ATENEO
Magisterial Lecture Series
WOMEN ON TOP:
The Career Development Journey
of Filipina Business Executives in the Philippines

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With one word, what comes to mind when you hear the word “CEO?”
TOP 3 ANSWERS GIVEN IN AN OD FORUM

Leader
Visionary
Male
In one to two words, how would you describe the “Filipina CEO?”
TOP 3 ANSWERS GIVEN IN AN OD FORUM

Gaining recognition
Uncommon
Brilliant and rare
BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

• UNESCO (2017) reported that gender inequality in leadership positions still persists globally.

• Grant Thornton International (2018) also reported that women in Japan occupy only 5% of senior management positions with an average of 23% from the Asia-Pacific countries.

• However, in the same 2018 study, the Filipina women executives comprised 46.58%.
THE “WOMEN ON TOP…” STUDY


• Paper also presented at the 56th Annual Convention of the Psychological Association of the Philippines, SMX Convention Center, Davao City, 18-20 September 2019.

THE “WOMEN ON TOP…” STUDY
METHODOLOGY

- In-depth interviews were conducted among seven (7) Filipina CEOs.

- Industries covered in this study were considered male-dominated where women constituted “25% or less... in total employment.”

- Accounting, automotive, aviation, banking, financial and media were identified, where women generally find difficulty in advancing or in leading.
## PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CEOs</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Years in top leadership position</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Religion</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>President and CEO</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Graduate degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Managing Director/Country Head</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>College degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chairperson and CEO</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Advanced Management Program</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Automotive</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>College degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Aviation</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>College degree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>President and CEO</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Media</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Advanced Management Program</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Automotive</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>College Degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Three key questions were asked during the interviews:

1. Please share the story of how you became a business/corporate executive.

2. What challenges/barriers have you experienced and conquered in your journey as a woman leader?

3. What are the factors that contributed to your success?
Three phases tracked the career development journey of the Filipina CEOs that participated in the study:

1. Growing Up Years
2. Career Advancement & Raising a Family
3. Becoming & Being the CEO
1. GROWING UP YEARS

(CEO 1) “I was fortunate to be raised by parents who really put emphasis in doing everything well. They never said that you can’t do anything because you’re female.”

(CEO 2) “Korean and Japanese women...walk behind men” and stated that “in the Philippines, being a woman is not a disadvantage” and that “there’s no glass ceiling for women.”
(CEO 5) “My mother always made sure we knew how to cook. ...knew how to do all the household work which the boys were spared of.... Oh I hated it!,”

(CEO 3) “Our society, women however successful, ultimately will be judged based on how successful your children are...”
2. CAREER ADVANCEMENT & RAISING A FAMILY

(CEO 7)
“...they value diversity. ...HR actually had a KPI of how diverse the team is. So, it was intentional that there was a mix not only on gender, but also our background.”

(CEO 4)
“I owe it to (company) because they make it their objective. You do cross functional. There’s career pathing. They really do this intentionally by looking into your potentials.”

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<tr>
<th>Enablers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career Pathing and Diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Advancement and Raising a Family</td>
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<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectations as a Mother</td>
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CULTURAL

WOMEN ON TOP: THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY OF FILIPINA BUSINESS EXECUTIVES IN THE PHILIPPINES
2. CAREER ADVANCEMENT & RAISING A FAMILY

(CEO 1)
“...as a parent... while they are growing up, you’re always doubting yourself. ...are you spending enough time with them? How will they turn out when they are older?... it’s not so much the time you spend with them, but what they learn from you in the time you were with them.”

(CEO3)
“The ideal typical mother would teach her child and prepare sample exams... On your part as a working mother, this maybe frustrating. You will likely be doing these study sessions at 9:00 in the evening, you’re tired while your child is sleepy.”
### 3. BECOMING AND BEING THE CEO

#### CULTURAL

**ORGANIZATIONAL & FAMILIAL**

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<tr>
<th>Enlightened Husband</th>
<th>Male Mentors/Role Models</th>
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#### Enablers

- **CEO**
  - Spirituality
  - Competitive but not ambitious
  - Speaks her mind
  - Can do attitude
  - Accountability
  - Openness to learn and continually re-invents self

#### Challenges

- Limited Representation in the Boardroom
- Discrimination as Women Leaders
- Women not seen as Leaders
- Husband’s Ego

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(CEO 6)  
“A lot of support from a husband who’s very secure and who’s selfless. You need a partner who’s very supportive. You can’t do it on your own.”
3. BECOMING AND BEING THE CEO

(CEO 1)
“My male Boss took the time to talk to me because it was how you understood the culture... how they decide, the way they think... they spend time with you and they shape your thinking.”

