DILIMAN GENDER REVIEW

UP Diliman Gender Review

Ang *UP Diliman Gender Review* (DGR) ay upisyal na dyornal ng UP Diliman Gender Office (UPDGO). Bilang pagsasakatuparan ng mandato nitong *gender mainstreaming,* naglalathala ito ng mga pangkasariang pananaliksik, mapanlikhang sulatin, rebyu ng mga iskolar na lathalain pati na rin ng mas popular na porma ng midya. Layon nitong magtanghal at magpalaganap ng mga bagong kaalaman at mapalakas ang talastasang pangkasarian na maaaring gamitin sa gawaing pagtuturo, administrasyon at serbisyo publiko habang isinusulong ang progresibo at makabuluhang panglipunang hustisya at pagbabago para sa lahat ng kasarian.

Tungkol sa Pabalat

Ang pabalat para sa *UP Diliman Gender Review Special Issue* ay nagpapakita ng mga paghihirap na pinagdaanan ng iba't ibang sektor ng Pilipinas sa gitna ng pandemya. Ang mga mahahalagang sektor ng lipunan tulad ng mga manggagawa sa mga ospital, mga maralitang pamilya, mga tsuper ng jeepney at mga uring manggagawa ay nakaranas ng maraming problema sa panahong ito. Ang pabalat na ito ay nagpapakita kung paano ang kawalan ng pagkilos ng gobyerno ay nagdala ng gutom, hirap at pagkadalamhati sa mga taong ito. Likhang sining ito ni Ma. Angela Luz Espinosa.

UP Diliman Gender Review

The *Diliman Gender Review* (DGR) is the official journal of the UP Diliman Gender Office (UPDGO). As part of the UPDGO's fulfillment of its mandate of gender mainstreaming, the DGR features articles on gender research, creative works, and reviews of scholarly works and popular media productions. The journal aims to showcase, strengthen, and disseminate new knowledge on gender discourse, which can be utilized in teaching, public work, and service while promoting progressive and meaningful social transformation and justice for all genders.

About the Cover

The cover for this special issue of the *Diliman Gender Review* showcases the struggles that various sectors form the Philippines faced amidst the pandemic. Important sectors of society like healthcare workers, low income families, jeepney drivers, the working class encountered many difficulties in this times. This cover showcases how the government inaction brought a lot if distraught to these people. The cover is an artwork by Ma. Angela Luz Espinosa.

Diliman Gender Review
Special Issue 2024

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PASASALAMAT

Taos-puso naming pinasasalamatan ang mga kontribyutor ng isyu na ito. Napakahalaga ng kanilang dedikasyon sa pananaliksik at pag-aaral tungkol sa iba't ibang epekto ng pandaigdigang krisis sa kalusugan kaugnay ng mga isyung pangkasarian.

Lubos din naming pinasasalamatan ang mga rebyuwer, lupong tagapayo, at punong patunugot para sa kanilang dedikasyon at husay para mabuo ang nilalaman ng isyung ito.

Binibigyang-pugay din namin ang mga martir at bayani na nagsulong ng laban sa paglaya ng mga kasarian, at ng mamamayan. Patuloy naming pinapahalagahan ang kanilang mga sakripisyo na nagsisilbing inspirasyon para sa pagsusulong ng isang lipunang malaya at may katarungan.

Inaalala rin namin ang libu-libong buhay na nawala at mga labis na naapektuhan ng COVID-19 pandemic. Tanda ang kanilang danas ng nagpapatuloy na kawalang hustisya at sistematikong opresyon sa lipunan. Bukal ang kanilang tatag at paghihirap na nagbibigay-lakas sa ating panawagan para sa kolektibong pagkilos tungo sa isang tunay na lipunang malaya.

Alay ang bolyum na ito sa lahat na walang sawang nagsusulong ng pangkasarian at panglipunang hustisya. Hangad namin na magsilbing inspirasyon ang mga naratibong narito upang patuloy na mag-aral, maglingkod, at makibaka para sa ating misyon na itaguyod ang katarungang pangkasarian at panlipunan.

Mabuhay ang pananaliksik at praktika na nagsusulong ng pagkakapantay-pantay at pag-asa sa harap ng mga hamon!

LUPON NG PATNUGUTAN
DILIMAN GENDER REVIEW

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Paunang Salita

Sa lipunang patuloy na umuusad, napakamakabuluhan ng pagtatagpo ng usaping pangkasarian sa kultura, at politika sa pang-araw-araw nating buhay. Mula pa noon, naging lunsaran na ang Diliman Gender Review ng mga kritikal na diskurso at nagsusulong ng mga tunguhing mapanghamon na nagbibigay-hugis sa ating kaalamang pangkasarian sa iba't ibang konteksto.

Ang isyu na ito ay magmumula sa isang makasaysayang pagkakataon. Ito ay ang panahon kung kailan ang mga diskurso tungkol sa kasarian ay naiuugnay pa rin sa *mainstream* na mga isyu tulad ng hustisya, karapatang pantao, at *inclusivity*. Sa mga pahinang ito, gumamit ng iba't ibang malikhain at kantitatibong pamamaraan sa pananaliksik ang mga kontribyutor. Ilan lamang sa mga pananaliksik na naisama ay tungkol sa karahasan sa kasarian, mga isyu ng LGBTQ, peminismo at peministang edukasyon, at mga pagkilos mula sa batayang sektor. Makikita sa bawat artikulo ang pagsisikap na mag-ambag sa kaalaman at pagsasakatuparan ng layunin sa kagampan ng lipunang makatarungan na siyang ipinaglalaban ng Unibersidad.

Masasaksihan sa bolyum na ito ang patuloy na pakikibaka at mga napagtagumpayan tungo sa pagkakapantay-pantay ng mga kasarian kaya naman hinihikayat namin ang mga mambabasa na matamang siyasatin at sinsinin ang lalim at lawak ng mga naratibo at pagsusuri sa iba't ibang konteksto. Layon ng proyektong ito na mapatatag ang ating kolektibong pagunawa at hikayatin ang mga indibidwal at mga komunidad na aktibong lumahok sa paglikha ng isang inklusibong hustisya.

Ipinagmamalaki naming itanghal sa inyo ang pinakaunang espesyal na isyu ng Diliman Gender Review. Malaking pasasalamat sa mga may-akda, mga patnugot, rebyuwer, at mga katuwang na nagbigay ng kanilang lakas at dunong para sa publikasyon na ito. Nawa'y magsilbing inspirasyon ang mga isyu na ito ngayong 2024 para patuloy na maghangad ng isang lipunang mas mabuti, mas makatarungan at may pagkakapantay-pantay.

Sa pagkakaisa at pag-asa,

Anna Myrishia R. Villanueva
Tagapangulo, Lupon ng Tagapagpaganap
Diliman Gender Review

Foreword

In a society that is constantly evolving, the discourse around gender and its intersections with culture, politics, and everyday life have never been more relevant. *The Diliman Gender Review* has long been a platform dedicated to fostering critical discussions and promoting visions that question and reshape the notions of gender in a variety of contexts.

This issue emerges during a pivotal moment. It is a time or era where the debates about gender are still linked with mainstream issues such as justice, human rights, and inclusivity. Within these pages, our contributors have made an attempt to use a wide range of creative and qualitative approaches and practices, including but not limited to gender violence, LGBTQ issues, feminism and feminist education, and grassroots movements. Each and every article endeavors to contribute towards knowledge and fulfillment of just endeavors in society, which the University stands for.

This volume is a testament to the relentless and continuing struggles as well as the great achievements and triumphs in the quest for fair gender practices, and we urge readers to take time to assess and operationalize the depth of these narratives and analyses in their different contexts. This project intends both to strengthen our collective comprehension as well as motivate individuals and societies to participate in the creation of inclusive justice.

It gives us pleasure and appreciation to present to all of you this publication of this issue of *the Diliman Gender Review*. We would like to thank all the authors, editors, reviewers, and partners who contributed their energy and wisdom to this publication. May this compilation serve as a source of motivation for the desire and goodwill to change the world into a better, more just, and equitable global society.

In solidarity and hope,

Anna Myrishia R. Villanueva
Executive Board Chair
Diliman Gender Review

NILALAMAN

Kababaihan, Kasarian, at ang COVID-19 Pandemic: Krisis, Pagbangon, at Pakikibaka

Introduksyon

Diliman Gender Review: Espesyal na Isyu tungkol sa Kababaihan, Kasarian at Pandemya
(Salin ni Steph Andaya)

Ang Saklaw ng Pandemya

Nagbago ang buhay ng mga Pilipino sa kalakhan ng 2020, 2021 at sa unang bahagi ng 2022 dulot ng *coronavirus disease* (COVID-19) at sa pagpataw ng mahigpit na *lockdown* bilang tugon ng pamahalaan. Nagsara ang mga negosyo, opisina ng gobyerno at eskwela. Ipinagbawal ang pampubliko at pribadong transportasyon, nagkaroon ng limitasyon sa paglalakbay ng mga tao at may banta ng pagkakakulong sakaling lumabag dito. Inilipat naman sa *online* ang mga eskwela at mga opisinang pampubliko at pribado. Magtatagal ang kalagayang ito hanggang sa kalagitnaan ng 2022. Sa halos dalawa't kalahating taon, kalakhan ng mga Pilipino ay namuhay nang hiwalay-hiwalay o *in isolation* at nakasandig sa ayuda ng gobyerno na kadalasa'y kulang o mabagal ang pagdating.

Tunay ang panganib na dulot ng COVID-19, nakamamatay ito at sadyang napakalaking krisis pangkalusugan ang pandemya. Libu-libong mga buhay ang nalagas at lagpas apat na milyon ang nagpositibo sa virus. Nalaman natin sa mga ulat sa *mainstream* at *social media* tungkol sa mga ospital na nag-uumapaw, ng mga pasyenteng nagkakandamatay sa *parking lot*

ng mga ospital, ng mga labi ng pasyenteng yumao dahil sa COVID-19 dulot ng kakulangan ng pasilidad para sa *cremation*. Kulang na kulang din ang mga pampublikong transportasyon na nagtulak sa mga pasyente at *health workers* para maglakad papunta sa ospital. Kapos din ang mga *personal protective equipment* (PPE) at laganap ang kawalan ng benepisyo sa hanay ng mga empleyado ng ospital. Sa madaling sabi, lantad na lantad ang kawalan ng kapasidad ng bansa sa maayos na sistemang pangkalusugan. Ani ng isang mamamahayag, "*incompetence married with militarism*" (Beltran 2020) ang naging tugon ng gobyerno sa pandemya.

