

Gender Equity

Lack of Female Leadership in Public Administration

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Executive Summary

The “glass ceiling” still exists for women in Public Administration. This metaphoric obstacle typically stops women from advancing to their full potential in leadership roles. On a global scale, women make up less than 1/3 of executive positions according to a report from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and researchers from the Gender Inequality Research Lab (GIRL) at the University of Pittsburgh in September 2021. In the state of New Jersey, specifically, according to a March 2018 data report, about 45 percent of women hold higher-level positions that require college degrees and typically offer higher wages and employment benefits (Research, Institute for Women Policy, 2018). Despite some progress, the reports demonstrate that continual gaps remain, and women’s numbers decline when higher levels of power come into play. While there’s been progress on women’s representation in public administration in many countries, women are still significantly outnumbered by men in leadership and decision-making positions. Additional UNDP and GIRL research efforts indicate that women make up 46 percent of public administrators but occupy only 31 percent of managerial positions and represent only 30 percent of executive-level management. Considering such statistics, we are recommending that the state adopt legislature that mandates employers to implement family friendly allowances such as remote work, so that women who are parenting can effectively manage work-life balance. Furthermore, all employers should adopt sensitivity training that emphasize diversity, equity and inclusion education aimed at helping employees at all levels and in all departments to do better work with colleagues of different identities, cultures, and backgrounds.

Statement of the Problem:

There is a noticeable lack of female leadership in Public Administration. So noticeable that “gender equality” is one of the seventeen identified Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on the 2030 Agenda adopted by world leaders back in the year 2015. Women in every part of the world continue to be underrepresented in decision-making levels. Globally, women make up 38 percent of managers and only 31 percent of high-level leaders. These statistics reveal a far too common pattern: As the level of decision-making authority increases, the number of women decreases. Moreover, another palpable trend is women remaining concentrated in specific areas and starkly underrepresented in others. Numbers for female civil servants are highest in agencies focused on women’s issues, health, and education, while being severely underrepresented in fifteen of the most common twenty policy areas. Public Works and Transportation fields have reported the lowest employment of women (United Nations Development Programme, 2021). Additionally, the above trend is believed to be heavily influenced by the theory that there is conscientious effort to pigeon hold women in jobs where they are inconspicuous and less likely to see opportunities for advancement. Despite the surge of female representation in healthcare, a 2019 World Health Organization (WHO) report showed that female healthcare workers are concentrated in lower-

status occupations such as midwives and nurses, while men continue to prevail among doctors and other high-level medical specialists (Mukhtarova, Baig, & Hasnain, 2021).

According to the Center for American Women in Politics (CAWP), a research and scholarship branch of Rutgers' Eagleton Institute of Politics, the following numbers currently represent women in New Jersey government: Two (2) members in Congress out of 14; one (1) statewide Elected Executive; fifteen (15) staff members in the Governor's cabinet out of 25 positions; forty-two (42) State Legislators out of 120 seats; forty-nine (49) County Commissioners out of 135; twenty-one (21) County Constitutional Officers out of 65; nine (9) Mayors of cities with over 30,000 residents out of 76; eighty-five (85) Mayors of cities with less than 30,000 residents out of 489; ten (10) County Party Chairs out of 42; and three (3) on the State Supreme Court out of 7. (Center for American Women and Politics, 2022) These numbers do not include executive leadership in contracted public, social, and/or nonprofit human service agencies and organizations.

With regards to the non-profit sector, research shows that 75 percent of all workers and/or volunteers are women. However, only 45 percent of these women will go on to secure leadership positions at any of these non-profit organizations. Moreover, only 21 percent of these women in executive positions will be entrusted with budgets of \$25m. Furthermore, due to the often-deceptive constraints on workforce intersectionality, women of color face even more opposition from the industry, where 89 percent of nonprofit executives and 80 percent of all board members are white (Renock, 2017).

The lack of female leadership is also largely in part to circumstances involving gender biases and stereotyping. Many companies view women as liabilities following the #MeToo movement in which many men were depicted (or exposed) as being sexist, misogynistic, or insensitive towards femininity. There are implicit sentiments that emphasize men being the more mentally sound, superior, and logical than that of women. And many times, women are challenged with the struggle of balancing life and work, leaving them with no other choice than to choose one over the other.

Economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and equity are the four pillars of Public Administration. Social equity is the working dedication to fairness, equality and justice in the creation of public policy, distribution of public services, and management of all organizations serving the public directly or by contract (Guy & Ely, 2022). Gender equity is being respectful and fair, regardless of one's biological sex or identified gender. It can be surmised that women are expected to exemplify more – academically, socially, even aesthetically – as they are stereotypically perceived as being less capable of doing anything as well as a man can do. Across various cultures, men are viewed as being the more capable, putting women in the position of needing to go above and beyond the minimal standards to which men are held to validate their worth (D.I., 2019).

Background:

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was drafted in 1923 by New Jersey native and attorney, Alice Paul, following the passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920. The amendment was drafted to guarantee legal gender equality for women and men. The Constitution had been strongly influenced by the English Common Law which did not regard women as legal persons, but rather as the property of their fathers or husbands. The ERA was officially passed by

Congress in 1972, but the constitutional amendment required authorization by three-fourths of the country (38 states) by 1979 but was extended to 1982 (KS Branigan, P.C., 2021).

In 1945, the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (NJ LAD) was enacted and became the foundational standard for workplace protections of race, national origin, creed, national origin, or ancestry, and other “protected categories.” Moreover, the NJ LAD did not specifically prohibit discrimination based on sex and marital status until 1970. In 1947, New Jersey modified its State Constitution, changing all mentions of “men” to “persons”, demonstrating to the courts that women appreciate constitutional protections in employment and property that are equal to those of men. The following 50 years brought forth several, constructive amendments to the policy, which included the prevention of discrimination based on affectional or sexual orientation (1991), familial status (1992), disability (2003), domestic partnership status (2003), civil union status (2006), and gender identity or expression (2007). In January 2014, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA) was signed into law as an amendment to the existing state LAD policy, providing not only protection from discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, but also the right to reasonable, pregnancy-related accommodations. And finally, in March 2019, one final approved amendment (to date) was made to the NJ LAD prohibiting any provision in an employment contract that waives any substantive or procedural right or remedy relating to a claim of discrimination, retaliation, or harassment, deeming them unenforceable and against public policy (KS Branigan, P.C., 2021). There is a pending amendment which is intended to expand anti-harassment protections.

Several other state specific policies, laws, and protections have been enacted over the years, including the *Temporary Disability Benefits* for ‘disabilities’ including pregnancy (1948); *New Jersey Family Leave Act* which protects employees that need time off to care for a newborn (1989); the NJ Supreme Court made a decision on standards of liability for employers regarding sexual harassment cases in the state (1992); *Family Leave Insurance* which offers a financial benefit for child/parent bonding after birth (2008); *New Jersey Security and Financial Empowerment Act* (NJ SAFE Act) which provides employment protections for victims of domestic violence and/or their caregivers (2013); *Diane B. Allen Equal Pay Act* which prohibits an employer from paying employees that are members of a protected class at a rate of compensation less than the rate paid to other employees without a justifiable reason (2018); and the *Salary History Ban* which prohibits employers from inquiring about a prospective employee’s wage and salary history (2019) (KS Branigan, P.C., 2021).

To further show the long and tumultuous road that has been paved by and for women in public administration, it is crucial to consider these national facts. The first Presidential election was held in 1789. The first Women’s Rights Convention did not occur until 1848. The first woman (Victoria Woodhull) to ever run for president on the ‘Equal Rights Party’ ticket was in 1872. The first three women elected to any kind of state legislature (Clara Cressingham, Carrie C. Holly, and Frances Klock) occurred in 1894. The first female State Senator (Martha Hughes Cannon) was elected in 1896. The first female elected to Congress (Jeannette Rankin) occurred in 1916. The country elected its first female Governor (Nellie Taylor Ross) in 1925. The first woman to ever serve in a Presidential cabinet (Frances Perkins) occurred in 1933. The first black woman to serve on Congress (Shirley Chisholm) occurred in 1968. The first woman to ever sit on the U.S. Supreme Court (Sandra Day O'Connor) occurred in 1981. The first U.S. Attorney General (Janet Reno) was appointed in 1993. The first woman to ever be on a national Republican ticket (Sarah Palin) as a

vice presidential running mate occurred in 2008. And the first woman formally selected as a major party's presidential nominee (Hillary Clinton) occurred only six years ago, in 2016. (Center for American Women and Politics, 2022)