(CEO 5).
“I learned a lot from (male mentor) about managing people, about making hard decisions, about not panicking when things look like they’re about to go wrong. It’s always stay calm, think! There are always solutions...”
(CEO 2)  
“I’m in the...board, I am the only woman...it’s still predominantly men.”

(CEO 7)  
“...to this day, I still stand out like a sore thumb...because well, I’m shorter than all of them. I have to bring my highest heels (laughs). I was the only lady in the entire team.”
3. BECOMING AND BEING THE CEO

(CEO 5)
“During the hearings...a male lawyer said so Ms... you’re the CEO of.... What were your previous qualifications? He was alluding to me having no... experience. And I wanted to tell him, you know if I was a man, you would never ask me that question? Would you ask (male CEO competitor) what he was doing before he acquired (competitor company)? (raised voice). But my lawyer was kicking me under the table and whispered to just stay calm (laughs).”
3. BECOMING AND BEING THE CEO

(CEO 7) “You really have to make the decision and get everybody behind you. That’s important because sometimes, they think I’m a woman.”

(CEO 3) “Generally, there is a belief that the leader must be decisive. And the general bias is towards a male leader because this trait is possessed by men. Interestingly, if a woman possessed said characteristic, then we start to tag her as iron lady. So, in my case, I’m an iron lady!”

CULTURAL
ORGANIZATIONAL & FAMILIAL

Enablers
Enlightened Husband
Male Mentors/Role Models

CEO
Spirituality
Competitive but not ambitious
Speaks her mind
Can do attitude
Accountability
Openness to learn and continually re-invents self

Challenges
Limited Representation in the Boardroom
Discrimination as Women Leaders
Women not seen as Leaders
Husband’s Ego
3. BECOMING AND BEING THE CEO

(CE0 7) "It became difficult when I became President because of course he’d (husband) always accompany me in social functions... and people would ask him ‘so where are you connected?’ ‘Oh so what do you do there?’ and it’s a little bit difficult for the man’s ego. ...so he’d start begging off on certain events. We’ve managed to cope by talking about it.”

CULTURAL

ORGANIZATIONAL & FAMILIAL

Enablers

- Enlightened Husband
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CEO

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- Discrimination as Women Leaders
- Women not seen as Leaders
- Husband’s Ego
3. BECOMING AND BEING THE CEO

(CEO 2)  
“I am a prayerful person...that helped me go through a lot of things even in my personal life.”

CEO 6)  
“Competition was very tough because we were number five...and we were able to bring it to where it is now...the number 1 position.”

(CEO 1)  
“I initially turned down the CEO position... so when I came home I told my husband ‘my boss is asking me to consider it’ and I said to my husband ‘I really don’t want to accept it.’ The next day, I went back and told my boss I’m turning it down. He spent the next hour telling me all the reasons why I should take it”
(CEO 5) “Everybody knows, I’m very outspoken…. I speak out, so it scares some people because they say, you can get chewed off.”

(CEO 1) “I never said no” when “being given more and more accountabilities.”
(CEO 2)  
“I don’t think all the decisions I made were correct. But even if it turned out to be bad, I know that it was well intentioned....”

(CEO 1)  
“You have to be willing to learn...and try to be a quick learner.” She added “nobody is ever ready to be CEO...you just learn along the way.”
MODEL SUMMARIZING THE CAREER JOURNEY OF THE FILIPINA CEO

CULTURAL

ORGANIZATIONAL & FAMILIAL

Enablers

Enablers

Parents’ Support
Equal Opportunity
Culture

CAREER ADVANCEMENT & RAISING A FAMILY

Career Pathing
& Diversity

Enabler

Enabler

Enlightened Husband
Male Mentors/Role Models

CEO

Spirituality
Competitive but not ambitious
Speaks her mind
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Accountability
Openness to learn and continually
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Challenges

Challenges

Limited Representation in the
Boardroom
Discrimination as Women Leaders
Women not seen as Leaders
Husband’s Ego

Women as In-
Charge of
Households

Expectations as a
Mother

WOMEN ON TOP: THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY OF FILIPINA BUSINESS EXECUTIVES IN THE PHILIPPINES

(Osi and Teng-Calleja, 2021)
Give one recommendation that an organization can undertake to encourage more Filipinas to reach for the top.
TOP 3 ANSWERS GIVEN IN AN OD FORUM

Childcare support system
Program on diversity and inclusion
Leadership and mentorship programs
1. Top management may identify and form a talent pool of potential leaders that deliberately includes women whom shall undergo leadership trainings.

2. Organizations may consider institutionalizing programs in mentoring, career pathing and gender diversity with set targets for women.

3. Organizations may explore providing extensive support through childcare programs and facilities for women.
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