Atrasado ang *contact tracing* at *mass testing* ng mga susing ahensya na nakatoka sa tugon ng gobyerno sa pandemya na pinamumunuan ng mga dating heneral kaya naman magiging militarista din ang kanilang pamamaraan: nagtakda ng mga *checkpoint*, kaliwa't kanan ang pag-aresto sa mga lumabag sa mga *health protocol* kahit na iyong mga nangangailangan ng mabilisang tugon o *emergency*.

Naging krisis pang-ekonomiko ang pandemya dulot ng pagsara ng mga negosyo. Isang taon makalipas ang Marso 15, 2020 kung kailan nagsimula ang *lockdown* na ipinataw ng gobyerno, 4.2 milyon ang mawawalan ng trabaho at halos 8 milyon ang mapipilitang tumanggap ng mas mababang sweldo (de Vera 2021).

Mapapansing tumaas ang kaso ng depresyon, pagkabalisa, *stress* at mga isyung may kinalaman sa *mental health* noong panahon ng pandemya. Dulot ng pagtaas ng mga kasong ito ang matagalang *isolation,* pakiramdam ng kalungkutan at limitadong pakikipag-ugnayan sa kapwa dulot ng matinding pagbabawal.

Sa gitna ng krisis pangkalusugan at ng resulta nitong kagipitang pang-ekonomiko at siko-sosyal, nagdulot lalo ng "*human rights crisis*" ang pamamaraang militarista ng gobyerno sa ilalim ni dating Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte. "Ginamit [niya] ang COVID-19 para maglunsad ng panibagong mga atake laban sa karapatang pantao. Sa kasagsagan ng pandemya, itinuon ng gobyerno ang kampanya ng mga reyd, panghuhuli at pagpatay sa mga aktibista at *human rights defenders* na dati nang na-'*red-tag*' o inakusahan ng pagkakaugnay sa mga 'komunista' at 'teroristang grupo' habang nagpatuloy ang pagpaslang sa mga sinususpetsahang "*drug offenders*" (Amnesty International 2021; isinalin). Ang mga manggagawang pangkalusugan na nanawagan para sa mas masaklaw na proteksyon, mataas na benepisyo at mas maayos na tugon sa pandemya ay pinagre-'*red tag*' (tinawag na kaaway ng estado) ng National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) (ibid).

Narito ang ulat tungkol sa iba't ibang porma ng paglabag sa karapatang pantao noong panahon ng *lockdown*:

> *Stories such as those of a mentally ill Army veteran who was shot dead for being outside and a fish vendor severely beaten for not wearing a face mask have become commonplace. Arrests have also extended to anyone caught criticizing the administration's perceived failures during the pandemic. Police have begun to target relief workers and even people posting unflattering opinions about Duterte online. The biggest single haul of the crackdown came on Labor Day, May 1. Ninety-two individuals across five cities were imprisoned while either engaging in feeding programs or joining online protests* (Beltran 2020).

Inaresto ang mga residente ng maralitang komunidad matapos nilang magprotesta sa kawalan ng ayuda sa unang mga linggo ng *lockdown* (Bush et al. 2023). Ang dalawampung (20) katao na nagkasa ng protesta sa araw

ng LGBTQIA++ Pride noong Hunyo 26, 2020 ay inaresto dahil daw sa paglabag sa batas kaugnay ng *health protocols* samantalang sumunod ang mga nagprotesta sa *social distancing*, nagsuot ng *face mask*, at higit sa lahat ay walang batas ang nagbabawal sa pagsasagawa ng protesta at rally (Thoreson 2020).

Habang nananatiling malaking problema ang korupsyon sa gobyerno, naglabasan ang maraming ireguralidad sa pangangalap ng materyales na may kaugnayan sa COVID-19 – mga isyu katulad ng kung papaanong ginamit ng ilang mga opisyal sa gobyerno ang krisis pangkalusugan para sa pansariling pinansyal na interes. Halimbawa nito ang Pharmally *scandal* kung saan sangkot ang bagong kumpanya na limitado ang pinansyal na kapital at walang mga naunang transaksyon sa gobyerno. Sa kabila nito ay sa kanila ibinigay ng Department of Health ang bilyon-bilyong pisong kontrata para mabigyan ng suplay ng labis-labis na presyo ng *face masks*, pati na rin ng mga *test kit* na napakamahal na ay napakalapit na rin ng *expiration date* (Silverio 2021). Sa kabila ng imbestigasyon sa Senado tungkol sa anomalya at kahit na mayroong mga kasong ipinataw laban sa noo'y DOH Secretary at ng opisyal ng Department of Budget and Management (DBM) na may kaugnayan sa Special Assistant to the President (SAP) na si Bong Go, wala pa ring naipapakulong samantalang nailagay sa panganib ang buhay ng maraming *front liners* at ng mga mamamayan (UN Women 2020).

Pinalala din ng pandemya ang *gender inequalities*. Iniulat sa pananaliksik ng UN Women Philippines (2020) na may mga nakaranas ng *sexual harassment* sa mga COVID-19 *checkpoints* na itinayo ng mga pulis at militar. Ayon sa pananaliksik, bunsod ito ng *"(w)omen mak[ing] up only 12 percent of law enforcement in the Philippines"* kaya naman ayon sa pananaliksik, *"COVID-19 mandatory*

checks and physical screenings of women, such as temperature checks, are often conducted by male officers". Nailalagay sa lalong bulnerableng pusisyon ang kababaihan para makaranas ng sekswal na karahasan.

Parehas na iniulat ng UN Women at Asian Development Bank (ADB) ang epekto ng pandemya sa kabuhayan ng kababaihan. Ayon sa ADB, *"in the Philippines, (women who lost jobs) in agriculture, accommodation and food services, administrative and support services, public administration, and education (were higher than the share of women employed)"* (Ibanez 2021). Ayon sa UN Women (2020), ang mga limitasyon sa pagbebenta, pati na rin sa mga personal na interaksyon, pagsasara ng mga palengke at eskwela, ay nangahulugan na nawalan ng kabuhayan ang nasa 6.6 milyong kababaihan na nasa impormal na sektor.

Nangahulugan din ng dagdag na trabaho sa reproduktibong gawain ng mga kababaihan dulot ng limitasyon sa paglabas at *online school* dahil nangailangan na manatili sa kani-kaniyang mga bahay ang mga miyembro ng pamilya. Lalong bumigat ang pasakit ng kababaihan lalo't sila ang nakatoka sa pagtitiyak ng kalusugan ng kanilang mga kapamilya, nag-aalaga ng mga may sakit, at inalalayan ang mga anak sa *online classes* at *school assignments*; labas pa ito sa mga gawaing pambahay at pagluluto. Ang ibang kababaihan ay nagboluntaryo din ng trabaho sa komunidad o bilang *health* o *community worker*.

Dahil kapos at mabagal ang tugon ng gobyerno, naging lunan ang COVID-19 pandemic ng pakikiisa at pakikibaka. Namigay ng mga *relief goods,* nagpalaganap ng mga impormasyon, at humiling ng mas mahusay na tugon pangkalusugan tulad ng *contract tracing*, libreng te*sting*

at *vaccination* ang mga organisasyon, unyon, taong simbahan, propesyunal, mga estudyante at indibidwal.

Ang pakikipagkaisa ay nakita sa mga inisyatiba katulad ng CURE Covid PH (2020) na nagdaos ng regular na webinar, mga *community pantry* (Community Pantry PH 2020), at ang onlayn na pasinaya, "Damay at Dangal" na nagbigay ng pagpupugay sa mga yumao noong pandemya sa gitna ng pagbabawal sa mga burol at libing (Damay at Dangal 2021). Sa kabila ng restriksyon sa mga pampublikong pagtitipon at demonstrasyon, idinaos ang mga malikhaing porma ng pagkilos na sumunod sa *health protocols* laban sa pagpapasa ng *Anti-Terrorism Law* na nagtatakda bilang kriminal ang maraming porma ng aktibismo, malawakang paglabag sa karapatang pantao at korupsyon (Dabu 2024). *"Masked but not silenced"* ang naging panawagan para sa pagpapatuloy ng paglaban, sa gitna ng krisis at represyon.

Kung titingnan, nasa isang banda ang krisis pangkalusugan, militaristang pagtugon ng gobyerno, ekonomiko at siko-sosyal na hamon, paglabag sa karapatang pantao, korupsyon at paglala ng pangkasarian at kawalan ng hustisyang panlipunan, at sa kabilang banda naman ang pagkakaisa at ang paglaban– ito ang kontekstong kinapalolooban ng mga artikulo sa espesyal na isyu ng *Diliman Gender Review* (DGR) tungkol sa kababaihan, mga kasarian at ng COVID-19 pandemic.

Mga Pag-aaral hinggil sa Krisis, Pagbangon, at Pakikibaka sa Panahon ng COVID-19 Pandemic

Apat (4) na taon matapos salantain ng COVID-19 ang Pilipinas at ang buong mundo, inilalahad ng isyung ito ng DGR ang iba't ibang dokumentasyon at pagsiyasat kung ano ang epekto at paano tinugunan ng kababaihan

at kalalakihang Pilipino ang iba't ibang mga kalagayan at usapin kaugnay ng pandemya.

Ang "**Gender Mainstreaming in the University of the Philippines Diliman During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Preliminary Assessment Using Mixed-Methods**" ni Kristel May R. Gomez-Magdaraog ay nagbigay-tuon sa patuloy na pagtitiyak ng pagiging malay sa kasariang pagtugon ng mga programa at polisiya sa loob ng unibersidad sa kabila ng mga kalagayan ng *lockdown* at limitadong pagkilos. Sa pamamagitan ng datos na nakuha mula sa *workshop* na nilahukan ng pitumpung (70) empleyado ng UP at sa rebyu ng mga dokumento, inilahad at tinalakay ng pag-aaral ang mga salik na nagpatuloy at nagpatibay sa *gender mainstreaming* sa mga akademikong institusyon sa panahon ng pandemya. Ang mga ito ay ang *"Gender and Development (GAD) budget and institutional support; policy-setting and capacity building; leadership structure and staff morale and hybrid work arrangement"*.

