

How Secure are Women and Young Professionals Working in Global Nutrition Sciences?

Duque T*

Global Nutrition and Public Health, Colombia

***Corresponding author:** Tiffany Duque, Global Nutrition and Public Health, Colombia, Tel: +57 301 795 7551; Email: tngust@gmail.com

Editorial

Volume 3 Issue 2

Received Date: September 04, 2019

Published Date: September 20, 2019

DOI: 10.23880/whsj-16000134

Editorial

How can we encourage outstanding young researchers from all over the world and from all fields of nutrition to develop their careers in nutrition and to become part of a global network of future nutrition leaders? I propose a series of questions and subsequently elaborate my views on the future of leadership in nutrition, focused on how to evolve and strengthen as a field.

- Why do women scientists potentially have to choose between caring for a family and having a PhD? It is not always possible or desirable to do both, and opportunity should be given to all, recognizing the many varieties of positions in global nutrition sciences.
- What responsibilities do global nutrition NGOs, government organizations, and other institutions have in securing the futures of their women employees, rather than just the futures of the women and families enrolled in their studies and community programs? And for their non-doctoral scientists?
- Why is paid maternity leave, equal pay for men and women, family leave, and fair and just contracts not commonplace in our field?
- The field and study of global nutrition and public health are in general woman-heavy; however, most congresses, forums, initiatives, and organizations are led by more men than women. What does this imply for the security of leadership and career growth of women in nutrition?
- Why does nutrition advocate so heavily for women's strength and empowerment, but does not routinely apply these same theories within our workforce?

The role of leadership is undeniably important and includes education and experience in leadership, management, finance, and technology. We must provide opportunity for colleagues with these skills in order to foster ideal conditions for the future of leadership in global nutrition. We will always need and rely on doctoral-level science, yet must recognize those who do not have or cannot get a PhD. It's time to move into the future by allowing young scientists and public health professionals from all countries to fill roles according to their strengths, acknowledging that our field will become stronger if future leaders, especially women, are given an equal opportunity to sustain maternal and child health starting with their own families, and are empowered to pursue less traditional roles. We also live in an era of remarkable technology, providing exceptional flexibility and opportunity for growth.

Participating in this field as a woman, mother of young children, and non-PhD scientist provides insight into prospects for improving the ways in which our field currently operates. I am raising two young children while moving around the world with my husband for his employment. In the four countries where we have lived, I have found global nutrition work through tenacity and determination, and so have become a nutrition scientist with a varied skill set, including leadership skills, the ability to work in challenging environments, comfort with risk, and sensitivity to cultural differences. I very much enjoy and am passionate about my work and colleagues and I have gained so much, but have also been the contractor treated unfairly by giant nutrition NGOs and the government employee not given paid maternity leave,

thus giving me the personal experience and motivation to move the field into the future.

Other industries have goals and strategies for diversifying leadership. Without strategically and comprehensively taking steps to diversify our leadership, the field will suffer by losing high quality, top-performing women and young scientists to other fields. Women have moved into historically male jobs in white-collar fields more than in blue-collar. Yet the gender pay gap is largest in higher-paying white-collar posts. One reason may be that these jobs demand longer and less flexible hours, and research shows that workers are penalized for family care and wanting flexibility [1]. Studies show that companies with more women in leadership roles tend to be considered “higher quality” companies, with better returns on equity, and those that utilize female talent effectively are 45% more likely to report improved market share [2]. According to the World Economic Forum, countries with greater female representation are more prosperous and competitive [3].

When we empower our own women and young people in the global nutrition field and not just the vulnerable populations to whom we tailor our interventions, and when we apply to our own workforce the ideology that we apply to communities around the globe, our reach, impact and potential will become far greater.

References

1. Goldin C (2014) A Grand Gender Convergence: Its Last Chapter. *American Economic Review* 104(4): 1091-1119.
2. Lynne Doughtie (2017) *Forbes Publication: Inspiring Greatness: Advancing Women Leaders in the Workplace.*
3. World Economic Forum: *The Global Gender Gap Report 2015.*

