her, “it’s better done than said.”

Ms. X is a very Confucian woman. She even shared her favorite line which is “Be a Lotus”. She illuminated to us that, the lotus, although situated in the

dirty waters in a dirty pond, still manages to remain pure and beautiful. Comparing it to herself, she always maintains her good performance in the public office in spite of the fact that she is encircled by people of diverse norms, character and values.

For Ms. X, her concept of honesty is stated as:

“Bahala ug mangurakot na sila diha basta ako, di gyud ko. Mao na kamo, ayaw gyud mo.”(I do not care if they do corruption, as for me, I would never do the same thing no matter what happens. So you, don’t ever do that).

Profoundly to herself, she is Lady Lotus, a pure, and honest public servant Honesty in service and in all her political activities are her best weapons to fight corruption.

A Note to Her Constituents

Ms. X, divulged having no plans of running again in 2019, as she will be in her retiring age. With that, she has a message to leave to her beloved constituents. She stresses out that, “Improvements on work attitude should be given importance as it is very critical. It has to be developed and enriched so that it won’t be a problem in the public office.” She also emphasized her message to the youths who are now under the shadow of high technology. She advises the youth to become more watchful with the rise of technology and be more responsible. Most importantly, she encouraged and inspired young women to enter into the political arena, not essentially to be a politician, but just to serve the public and make a difference.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In capsule, Ms. X’s journey is grasped to be an epitome of leadership success in the public office. Commencing from being amateur and innocent in the political field, she blossomed into a passionate public servant. She has brought up a quite number of robust and truthful advocacies, especially on the range of women and children. She somehow ascertained that, an empowered woman like her can stand up and represent every other woman in the society to the field of politics and can surpass every challenge and ridicule being thrown upon her, and yes, she did. She did it both smoothly and sturdily without stepping down on other people’s lives.

Further, the journey of Ms. X in politics is truly an inspiration to young women who aspires to set foot in politics. Her legacy of honesty, integrity and real service, as relating oneself to a “lotus” definitely offers a huge motivation to the youth, especially the women youth to pursue in public service. If Ms.X, made it through amidst all of the obstacles, then other women, even the lesbian, gays, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) could do it likewise. One’s gender does not sum up who someone is as a public servant, it’s just a matter of the innate spirit of dedication and genuine service to the populace.

In connection, it is therefore recommended that the government conducts more initiatives concerning women representation and empowerment as well as the mainstreaming of gender equality in politics. Further programs that escalate women involvement and participation in improving their skills and capabilities in diverse fields in the society should also be introduced and present programs relating to the latter should be advanced.

Moreover, further researches should also be done for substantiation of women representation and gender inequity matters. Fruitful and relevant documentaries of other emboldening stories of women in the field of politics who exemplified utmost enthusiasm and passion in politics and public service should also be instigated.

REFERENCES

- [1] Philippine Initiatives to promote women’s leadership and political participation. Retrieved November 26, 2016 from: <https://goo.gl/PJa2Z8>
- [2] Smee, S. & Woodroffe, J. (2013). Achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment in the post-2015 framework. The Gender and Development Network. Retrieved November 26, 2017 from <http://www.gadnetwork.org.uk/>
- [3] Rolleri, L. (2012a). Understanding Gender and Gender Equality. A publication of the Act for Youth Center of Excellence. New York: EngenderHealth. Retrieved January 30, 2018 from <https://goo.gl/kgkqh2>
- [4] Sustainable Development Goals 17 Goals to Transform Our World, Retrieved January 20, 2018 from <https://goo.gl/D4MjbN>
- [5] Culie, I. (2012). The image of politician women in the Romanian media. Retrieved November 26, 7 from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1372159299?accountid=141440>
- [6] Momongan, Cuizon, Godinez, Mendoza, Polinar, (2012). *Decision Making Styles of Women Local Leaders in Cebu City*.
- [7] Hakim, C. (2006). Women, careers, and work-life preferences. Retrieved November 26, 2016 from <https://goo.gl/u5LHjG>
- [8] Ahmed, K. (2013). Women Political Participation and Decision Making in Hargeisa, Somaliland. Retrieved from November 26, 2016 from <https://goo.gl/M7ucvn>
- [9] Marsh, S. (2014). Why is local politics still dominated by men? The guardian.
- [10] _____ (2002). Leadership modules for women with disabilities (A Training Manual). National council for the welfare of disabled persons.
- [11] Stake, R. E. (2008) Qualitative Case Studies. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds) *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*. Sage Publications: Los Angeles. Ch. 17.
- [12] Yin, R. K. (2009) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. SAGE Publications Ltd: London.
- [13] Njie, B. & Asmiran, S. (May-June 2014). Case Study as a Choice in Qualitative Methodology. IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education. Vol. 4 No. 3 Ver. 1. Retrieved January 25, 2018 from www.iosrjournals.org
- [14] Willis, Ben. (July 2014). The Advantages and Limitations of Single Case Study Analysis. University of Plymouth. Retrieved February 2, 2018 from <https://goo.gl/Db3uTx...>
- [15] Zainal, Z. (2007). Case Study as a Research Method. Retrieved February 01, 2017 from <https://goo.gl/pty1xQ>
- [16] Soy, S. (2006) The Case Study as a Research Method. Retrieved February 01, 2017 from <https://goo.gl/J37gcQ>
- [17] Hanson, J. T. (June 2011). Public Servant Leadership: A new paradigm for public service. Government Finance Review. Retrieved February 2, 2018 from <https://goo.gl/kNJ6ot>
- [18] Public Servant or Servant Leader | - How Gov Leads (May 2014). Retrieved February 2, 2018 from <https://goo.gl/jpSVKt>

COPYRIGHTS

Copyright of this article is retained by the author/s, with first publication rights granted to APJMR. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4>)