Ang laganap na pagkabalisa ng mga Pilipinong maybahay (dalawampu't lima hanggang apatnapu't siyam [25-49] na taong gulang) sa Metro Manila noong pandemya, at ang kaugnayan nito sa kanilang kapaligiran ang naging paksa ng kantitatibong pag-aaral na pinamagatang, "**Level and Prevalence of Anxiety and Quality of Life of Housewives of Metro Manila During the COVID-19 Pandemic.**" Inilapat ni Marion Abilene R. Navarro ang *descriptive* at *inferential statistics* para ipaliwanag ang datos mula sa onlayn na sarbey ng walumpu't isang (81) kababaihan. Ipinagtibay ng resulta ang epekto ng pandemya sa *mental health* ng kababaihang Pilipino; halos kalahati sa walumpu't isang (81) na tumugon ang nakaranas ng sintomas ng pagkabalisa sa kalakhan ng linggo noong panahon ng pandemya. Napakahalagang rekomendasyon mula sa

pag-aaral ang pagbubuo ng *"community-based mental health interventions that tackle the burden of caregiving among women, provide space for them to connect with other women in the community to talk about their experiences, and receive collective care."*

Sinuri naman ng pag-aaral na "**Adapting to the New Normal: Post-pandemic Care Work Dynamics in Working-Class Filipino Households with Full-time Working Mothers in Metro Manila**" nina Charlene Alexia Cumal at Andrea Martinez ang pagbabago sa *gendered dynamics of care work* ng mga pamilyang Pilipino sa panahon at matapos ang COVID-19 pandemic. Gumamit ng *hermeneutic phenomenological approach* ang pananaliksik kung saan tinutukan ang buhay na danas ng mga kababaihan. Labintatlong (13) kababaihan mula sa Quezon City ang isinailalim sa indibidwal na interbyu, sa tulong ng *photo elicitation*. Sinasagot ng pag-aaral ang mga sumusunod:

> *Did men's contribution to care work in households where wives also held full-time work increase during the pandemic?*
>
> *If it increased, did such a level remain after the pandemic?*
>
> *How did the women cope with the challenges of paid work and domestic care work?*
>
> *What support should the government give to ease the burdens of working women?*

Ang papel naman na "**COVID-19 and Gendered Realities: Assessing the Pandemic's Impact on Rural Women in Pampanga**" ay hinarap ang mga danas at

pamamaraan sa pagbangon ng mga kababaihan sa apat na barangay labas sa Metro Manila. Ito ang tanging kontribusyon sa dyornal na tumalakay sa kababaihan sa kanayunan. Animnapu't pitong (67) kababaihan na nasa edad 18-60 mula sa apat na barangay ang bumuo sa walong (8) pangkatang talakayan na isinagawa para sa pagkalap ng datos. Natuklasan ng mga manunulat na sina Eden H. Terol et al. na, "ang kababaihan mula sa Porac, Pampanga ay nakitaan ng mahalagang *social buffers* para matugunan ang hagupit ng krisis ng pandemya. Ang mga pamamaraan para makabangon sila ay kinakitaan ng malikhaing pag-iisip at diskarte, pagsandig sa mga sosyal na ugnayan para sa materyal, emosyonal at espiritwal na suporta."

Nagbago kaya ang karanasan, gawi, at ideya ng pagkalalaki ng kalalakihang Pilipino noong panahon ng pandemya? Ito ang suliraning siniyasat ng tanging pag-aaral sa isyung ito na tinalakay ang karanasan ng kalalakihan sa panahon ng pangkalusugang krisis--ang "**Filipino Men in Crisis: Negotiating Masculinities during the COVID-19 Pandemic**" ni Ferdinand Sanchez II. Puspusang interbyu ng 13 kalalakihang Pilipino na nasa edad 18-59 mula sa iba't ibang uring panlipunan (na kalakhan ay nasa panggitnang uri) ang isinagawa. Matutunghayan sa resulta ng pag-aaral kung papaano gumana ang dalawang tipo ng pagkalalaki (*hegemonic and subordinated)* noong panahon ng pandemya.

Ang pagiging *family-oriented*, madiskarte, at tibay ng loob ang ilan sa mga pamantayan para sa *hegemonic masculinity* na napipigilan ng ekonomiko, mental at kalagayang pangkalusugan. Ang kalalakihan na hindi nakakasalubong sa pamantayan ng pagkalalaki ay maaaring makategorya na nagtataglay ng *subordinated masculinity*, maaaring ituring na mahina at nakaranas ng *stigma*. Binigyang-tuon ng manunulat ang kahalagahang,

"magsulong ng mas ingklusibo at makatarungang relasyong pangkasarian, kahit sa kalalakihan. Dagdag pa, kailangang malakas na maisuong ang mga programang naghihikayat sa kababaihan na paunlarin at palawakin ang kanilang kamalayan tungkol sa kanilang *masculinities* at maging mapanlikha sa mga identidad na ito lagpas sa kanilang tradisyunal na nakagisnan."

Pagbangon, pakikiisa at pakikibaka sa panahon ng pandemya naman ang paksa ng Pilipinong *domestic workers* sa Hong Kong ang paksa ng "***Kalampagan Sundays: Narratives from ethnographic field work amid political and pandemic duress***." Sa pamamagitan ng *participant observation*, pahapyaw na nakabalangkas na interbyu, pag-boluntir at pakikisama o *"with-ing"* ni Kristine Marie Reynaldo ang dokumentasyon ng mga danas, boses at pakikibaka ng *migrant domestic workers*. Sa proseso, mailalahad niya ang mayayamang saloobin hinggil sa pagpapasya at pag-oorganisa ng kababaihan habang malay sa kanyang mga pribilehiyo bilang iskolar na estudyanteng gradwado sa Hong Kong.

Aniya, *"Some of the strategies adopted by migrant activists, such as shifting to online modes of organizing and protest and focusing on the immediate welfare needs of migrant domestic workers (MDW) to respond to these challenges. It also contextualized the political demands articulated by MDW activists within the frames of the Philippines' labor export policy, the long-distance nationalism of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) that rose with it, and the marginalization of MDWs in Hong Kong.* Malaking ambag ang kanyang sipat hinggil sa aktibismo at pag-oorganisa ng kababaihan na, *"the activism of MDWs in Hong Kong show that at its heart, activism is a politics of communal support, relationality and care, and that the work it involves extends far beyond weekly noise barrages."*

Nagwakas na ang pandemyang dulot ng COVID-19 virus. Nagbalik na ang mga personal nating mga interaksyon, ang pagbalik sa ating mga klasrum, at binawi na rin ang mga striktong pagkilos at mahigpit na *health protocols*; ramdam na nating nagbalik na tayo sa normal nating mga buhay. Para sa maraming kababaihan at mga marhinalisadong grupo, ang "normal" na buhay bago pa ang pandemya ay puno ng kawalan ng hustisya at taglay ng mga hamon sa buhay. Bagamat unibersal ang pandemya, ang kapasidad ng mga tao para umusad, mabuhay at makaigpaw ay nagkakaiba at nakabatay sa kanilang sosyo-ekonomikong kalagayan. Sa kasalukuyan, sa ilalim ng tinatawag na "*new normal*", lumawak pa ang saklaw ng kawalan ng hustisya at ang krisis sa maralitang kababaihan at kalalakihan pati ng nalulugmok nilang mga kinapapailalimang mga sektor. Napakarami pang mayayamang kwento at karanasan na nangangailangang halungkatin para tuwirang maintindihan ang epekto ng pandemya, ang pangangailangan para maningil, lalo na sa mga nasa kapangyarihan, maging ang mga salik na nagbigay ng lakas sa kababaihan at kanilang mga komunidad para umunlad at palakasin ang pakikiisa at kolektibong pagtugon sa krisis.

Ibinabahagi ng *Diliman Gender Review,* sa pamamagitan nitong espesyal na isyu, ang ilan sa mga kwentong ito. Samantala, hindi sasapat ang paglilimbag sa mga artikulong nabanggit. Hinihikayat naming ibahagi ng mga manunulat ng espesyal na isyung ito ang kanilang mga nakalap na datos at rekomendasyon sa mga indibidwal na naging bahagi ng pananaliksik, sakaling hindi pa ito nasasagawa. Ang gawaing ito ay sang-ayon sa mga prinsipyo at metodo ng peministang pananaliksik at napakahalagang bahagi ng pagbubuo ng pakikiisa ng mga akademiko sa mga nasasantabing komunidad ng kababaihan at kanilang mga sektor, lahat tungo sa

pagwawakas ng kawalang hustisyang pangkasarian at panlipunan.

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Women, Gender and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Crisis, Coping, and Struggles

Introduction
Diliman Gender Review (DGR) Special Issue on Women, Gender and the Pandemic

The Pandemic Landscape

For most of 2020, 2021, and the early part of 2022, life in the Philippines was at a standstill as the government's response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic was, for the longest time, a lockdown. Businesses, government offices, and schools were closed. Public and private transportation were prohibited, and restrictions on mobility, under threat of arrest if violated, were put in place. Schools and most government and private offices shifted to online mode. This would last until the middle of 2022. For over two years, the majority of Filipinos lived under conditions of isolation and dependence on government assistance for survival.

It could not be denied that the COVID-19 virus was deadly or that the pandemic was a massive health crisis. Tens of thousands of lives were lost, and over four million tested positive for the virus. Reports on mainstream and social media were shocking - of hospitals being overwhelmed, of patients dying in hospital parking lots, of remains of COVID-19 fatalities lined up on hospital grounds as there were not enough cremation facilities. Health workers and patients without private transportation had to walk to get to the

hospitals. Hospital personnel reported a lack of safe personal protective equipment and a prevalence of unpaid benefits. Essentially, the pandemic fully exposed the inadequacy of the Philippine healthcare system. An author described the government response as "incompetence married with militarism" (Beltran 2020).

Contact tracing and mass testing were delayed, and the key agencies in charge of the government's pandemic response were led mainly by former generals and adopted a militarist approach: checkpoints, arrests of violators of health protocols, even those who needed emergency provisions.

The pandemic became an economic crisis as businesses shut down. A year after March 15, 2020, the start of the lockdown imposed by the government, there were 4.2 million who lost their jobs and almost 8 million who were forced to accept pay cuts (de Vera 2021).

Depression, anxiety, stress, and mental health-related issues were observed to have increased during the pandemic. The increase was triggered by the long isolation, feelings of loneliness, and limited social interaction due to strict control measures.