Recommendations:

1. Statewide Work/Family Accommodation Options

Policy reform should be incorporated into public administration agencies and organizations across New Jersey to reflect employers' options for mandated family-friendly accommodations that allow for balanced work/family life. This includes the option of remote work, with at least 50 percent of horizontal (linear) and vertical (hierarchical) positions being tailored to fit the ever-growing shift to digital democracy. Or the option of an agency providing on-site childcare and/or transportation, corresponding to the employer's daily work hours. While many employers already offer parental leave, adoption benefits, caregiving leave for a spouse or domestic partner, and bereavement leave, it is necessary for all employers to shift from the old to the new digital age. These changes should include policies that lean towards flexible scheduling and on-site childcare. These added accommodations will allow employers to minimize the challenges that exist between balancing work and home. This kind of flexibility will provide support systems that encourage employees to thrive, as they will feel less like they must choose between careers and family. The disadvantages to this concept may include the expenses and liabilities associated with on-site daycare centers; possibly onsite safety issues for children; accurate employee performance assessment; and/or the technology needed may simply be too costly to sustain for certain employers. In this given situation, the focus should be placed on remote work scheduling.

2. Mandated Trainings

Sensitivity training that emphasizes diversity, equity and inclusion education aimed at helping employees at all levels and in all departments to better work with colleagues of different identities, cultures, and backgrounds. Gender sensitivity and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training needs to be incorporated into all employers' pre-service training in the state, regardless of the field. Advantages associated with a workplace that acknowledges the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion can encourage a healthy and support work environment. It can keep employees engaged, bring awareness to commonly unconscious biases, improve the sharing of ideas and problem-solving skills, reduce employee turnover, and assist in preventing legal issues that may arise from bullying, harassment, and intimidation. Employees are likely to feel more motivated to work alongside their colleagues in an environment that promotes diversity, equity and inclusion. However, some possible disadvantages to mandated Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training may include transitional challenges and short-term (but accumulating) costs associated with implementing new policies. Older employees may be stuck in their ways and initially resistant to change. Moreover, hiring consultants to analyze and/or provide training to an organization can range anywhere from \$150 to \$250 an hour. In this case, existing organization leadership needs to be prepared to focus on incorporating the costs associated with mandated training into their budgets accordingly.

3. *Make Quantifiable Data Readily Available*

New Jersey state government should consider partnering with Pipeline Equity Inc., a Denver-based consulting firm that increases financial performance through closing the gender equity gap. Pipeline's trademarked platform uses artificial intelligence to assess, address and act against gender biases costing the country \$2 trillion each year. The firm can provide individualized consultation, ultimately providing public service and government contracted public service agencies, with a clear definition of where the organization currently stands in terms of gender equity, where it wants to go and how it's going to get there (Pipeline Equity, Inc., 2022). Moreover, the commitment to making more quantifiable data available to track progress on women in decision making, leadership roles within public service, should be reinforced and heavily invested in. This data collection on gender equity in public administration and its availability to the public will further support evidence-based policy and programming. Additionally, the collection and analyzation of intersectional data on the inequalities faced by women in participation and leadership in public administration can be used to develop efficient solutions.

Conclusion

To ensure social and gender fairness, tactics must be available to counteract women's historical and social disadvantages that prevent them from operating on a leveled playing field with men. Information awareness, advocacy, and urgency are integral components for efficient change. The #MeToo Movement played a crucial role in pushing many states to reevaluate legal protections and allowances for women. While New Jersey has pioneered in such efforts and continues to make significant progress with transforming women's rights in the workplace, there remains room for improvement and innovative ideas on advancement, at both the state and federal level, to ensure women receive true equality.

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