In the midst of the health crisis and its resulting economic and psycho-social challenges, the government's militarist approach also transformed it into a "human rights crisis" as then Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte "used COVID-19 to launch fresh attacks on human rights. In the midst of the pandemic, the government embarked on a vicious campaign of raids, arrests, and killings of activists and human rights defenders who have been 'red-tagged' – or accused of links to 'communist' and 'terrorist groups' – while killings of suspected drug offenders have continued" (Amnesty International 2021). Health workers who demanded more protection, benefits, and

improved pandemic response were 'red-tagged' (called out as enemies of the state) by the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) (ibid).

A report detailed varying forms of human rights violations during the lockdown:

> *Stories such as those of a mentally ill Army veteran who was shot dead for being outside and a fish vendor severely beaten for not wearing a face mask have become commonplace. Arrests have also extended to anyone caught criticizing the administration's perceived failures during the pandemic. Police have begun to target relief workers and even people posting unflattering opinions about Duterte online. The biggest single haul of the crackdown came on Labor Day, May 1. Ninety-two individuals across five cities were imprisoned while either engaging in feeding programs or joining online protests* (Beltran 2020).

Residents of an urban poor community were detained after protesting the lack of government aid during the early weeks of the lockdown (Bush et al. 2023). Twenty (20) people who marked lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Pride Day with a protest on June 26, 2020 were arrested allegedly for violating laws related to health protocols even though the protesters followed social distancing protocols and wore masks, and the laws do not prohibit protests and rallies (Thoreson 2020).

While corruption in government has been a perennial problem, the exposé on a number of irregular COVID-19-related procurements raised questions about how certain high government officials took advantage of the health crisis for personal financial gains. The Pharmally scandal involved a newly set up company with limited capital and no previous government dealing. But it was awarded a multi-billion peso contract to supply the

Department of Health (DOH) with face masks that were overpriced and test kits that were not only overpriced but were due to expire (Silverio 2021). While there was a Senate investigation on this anomaly and charges were made against the then DOH Secretary and a Department of Budget and Management (DBM) procurement official associated with then Special Assistant to the President (SAP) Bong Go, no one has yet been imprisoned for this anomaly, which endangered the lives of front liners and of the people (UN Women 2020).

Gender inequalities were exacerbated during the pandemic. A UN Women paper on the Philippines (2020) reported that women were subjected to sexual harassment at COVID-19 checkpoints set up by police and military officers. The paper noted that as "[w]omen make up only 12 percent of law enforcement in the Philippines…[,] COVID-19 mandatory checks and physical screenings of women, such as temperature checks, are often conducted by male officers". This obviously made women more vulnerable to sexual molestation.

Both UN Women and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) reported on the impact of the pandemic and the response to women's work. The ADB stated that "in the Philippines, (women who lost jobs) in agriculture, accommodation and food services, administrative and support services, public administration, and education (were higher than the share of women employed)" (Ibanez 2021). Restrictions on vending and social interactions and the closure of public markets and schools meant workers in the informal sector, where 6.6 million are women, lost their livelihood, according to the UN Women (2020).

Mobility restrictions and online schooling for children translated into additional women's reproductive work as family members stay cooped up in the house. Women's multiple burdens became heavier as they ensured the health of family members, cared for those who got sick, and assisted the children with online classes and school assignments, on top of housework and meal preparations. Others even took on community volunteer work as health or community workers.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic, marked by the bungled government response, was also a time of solidarity and resistance. People's organizations, unions, church groups, professionals, students, and individuals provided relief goods, disseminated information, and lobbied for better health responses such as contact tracing, free testing, and vaccination.

Solidarity was manifested in other initiatives such as CURE Covid PH (2020) regular webinar, community pantries (Community Pantry PH 2020), and an online memorial, "Damay at Dangal", which honored the dead during the pandemic when wakes and funerals were prohibited (Damay at Dangal 2021). Despite a prohibition on public gatherings and demonstrations, creative forms of resistance, which followed health protocols, were held to protest the imposition of an anti-terrorism law that criminalizes many forms of activism, widespread human rights violations, and corruption (Dabu 2024). "Masked but not silenced" became a rallying call for continued resistance in the face of crisis and repression.

The health crisis, militaristic government response, economic and psycho-social challenges, human rights violations, corruption and exacerbation of gender and social inequalities on the one hand, and solidarity and resistance on the other, provide the context of the articles

included in this special issue of the *Diliman Gender Review (DGR)* on women, gender and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Studies on Crisis, Coping, and Struggles During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Four (4) years after the COVID-19 pandemic struck the Philippines and the world, this issue of the *DGR* presents several documentation and analyses of how Filipino women and men in various settings were affected and responded to the health crisis.

Kristel May R. Gomez-Magdaraog's "**Gender Mainstreaming in the University of the Philippines Diliman During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Preliminary Assessment Using Mixed-Methods**" focuses on the University of the Philippines Diliman's continuing efforts to ensure gender-responsive programs and policies even under the conditions of lockdown and mobility restrictions. Through data generated from a workshop involving seventy (70) UP personnel and document reviews, the study presented and discussed the factors that made gender mainstreaming in academic institutions a continuing process during the pandemic. These are "Gender and Development (GAD) budget and institutional support; policy-setting and capacity building; leadership structure and staff morale and hybrid work arrangement".

The prevalence of anxiety among Filipino housewives (25-49 years old) in Metro Manila during the pandemic and its correlation to their environment was the subject of the quantitative study entitled "**Level and Prevalence of Anxiety and Quality of Life of Housewives of Metro Manila During the COVID-19 Pandemic**."

Marion Abilene R. Navarro employed descriptive and inferential statistics to interpret the data from the online survey of eighty-one (81) women. The results confirmed the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of Filipino women: almost half of the eighty-one (81) respondents experienced various anxiety symptoms most of the day in a week during the pandemic. An important recommendation of the study is the creation of "community-based mental health interventions that tackle the burden of caregiving among women, provide space for them to connect with other women in the community to talk about their experiences, and receive collective care."

"**Adapting to the New Normal: Post-pandemic Care Work Dynamics in Working-Class Filipino Households with Full-time Working Mothers in Metro Manila**" by Charlene Alexia Cumal and Andrea Martinez examines changes in gendered dynamics of care work in Filipino households during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The study used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach which spotlighted women's lived experiences. Thirteen (13) working women from Quezon City were interviewed individually with the help of photo elicitation. The study answers several questions. Among them are:

> Did men's contribution to care work in households where wives also held full-time work increase during the pandemic?

> If it increased, did such a level remain after the pandemic?

> How did the women cope with the challenges of paid work and domestic care work?

> What support should the government give
> to ease the burdens of working women?

The paper "**COVID-19 and Gendered Realities: Assessing the Pandemic's Impact on Rural Women in Pampanga**" deals with the experiences and coping strategies of women in four barangays (villages) in a town outside of Metro Manila. It is the only contribution in this journal focusing on rural women. Sixty-seven (67) women, aged eighteen to sixty (18-60), from four (4) barangays comprised the eight (8) focus group discussions conducted for data gathering. The authors, Eden H. Terol et al., found, among others, that "the women from Porac, Pampanga seem to have significant social buffers to address the blow of the pandemic crisis. The women's coping strategies reflect their creative thinking and resourcefulness (*diskarte*) and reliance on social networks for material, emotional, and spiritual support."

Did Filipino men's experiences, practices, and ideas of masculinity evolve during the pandemic? This was the problem explored by the sole study interrogating men's experience during the health crisis, by Ferdinand Sanchez II. In-depth interviews of thirteen (13) Filipino men, ages eighteen to fifty-nine (18-59), from diverse social strata but mainly middle class, were conducted. The findings revealed how the two types of masculinities, hegemonic and subordinated, operated during the pandemic.

Family-orientedness, *diskarte,* and *matibay ang loob* as standards for hegemonic masculinity are, however, constrained by economic, mental, and health realities. Men who are unable to meet the standards of masculinity may be categorized as possessing subordinated masculinity, considered weak, and experience stigma. The author highlighted the need "to promote more

inclusive and equitable gender relations, even among men. Moreover, programs that encourage men to develop a broader understanding of their masculinities and reimagine these identities beyond traditional notions should be strongly advocated."

Coping, solidarity, and resistance during the pandemic for Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong is the subject of **"Kalampagan Sundays: Narratives from ethnographic field work amid political and pandemic duress."** Employing participant observation, semi-structured interviews, volunteering, and *pakikisama* or "with-ing", author Kristine Marie Reynaldo documents the experiences, voices, and struggles of migrant domestic workers. In the process, she draws out rich insights into the women's determination and organizing styles while reflecting on and being conscious of her own privilege as a funded graduate student in Hong Kong.

She notes, "Some of the strategies adopted by migrant activists, such as shifting to online modes of organizing and protest and focusing on the immediate welfare needs of migrant domestic workers (MDW) to respond to these challenges. It also contextualized the political demands articulated by MDW activists within the frames of the Philippines' labor export policy, the long-distance nationalism of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) that rose with it, and the marginalization of MDWs in Hong Kong." A significant insight on women activism and organizing is her observation that "the activism of MDWs in Hong Kong show that at its heart, activism is a politics of communal support, relationality and care, and that the work it involves extends far beyond weekly noise barrages."

The COVID-19 virus pandemic is over for now. Face-to-face interaction, onsite learning, the lifting of mobility restrictions and of stringent health protocols make it appear that life is back to normal. For many women and other marginalized groups, "normal" pre-pandemic life was marked by inequalities and challenges. While the pandemic was universal, people's ability to navigate, survive, and even prosper varied based on their economic and social standing. At present, under the so-called new normal, inequalities have further widened since the pandemic, and challenges for poor women and men and other subordinated sectors remain daunting. There are still myriads of stories and experiences that have to be unearthed to contribute to a better understanding of the cost of the pandemic, the need for accountability, especially from those who are the duty holders, and the factors that enabled women and communities to develop and strengthen solidarity and collective response to the crisis.

The *Diliman Gender Review*, through this current special issue, shares some of these stories. However, publishing the articles is not sufficient. We also hope that the authors in this special issue will devise ways to share the findings and recommendations of their studies with their research participants if they have not yet done so. This activity is consistent with the principles and methods of feminist research and is a necessary component for building solidarity among academics and marginalized communities of women and other sectors towards ending gender and other social inequalities.

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GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES DILIMAN DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT USING MIXED-METHODS

Kristel May Gomez-Magdaraog, RSW, MAWD

ABSTRACT

Since the 1990s, gender mainstreaming has been a key strategy for achieving gender equality across various programs. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing gender inequalities globally and, in the Philippines, affected women disproportionately through increased domestic responsibilities, economic hardships, and barriers to accessing essential services. The pandemic also disrupted educational institutions, forcing them to adapt rapidly to new modes of operation, including remote working arrangements. However, there is a gap in understanding how academic institutions navigated gender mainstreaming during the pandemic. This paper addresses this gap by examining the experience of the UP Diliman Gender Office (UPDGO) and its gender mainstreaming practices during the COVID-19 pandemic using the Gender Mainstreaming Evaluation Framework Tool, complemented by a desk review of the UPDGO Accomplishment Reports of 2020 and 2021. The findings reveal that the UPDGO's resilience during

the first two years of the pandemic highlights its strength in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment and is a continuation of its rich experience in gender mainstreaming before the pandemic. It was possible to have access to internal assessments and reports of the UPDGO as the writer was the UPDGO's Coordinator at the beginning of the pandemic.

ABSTRAK

Mula noong 1990s, ang *gender mainstreaming* ay naging pangunahing estratehiya upang makamit ang pagkakapantay-pantay ng kasarian sa iba't ibang programa. Ang pandemya ng COVID-19 ay lalong nagpatingkad sa umiiral na mga 'di-pagkakapantay-pantay ng kasarian sa buong mundo, kabilang ang Pilipinas, kung saan ang mga kababaihan ang higit na naapektuhan sa pamamagitan ng pagdami ng mga responsibilidad sa tahanan, mga problemang pang-ekonomiya, at mga hadlang sa pag-akses sa mga mahahalagang serbisyong panlipunan. Naapektuhan din ng pandemya ang mga institusyong pang-edukasyon, na napilitang mabilis na umangkop sa mga bagong pamamaraan ng operasyon, kabilang ang pagtatrabaho nang labas o malayo sa mga opisina. Gayunpaman, may kakulangan sa pag-unawa kung paano naisagawa ng mga institusyong pang-edukasyon ang *gender mainstreaming* sa panahon ng pandemya. Ang papel na ito ay naglalayong punan ang mga kakulangang ito sa pamamagitan ng pagsusuri sa karanasan ng UP Diliman Gender Office (UPDGO) sa pagsasabuhay nito ng *gender*

mainstreaming sa panahon ng pandemya ng COVID-19. Ang pag-aaral ay isinagawa sa pamamagitan ng Gender Mainstreaming Evaluation Framework Tool at pagrerebyu ng mga mga taunang ulat ng UPDGO ng 2020 at 2021. Ang manunulat ay nagkaroon ng akses sa mga internal na dokumento ng UPDGO dahil siya din ang Tagapag-ugnay ng UPDGO sa simula ng pandemya. Batay sa resulta ng pananaliksik, ang katatagan at kalakasan ng UPDGO bilang tagapagtaguyod ng pagkakapantay-pantay ng kasarian at pagsasakapangyarihan ng kababaihan ay naisagawa at napatunayan sa unang dalawang taon ng pandemya. Ito ay pagpapapatuloy ng kanilang masaganang karanasan at kasaysayan sa *gender mainstreaming* bago pa ang pandemya.

Susing salita: Gender mainstreaming, edukasyon, University of the Philippines Diliman Gender Office, COVID-19 pandemic, GMEF Tool

I. Introduction

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy to achieve gender equality. When it was put forward in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women, it was envisioned as a "critical and strategic approach" to incorporate a gender perspective in legislation, policies, programmes, and projects (UN EcoSoc Council 1997). Advocates of gender equality have made tremendous efforts to demonstrate why national governments should be concerned about gender issues and how these issues can be integrated into their processes, procedures, and operations, known as the integrationist approach. However, to do it as an afterthought, rather than as a fundamental component, can be problematic (Jahan and Mumtaz 1996).

The integrationist approach often results in superficial compliance rather than meaningful change, as it fails to address the underlying systemic inequalities. Simply "fitting" gender concerns into pre-existing frameworks can perpetuate tokenism, where efforts are more symbolic than substantive. Without a thorough restructuring to prioritize gender equality at every level, these efforts may lack the depth and sustainability needed to create impact.

Some scholars state that gender mainstreaming has become a dominant paradigm within development work, but in practice, it represents a retreat from women's equality and a means of making such an outcome appear more palatable to those whose views are opposed to it (Palmary and Nunez 2009; Weldon et al. 2017). As a critique of the integrationist approach, women activists pushed for an agenda-setting approach: an agenda for changing organizational rules and cultures to make processes, procedures, and operations participatory, inclusive, transparent, and accountable (Jahan and Mumtaz 1996).

Since then, the degree to which gender mainstreaming has been implemented across countries has varied. Despite some progress in women's status, the fundamental objectives of the women's movement to transform social and gender relations and create a just and equal world remain elusive (Jahan and Mumtaz 1996). The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, resulted in the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), which outlines strategic objectives and actions for women and girls in 12 key areas (United Nations 1996). In 2015, twenty years after the adoption of the BPfA, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) held its 59th session to assess the progress made. The CSW acknowledged that while there had been progress, it was slow and uneven, with

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no country having fully achieved gender equality (United Nations 2015). Furthermore, gaps and new challenges have emerged. As a result, member states pledged to commit to full, accelerated, and effective implementation, with an emphasis on strengthening institutional support for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at all levels.

In the Philippines, a multitude of activities were undertaken by various stakeholders a few decades prior to the 1979 UN's adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), considered the bill of rights for women (UN General Assembly 1979). These activities can be traced back to the colonial history of the country (Santiago 1995). For example, Filipino women's right to vote was won in 1937 during the American colonial period, when women's organizations campaigned extensively for this right. The women's movement played a major role in transforming the Marcos dictatorship (Friesen 1989) and created the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW). The NCRFW changed into the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), institutionalized under Republic Act No. 9710 or the Magna Carta of Women (2009).

At the level of academic institutions, however, practice precedes policy. The University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman, the flagship campus of UP, had already established in 1987 a degree-granting program, the Women and Development Program at the College of Social Work and Community Development. This program, the pioneer women's studies in the country and in the Asia-Pacific region, would be elevated into the Department of Women and Development Studies in 2000. In 1988, the gender unit with the mandate to oversee the university's gender programs per campus was created – the UP Center for Women's Studies,

which would be renamed in 2015 as the UP Center for Women's and Gender Studies with UP's adoption of the Guidelines on Promoting Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in the University of the Philippines or the UP Gender Guidelines (1309th BOR Meeting 2015). The University of the Philippines (UP) has two major gender-specific policies: the UP Gender Guidelines and the Anti-Sexual Harassment Code, with the latter's implementing rules and regulations (IRR) established in 1998. Following extensive consultations in 2017, the IRR was revised and approved by the Board of Regents and became the UP Anti-Sexual Harassment Code (UP ASH Code), which continues to guide the university's policies on sexual harassment prevention and response (1324th BOR Meeting 2107).

In 2003, the UPDGO transitioned from a project under the University Center for Women's Studies to an independent office under the Office of the Chancellor, marking its formal establishment as a separate entity (Kimuell et al. 2018). The primary objective of the UPDGO was to lead gender mainstreaming efforts across the UP Diliman campus. In its more than 15 years of existence and prior to the pandemic[1], the UPDGO has been acknowledged within UP Diliman as an institution that promotes women's and GAD concerns (Kimuell et al. 2018; UPDGO Terminal Report 2015 - 2020). Figure 1 provides a historical and overall context of this paper.

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[1] For further details on the implementation of gender mainstreaming initiatives prior to the pandemic, please refer to the UPDGO Terminal Report 2015-2020, prepared under the previous coordinator Dr. Nancy Kimuell-Gabriel. This document provides a comprehensive overview of the subject matter.
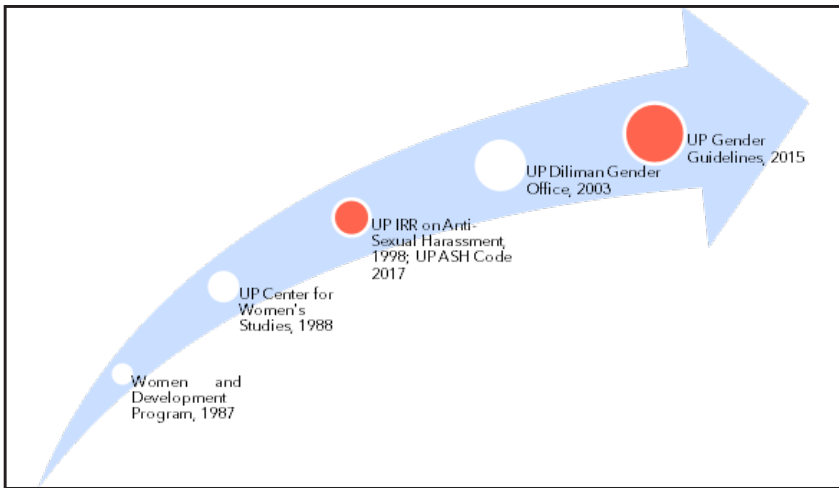
Figure 1: Evolution of policies and institutions in UP and UP Diliman

This is a preliminary study as the data gathered needs to be validated by other means of collecting information that would cover not only the UPDGO but also the responses of UP Diliman's academic units in addressing gender issues during the pandemic. The paper's sections are as follows: First, it provides a brief overview of the intersection of the COVID-19 pandemic, education, and gender mainstreaming. Second, it discusses the GMEF Tool and other data collection methods. Third, it presents a summary of the GMEF results. Finally, it presents the key points and recommendations for gender mainstreaming at UP Diliman.

In line with the principle of full disclosure, the author's research was facilitated by her involvement as a former UPDGO Coordinator during the first two years of the pandemic (2020 - 2022).

COVID-19 Pandemic, Gender and Education

The global pandemic has exacerbated gender inequalities, citing instances of reduced remuneration

for women, increased childcare responsibilities, and how the majority of women experienced verbal or physical abuse (UN Women and UNDP 2022). Gender norms, unprepared health systems, limited access to healthcare services, and power dynamics heighten women's vulnerabilities during a crisis (Simba and Ngcobo 2020). The rise in gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic was considered similar to previous pandemics and epidemics, but despite its global prevalence, addressing gender-based violence remains one of the most neglected outcomes of pandemics (Mittal and Singh 2020). Discrimination against LGBT++ also continued during the pandemic, worsened by their being stuck at home with unsupportive families, heightened mental health issues, and lack of access to support systems (Fish et al. 2020; Reid and Ritholtz 2020; Pinaga 2023).

The immediate effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education sector was the closure of schools and universities (Magno and Teehankee 2023). Following several months of disruption, operations in the education sector resumed, albeit with novel modalities of learning and operations. Various studies have revealed a differential impact of the pandemic on women and men in the academic community. The transition to remote work has had a detrimental impact on the scientific productivity of several women faculty members due to the increased family responsibilities that it entailed during the lockdown (Zabaniotou 2021; Ali and Ullah 2021) and their increased teaching and administrative load (Walters et al. 2022). Patriarchal cultures have discouraged husbands from sharing equally in domestic duties, which has further compounded the difficulties faced by these women. The lack of institutional policy support during the pandemic worsened the difficulties faced by women in academia in balancing work and caregiving responsibilities. This reinforces and

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favors the concept of a male 'ideal' worker (Nash and Churchill 2020). Women in academia have reported feelings of burnout, depression, exhaustion, anger, and a pressing need for personal time (Ali and Ullah 2021; Mukhopadhyay 2023).

COVID-19 Pandemic in the Philippines

When the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic in 2020, the Philippine national government's first response was to declare a public health emergency on March 8, 2020 (Presidential Proclamation No. 922 2020). The PP 922 will be followed by several announcements regarding the government's management of the pandemic, specifically related to quarantine guidelines. On March 15, 2020, former President Duterte initiated a community quarantine in Metro Manila as a preventive response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This was swiftly followed by the declaration of an enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) for the entire Luzon region on March 16, 2020 (Luna 2020). Further, the ECQ guidelines included the prohibition of mass gatherings, imposition of home quarantine, work-from-home arrangements except for essential offices, suspension of mass public transport facilities, and restriction of travel. Subsequently, the Inter-Agency Task Force Against Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) was reactivated. The IATF developed policy recommendations for the President, but the operational command was managed by the National Task Force Against COVID-19, led by the Secretary of the Department of National Defense (Magno and Teehankee 2023). This approach highlighted the militarized handling of a public health crisis in the Philippines. All health protocols, such as mobility restrictions, mask-wearing, and social distancing, were enforced through punitive measures (Hapal 2021), which affected mostly the poor (Bekema 2021). The

main purpose of the lockdowns and travel restrictions was to reduce the transmission of the virus, but the strict measures enforced in the early phase of the pandemic could not curb the rapid increase in daily cases (Reyes et al. 2022; Amit et al. 2020). The pandemic, along with the government's failed containment measures, resulted not only in high COVID cases and deaths but also in high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Tee et al. 2020).

On the other hand, the pandemic fostered a sense of community and solidarity among the people. The spirit of *bayanihan*, or mutual cooperation, remained strong amidst the crisis. What began as a local community pantry in Quezon City spread throughout the Philippines, evolving into various forms. Community pantries not only provided relief from hunger but also served as places of healing and improved access to healthcare for the poor and marginalized (Abesamis et al. 2023; Gozum et al. 2022; Espartinez 2021).

A review of literature on gender mainstreaming and institutions during the pandemic reveals limited studies in this area. This paper, therefore, intends to help fill the gap by exploring how gender mainstreaming in educational institutions, like the University of the Philippines in Diliman, fared during the pandemic.

The UPDGO, like other units of the university, ceased its physical operations and initiated remote working arrangements at the onset of the pandemic. As a non-teaching unit of UP Diliman, the UPDGO was compelled to adapt its programs and services to ensure the continued provision of services to its constituents under conditions of lockdown. It adopted work-from-home and telecommuting arrangements, marking the first instance in its history of implementing a fully online setup. This paper provides documentation and an initial assessment of how the UPDGO accomplished its

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gender mainstreaming role during the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

II. Methods

The study employed a mixed-methods approach to data gathering. The primary data was collected through a workshop on the Enhanced Gender Mainstreaming Evaluation Framework (GMEF) conducted for members of the UP Diliman GAD committees. The GMEF is a tool developed by the Philippine Commission on Women "to measure the reach and effectiveness of gender mainstreaming in institutions" (PCW 2016).

To complement the results of the GMEF, the author employed a desk review to examine the accomplishment reports of the UPDGO from 2020 to 2021. This paper reviewed two types of reports: the UPDGO Internal Accomplishment Report (AR) and the UPD GAD AR. The UPDGO AR is the annual report of the UPDGO on the utilisation of its approved budget, which was 5.4 million in 2020 and 5.2 million in 2021. This report is submitted to the Office of the Chancellor. In contrast, the UPD GAD AR is compiled from all colleges and units on their GAD activities for the specified year. These reports are consolidated with the UPDGO's AR and submitted to the UP CWGS. Along with other GAD reports from other CUs, these form the UP System GAD AR.

Elaboration on the GMEF as the main assessment method

The GMEF assessment tool has four entry levels for gender mainstreaming: policies, people, enabling mechanisms, and programs, activities, and projects/ PAPs (PCW 2016). The GMEF also identified the status of gender mainstreaming in organizations through levels 1 to 5. Each level corresponds to a set of descriptors,

which act as the guide questions during the workshop. Each entry level has a maximum of 25 points and an overall maximum combined score of 100 points. The assessment covered 2020 to 2021, which coincided with the early years of the pandemic. Please refer to Appendix 1 for further details on the GMEF Summary of Entry Levels and Descriptors (Table 1), as well as the Ranges and their Corresponding Level of Gender Mainstreaming (Table 2).

Participants

The participants were members of the UP Diliman GAD committee. A total of 70 individuals attended the GMEF Workshop, representing 13 academic units (50%) and 13 non-academic units (29.55%).

Process

The program included a lecture on the GMEF, workshop/breakout sessions, and a plenary session for the overall validation of the data. On the first day, the discussion on the GMEF tool was led by the author, who was also the resource speaker. This was followed by a workshop, which was divided into four groups corresponding to the four entry levels. A UPDGO staff member facilitated each workshop. Prior to the online training, a training session with the UPDGO staff was conducted by the resource speaker to ensure that they were prepared to answer any questions that may arise during the workshop. The resource speaker also visited each breakout room session to answer any questions that came up during the workshop. A plenary session was conducted during which each group presented the results of their scores, explaining how they arrived at these results and allowing all participants to validate them. The collective validation enabled other units to share their own experiences, enrich the data

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presented by each group, and provide a more detailed understanding of the scores.

III. GMEF Results

The GMEF scores and the workshop were employed to facilitate a discussion of the scores obtained at the entry level. The scores are presented in Appendix 2.

GMEF TOOL 1: Policy–LEVEL 2

The score for the policy entry level is 11.66 and is at level 2 (Table 3, Appendix 2). Before the pandemic, one of the major challenges of the UPDGO in terms of policy is its lack of approval as an office by the highest policy-making body of UP, the Board of Regents. The lack of a BOR approval posed major issues for the institutionalization of the UPDGO, which manifested in limited funds and personnel needed to implement gender mainstreaming on campus. This challenge continued to be significant even after the passage of the Magna Carta of Women, which required state universities to allocate at least 5% of their budgets to gender and development programs. As a result, the UPDGO hires contractual staff to perform core and essential work, operating under a budget ceiling approved by the Fiscal Policy and Operations Committee of UP Diliman. Despite being contractual, the numerous activities carried out before and during the pandemic demonstrate the commitment of the staff to gender advocacy, although it comes at the expense of the contractual staff's well-being (.i.e., delayed salary, multi-tasking, etc.). The situation of UPDGO contractual staff reflects the broader trend within the University, which is increasingly moving toward contractualization. This challenge has continued during the pandemic.

As the UPDGO is under the Office of the Chancellor, various GAD-related memoranda, such as attendance to the GAD Summit, submission of the GAD Plan and Budget, and so forth released by the gender office, is coursed through the Chancellor. However, it is not the UPDGO alone that is responsible for forwarding gender policies to the Chancellor. Various offices in UP Diliman have taken the initiative to implement gender-responsive policies: Memorandum No. OVCAA-MTTP 21-029: Guidelines on Affirming Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC) Students' Names, Pronouns, and Titles (TGNC Guidelines 2021) and the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Memorandum on the Gender Sensitivity Orientation for Freshie/First-year students (GMEF Workshop Policy; UPDGO AR 2021). The TGNC Guidelines represent a significant initiative undertaken by UP Diliman with the objective of promoting diversity and inclusivity, and of protecting its students from discrimination on the grounds of gender identity. Nevertheless, a comprehensive SOGIESC-based policy that can protect faculty, students, and employees against discrimination and violence is lacking (Gomez-Magdaraog and Peña 2021).

The absence of a GAD agenda was a major gap in terms of gender policy. The GAD agenda is important in direction setting, monitoring, and assessing GAD work (Jahan and Mumtaz 1996; PCW 2018). Initiatives for the GAD Agenda have already commenced with the 10th GAD Summit (UPDGO AR 2021), and in 2022, the Six-year UP Diliman GAD Agenda was launched.[2]

In spite of the presence of GAD-related policies, workshop participants shared difficulties in their implementation.

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[2] A printed copy of the UP Diliman GAD Agenda 2023 – 2028 may be formally requested from the UPDGO (updgo@up.edu.ph).

"GAD is still not yet seen as a priority. It often depends on the leadership." - participant 3, academic unit.

"The extent of effectivity of memoranda in offices is not clear. It's also not clear if other offices should provide or adopt own policies, or do existing policies in certain offices already cover other offices?" –participant 1, academic unit

"No analysis of [the] current GAD policy landscape not only in the university but in other government units." - participant 2, academic unit

Access and utilization of the GAD Budget is already challenging for some units. Without the support of the dean or unit head, the GAD committee members are unable to implement GAD PAPs and their efforts are not recognized, which results in their low morale. An in-depth analysis of the GAD policy landscape at UP Diliman is needed, with the view that policies should address and transform power relations (CORDAID 2019). This may take the form of new policy (such as the GAD Agenda) and review and revision of policies (such as the policy on employee housing, which does not allow the combination of points of staff or faculty who are in same-sex relationships).

GMEF TOOL 2: PEOPLE- LEVEL 4

The score for the people entry level is 21.99 and is at level 4 (Table 4, Appendix 2). The entry-level people encompass both internal and external clients. Clients are further categorised into sponsors (the agency's top executive), change agents (GAD committees), targets, and advocates.

Securing top-level management support is one of the most critical factors in the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming (Aguilar-Delavin 2017). Before and during the pandemic, the UPDGO had the support of the Office of the Chancellor, Chancellor Fidel R. Nemenzo, who is regarded as a champion of gender equality at UP Diliman. As Chancellor, he viewed gender responsiveness as not merely a mandate from above but an important component in creating an inclusive and safe university.

An analysis of administrators under his tenure revealed a higher proportion of female administrators than males (Table 5). Female leaders were more prevalent in executive roles, while male leaders were more prominent in academic units. In January 2021, a GAD Briefing was conducted for the Executive Committee of UP Diliman. This enabled the administration to recognize GAD as a priority area and to go beyond the mere submission of reports to the PCW and COA (UPDGO AR 2021). The recognition of GAD as a priority area by the administration of UP Diliman, following the January 2021 GAD Briefing for the Executive Committee, is manifested in several concrete actions and policies. This initiative is a significant step towards encouraging deans and unit heads to assign greater importance to GAD work by supporting their GAD committee members and by submitting the GAD Plan and Budget. Further, it has led to the approval of the UP Diliman GAD Agenda, which outlines strategic objectives and action plans to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women on campus, such as the approval of protocols to address Gender-Based Violence (GBV), ensuring that there are clear guidelines and procedures for handling cases of GBV within the university. This proactive stance is significant, as it not only addresses immediate concerns but also contributes to creating a safer and more inclusive environment for all students and staff.

However, translating this leadership into action at the college and office levels remains a challenge, as evident in the sharing of experiences of workshop participants.

Table 5: UP Diliman Administration 2020 - 2023

	Position	Male	Female	Total
	Chancellor	1	-	1
	Vice-Chancellor	1	5	6
	Deans	13	11	24
Unit heads	Office of the Chancellor	5	12	17
	Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs	4	7	11
	Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Administration	4	3	7
	Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs	3	4	7
	Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Research and Development	3	3	6
	Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Community Affairs	3	4	7
	Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Planning and Development	1	0	1
		38 (44%)	49 (56%)	87

Source: University of the Philippines Diliman (as of April 27, 2022)

The GMEF tool categorizes targets into "internal and external clients." This categorization is not appropriate for an educational institution, as it oversimplifies complex contexts to fit a "one-size-fits-all" solution to quantify results. Educational institutions have diverse stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, and the broader community. Imposing a rigid client-

based framework fails to capture the unique dynamics and needs of these groups. For instance, students are not merely clients but active participants in the educational process. Similarly, faculty and staff play multifaceted roles that go beyond the typical service-provider-client relationship. Despite this, because of the need to align with the GMEF format, "clients" were retained.

Before the pandemic, the UPDGO actively implemented capability-building, gender education, and advocacy activities for faculty, staff, students, and the public (UPDGO Terminal Report 2015-2020). During the pandemic, the UPDGO has continued to provide gender education in an online format. Online learning posed several challenges. Many participants found it difficult to adapt to the online platform and were experiencing technical issues. The extended screen time and lack of physical interaction strained both mental and physical health. The online format also limited the participatory nature of workshops, which are crucial for effective gender education. Engagement and interaction were often reduced, making it harder to foster meaningful discussions. On the other hand, the shift to online learning allowed for greater reach, enabling participants from various geographic locations to join sessions without the need for travel. This expanded accessibility meant that more individuals could benefit from the training. Online platforms provided opportunities for recording sessions, which participants could revisit later, reinforcing learning and offering flexibility for those who might have conflicting schedules.

Advances were made through the institutionalisation of the GST for employees and GSO for Freshies (first-year students), made possible by partnering with the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs (OVCSA) and the Human Resources Development Office (UPDGO AR 2020 and 2021).

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In 2021, the UPDGO conducted 35 sessions, with 96 faculty members, 390 employees, 1,134 students, and 109 unspecified participants. Additionally, 27 sessions were held with the public. The data reveals that more females (65.5%) than males (39.9%) are provided with regular GSTs. The proportion of unspecified data is 3.6% (UPDGO AR 2021, pp. 10-18). All the GST sessions conducted in 2021 were online. This represents a 54.3% increase compared to 2019, or a total of 19 combined sessions for UP Diliman (UPDGO Terminal Report 2015-2020).

In terms of leadership, a significant development during the pandemic was the emergence of a leadership structure within the UPDGO, primarily from the Research, Extension, and Professional Staff (REPS) ranks. This shift from faculty-led leadership ensures continuity and stability in GAD programs, allowing for more focused and sustained efforts in gender policy implementation and strategic planning (Table 6). The strong presence of gender experts within UP Diliman is recognized both nationally and internationally. Women activists and academics have been staunch advocates for integrating gender perspectives into all major outputs of UP Diliman. Before the pandemic, the UP CWGS, in partnership with the UPDGO, hosted the Southeast Asian Women's/Gender Studies Conference on July 30-31, 2015. Many faculty members have been active in leadership positions in feminist organizations such as the Women's Studies Association of the Philippines, the Center for Women's Resources, GABRIELA, and so forth.

Table 6 – List of UPDGO Coordinator, 2001 to present

Coordinator	Home college	Period
Prof. Rosario del Rosario, Ph.D.	College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD)	1999 - 2008
Prof. Marion Jimenez-Tan	CSWCD	2009 - 2011

Prof. Yolanda G. Ealdama	CSWCD	2011 - 2013
Prof. Bernadette V. Neri	College of Arts and Letters (CAL)	2013 - 2015
Prof. Nancy Kimuell-Gabriel, Ph.D.	CAL	2015 – 2020
Kristel May Gomez-Magdaraog, RSW	UPDGO	2020 – 2022
Prof. Pauline Mari Hernando, Ph.D.	CAL	September 2022
Anna Myrishia Villanueva, RGC	UPDGO	2023 - present

Source: UPDGO Website (2018)

GMEF TOOL 3: ENABLING MECHANISMS- LEVEL 2

The score for the enabling mechanisms entry-level is 12.67 and is at level 2 (Table 7, Appendix 2). The enabling mechanisms for successful gender mainstreaming are the GFPS, utilisation of the GAD budget, and creation of a GAD database. The GMEF results yielded very low scores, as UP Diliman lacks a consolidated GAD database, and the achievement of the 5% allocation for the GAD budget remains a challenge.

On the plus side, the reconstitution and strengthening of the GAD committees were enabled by the continuous issuance of memoranda and capability-building support by the UPDGO before and during the pandemic. The online setup increased the participation of deans and unit heads in the GAD Assembly and improved the submission of both their GAD Plan and Budget and GAD Accomplishment Report. The UPDGO employed participatory and consultative approaches in crafting its annual GAD Plan and Budget. It also initiated online consultations with the GAD committees, which resulted in 50 online consultations (UPDGO AR 2021). Some of the GAD committees included student representation through the student councils. The results

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of the consultations were drafted in the GAD Plan and Budget 2022, and the document was presented to the assembly of GAD committees for feedback and validation. This collaborative effort of the Office of the Chancellor, the UPDGO, and the GAD committees represents a major step towards achieving the required budget allocation in the future. The sense of ownership developed is an essential component during the subsequent stages of planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

However, despite the existence of official memos, GAD committee members experience the inadequacy of support from their unit leadership, which places a considerable burden on the work of GAD personnel. Staff shared the effects of the pandemic on their roles within this area and the subsequent decline in their mental and physical health. One of the challenges faced by academics is the ability to effectively manage multiple tasks simultaneously (Valencia 2017).

"GAD mainstreaming is seen as an additional task in the office units, resulting in the lack of expertise in the matter." -participant 4, Policy Group

"Multiple roles for GAD representatives, but there is a lack of incentives (e.g., financial compensation, credits). -participant 1, Enabling Mechanisms Group

The motivation of GAD committees and other stakeholders is crucial for ensuring the continuity of GAD work. Motivation can be fostered by addressing their objective interests (Pandolfelli *et al.* 2008), such as: a. access to resources in terms of adequate funding, training, and personnel, particularly to carry out activities related to gender mainstreaming and development; b. institutional support for implementing GAD-related policies, such as allowing official time to be used for

committee meetings and other activities and reflect these activities in their performance evaluation; and c. recognition for GAD advocacy in monetary (compensation) and non-monetary (academic loading, performance evaluation, research and extension loading) forms.

The Gawad Kasarian initiative, relaunched in March 2021, exemplifies this approach. Originally launched in 2015, the pre-pandemic Gawad Kasarian acknowledged the role of women academics in promoting scholarship in this field. However, the 2021 Gawad Kasarian, held during the pandemic, expanded its focus beyond individual recognition to also honor the collective efforts of the GAD committees.

GMEF TOOL 4: Programs, Activities and Projects (PAPs)-LEVEL 4

The score for the PAPs entry level is 20.1 and is at level 4 (Table 8, Appendix 2). The sustained and increased collaboration with GAD committees and the public before and during the pandemic resulted in a high score in the PAPs entry level.

The high score was a result of the UPDGO's continuous GAD activities. This reflects how successfully the office transitioned its core services online, such as implementing gender sensitivity trainings and leading online campaigns like the celebration of International Women's Day on March 8, One Billion Rising to end violence against women, UP Diliman Pride, and so forth. In addition to these campaigns, various gender-specific webinars were held, including discussions on masculinities, breastfeeding, and the like. The

UPDGO's radio program, GENDERadyo[3], launched its first podcast, with 13 episodes aired in 2021. Moreover, significant research publications were released (i.e., the Protocol on GBV Mitigation in UP Diliman, the *Diliman Gender Review Vol. 3*, and the like). Psychosocial and legal counseling for victims of gender violence and discrimination also transitioned online.

The success of online campaign activities was attributed to the support of the management, the active involvement of the GAD committees, and the dedication of the UPDGO staff. The UPDGO continues to fund GAD activities of different colleges, units, and organisations. It ensures that these are aligned with the guidelines on GAD Budget utilisation. During the pandemic, all staff were required to learn new technologies and platforms to continue their work. Within the UPDGO, efforts were made to balance the workload with consideration of the health and wellness of the staff. Administrative and temporary personnel were provided with support to assist program officers in carrying out their duties. Despite these efforts, the blurring of boundaries between work and family life, the continuation of work responsibilities outside of office hours and on weekends, and the resulting strains on both physical and mental health have also been observed (Palumbo *et al.* 2020).

The impact of teleworking on UP Diliman has yet to be fully investigated. The extant literature indicates a lack of consensus regarding the heterogeneous effects of teleworking, with some studies suggesting gender-related disparities. Negative outcomes of teleworking have been documented, particularly among mothers with young children (Blasko, 2020). On the other hand,

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[3] For the list of episodes, webinars and trainings, you can access the UPDGO AR 2021 available at the UPDGO website.

teleworking can be advantageous when the conditions for working from home are conducive (Rieth and Hagemann 2021). From the perspective of employers, this translates to greater job support and job autonomy (Wang et al. 2021). In the case of the UPDGO, job security remained an important concern. The majority of the staff do not have an employer-employee relationship and are referred to as "non-UP contractual". Non-UP contractual employees are not eligible for benefits and are subject to more rigorous monitoring, including the submission of work accomplishment reports to process their salary, which is often delayed and subject to numerous deductions.

OVER-ALL GMEF SCORE: LEVEL 3

The validated Enhanced GMEF scores yielded 66.42 points, indicating that the general status of gender mainstreaming in UP Diliman is at level 3 or at the GAD Application stage for 2020-2021 (Table 10). This was the first GMEF conducted by the UPDGO, but it should not be treated as the baseline for gender mainstreaming efforts in UP Diliman. The continuous functioning of the UPDGO as a lead unit in mainstreaming gender on campus before and during the early part of the pandemic suggests that the results can provide guidelines but are not sufficient for a comprehensive assessment. While the tool provides insight into various aspects of gender mainstreaming, its focus on quantitative measures does not capture the complexity and depth of the demands and challenges as well as accomplishments in mainstreaming in an academic institution. Moving forward, it is essential to establish more comprehensive evaluation mechanisms to accurately gauge the progress and impact of gender mainstreaming initiatives at UP Diliman.

Table 9: Overall GMEF Results of UP Diliman, 2020-2021

Entry Points	Scores
Policies	11.66 (Level 2)
People	21.99 (Level 4)
Enabling Mechanisms	12.67 (Level 2)
PAPs	20.1 (Level 4)
Total	**66.42 (Level 3)**

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this paper is to identify the level and the key points for gender mainstreaming in the context of the pandemic in UP Diliman. Gender mainstreaming was already well-established in UP Diliman and the entire UP System decades before the pandemic. Efforts continued throughout the pandemic, with improvements or breakthroughs made in some program areas.

In UP Diliman, the application of the GMEF tool indicates that the UPDGO attained the third level of gender mainstreaming. This was the first time that the GMEF Tool was used to assess the level of gender mainstreaming at UP Diliman. The findings reveal that UP Diliman – through its policies, structure, personnel, and programs – managed to continue and expand its gender mainstreaming during the health emergency that was the COVID-19 pandemic. These are:

1. Reach and Inclusivity: the UPDGO's programs provided mental health and gender-related services to affected individuals, including LGBTQ+ individuals and women, during the lockdown. Services like counseling and case handling were vital. However, it did not address pandemic-related issues such as work setups or job losses for jeepney drivers at the university.

2. Institutional Reforms: The UP System instituted two overarching gender-specific policies before the pandemic. In UP Diliman, the TGNC Guidelines, which were implemented during the pandemic, held particular relevance during online classes/meetings, where misgendering sometimes occurred. The TGNC Guidelines complemented the online anti-sexual harassment clause of the UP ASH Code. The effectiveness of GAD-related memoranda varied depending on the support from college deans and office heads.

3. Capacity Development, Collaboration, and Advocacy: the UPDGO played a key role in fostering gender-sensitive environments by transforming online spaces into safe spaces and enhancing the capacity of its major mechanism for gender mainstreaming, the GAD committees. Gender-specific advocacy and online campaigns during confinement helped raise awareness and distribute information.

The ability to address gender issues under conditions of lockdown and health emergency by UP Diliman may be attributed to the following:

1. GAD Budget and Institutional Support: The success of GAD work during the pandemic is largely due to the dedicated efforts of the UPDGO staff and GAD committee members, supported by top management. The UPDGO manages the GAD budget, accessible to committee members.

2. Policy-Setting and Capacity Building: Gender-responsive policies can be initiated by UPDGO and other strategic offices. The impact of capacity-building initiatives on technical tools like GMEF and HGDG is yet to be fully observed. Online

gender education has positive and negative effects, but the modality and a hybrid set up can be further examined.

3. Leadership Structure: The pandemic showed the feasibility and effectiveness of a leader emerging from within the UPDGO ranks. This internal leadership model not only provided continuity and a deep understanding of existing challenges but also facilitated a more responsive and adaptable approach to gender mainstreaming during the crisis.

4. Staff Morale and Hybrid Work Arrangement: The high efficiency of the UPDGO's programs is attributed to the dedication of its staff despite many being contractual. The pandemic highlighted the lack of care for university employees, causing low morale and anxiety. The UPDGO mitigates this by fostering a nurturing work environment, supporting professional development, and implementing hybrid work arrangements to address rising living costs.

To sustain progress in GAD work at UP Diliman, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Institutionalize GAD Executive Briefings for each term change and ensure equitable support from all deans and unit heads.
2. Initiate gender-responsive policies by the UPDGO, colleges, and units.
3. Maintain a full-time leadership structure within the UPDGO, regularize contractual staff positions for continuity, and foster a supportive work environment.
4. Equip GAD committees with gender lens and

gender analysis tools and provide organizational and funding support.

5. Maintain webinars and hybrid setups as alternatives to traditional gender education and work setups.

6. Continue producing diverse materials, including research outputs, training modules, and creative content, to maintain program efficiency and outreach.

The resilience demonstrated by the UPDGO during the first two years of the pandemic highlights its strength in addressing future challenges and continuing its mission of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment within UP Diliman. Building on its rich experience in gender mainstreaming, the UPDGO sustained its work throughout the pandemic but still faces challenges. These issues include unpaid care work, which disproportionately affects women faculty and employees, and job losses in the university's informal sector, where specific work (such as transportation, sari-sari store, and agency-hired personnel) are dominated by particular genders. Some of these entail continuous collaboration with other offices tasked to handle such issues (for instance, the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Community Affairs and the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Administration for workload and staff support). Additionally, there has been a rise in online-based discrimination and gender-based violence. Before the transition to a physical setup in the third quarter of 2022, the UPDGO launched its GAD Agenda online, consulting with all active GAD committees. The challenge now lies in ensuring the effective implementation, monitoring, and mid-term assessment of the GAD Agenda so it can adapt to new developments and the specific contexts arising in the post-pandemic period.

While the UPDGO's efforts during the pandemic are documented and found effective, continuous

monitoring and feedback—through interviews, surveys, research, and reports—are needed to fully assess the impact of these initiatives on mitigating gender-based disparities in work, academic performance, mental health, and security.

List of Acronyms

AR	Accomplishment Report
ASH	Anti-Sexual Harassment
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CAL	College of Arts and Letters
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
COA	Commission on Audit
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
CSWCD	College of Social Work and Community Development
DGR	Diliman Gender Review
GAD	Gender and Development
GBV	Gender-based Violence
ECQ	Enhanced Community Quarantine
FPOC	Fiscal Policy and Operations Committee
GFPS	GAD Focal Point System
GMEF	Gender Mainstreaming Evaluation Framework
HGDG	Harmonized Gender and Development Guidelines
HRDO	Human Resources Development Office
IATF	Inter-Agency Task ForceAgainst Emerging Infectious Diseases
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer
MCW	Magna Carta of Women
NCRFW	National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women
OVCA	Office of the Vice Chancellor for Administration
OVCAA	Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
OVCCA	Office of the Vice Chancellor for Community Affairs
OVCSA	Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
PAPs	Programs, Activities, and Projects
PB	Plan and Budget
PCW	Philippine Commission on Women
PP	Presidential Proclamation

SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics
TGNC	Transgender and Gender Nonconforming
UCWS	University Center for Women's Studies
UN	United Nations
UPCWGS	UP Center for Women's and Gender Studies
UPD	UP Diliman
UPDGO	UP Diliman Gender Office

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APPENDIX 1

Table 1: GMEF Summary of Entry Levels and Descriptors

Entry Level	Number of Descriptors	Number of Maximum Points
Policies	13	25
People	23	25
Enabling Mechanisms	27	25
Programs, Activities and Projects (PAPs)	30	25
Total	93	100

Source: Enhanced GMEF Handbook (2016)

Table 2: Ranges and their Corresponding Level of Gender Mainstreaming

Ranges of Scores	Level	Level Description
Level per Entry Point		
1-7.99 points	1	Foundation Formation
8-14.99 points	2	Installation of Strategic Mechanisms
15-19.99 points	3	GAD Application
20-23.99 points	4	Commitment Enhancement and Institutionalization
24-25 points	5	Replication and Innovation
Overall Level		
0-30.99 points	1	Foundation Formation
31-60.99 points	2	Installation of Strategic Mechanisms
61-80.99 points	3	GAD Application
81-95.99 points	4	Commitment Enhancement and Institutionalization
96 - 100 pints	5	Replication and Innovation

Source: Enhanced GMEF Handbook (2016)

APPENDIX 2: GMEF RESULTS

Table 3: GMEF Results on Policies

Level	General Descriptors	Scores	Total
1	Issuance of foundational policies		
	1.1 Has the organization issued policies articulating support to GAD Mandates and establishing the essential elements of GAD Planning and Budgeting?	1.67	
	1.2 Has the organization conducted a review of existing policies for consistency with emerging GAD issues and issuances accordingly?	0.83	
	1.3. Has the organization issued broad statements of intentions or aspirations reflecting its support for GAD related activities?	1.67	
			4.17
2	Issuance of policies to mainstream GAD in the organization		
	2.1 Has the organization issued policies reflecting its interest for gender mainstreaming?	1.67	
	2.2. Has the organization issued policies addressing the gender needs of the clients* (internal and external)?	0.83	
	2.3. Has the organization used gender fair language and images in its policy issuances?	0.83	
			3.33
3	Integration of GAD in the organization's policies		
	3.1 Has the organization adopted a GAD Agenda/Strategic Framework on GAD?	0	
	3.2 Has the organization integrated GAD perspective in its organizational and/or national/sectoral plan/s?	1.67	
	3.3 Has the organization formulated organizational/national/sector specific policies on GAD	0	
			1.67

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4	Updating and continuous enhancement of GAD policies		
	4.1. Has the organization's GAD policy/ies resulted in bridging gender gaps of its clients (internal and external)?	0.83	
	4.2. Has the organization used the results of gender analysis in the development and/or enhancement of policies?	0.83	
	4.3. Has the organization integrated GAD perspective in its vision, mission and goals?	0.83	
		2.49	2.49
5	Model GAD policies		
	5.1. Has the organization's GAD policies been used as model/standard by other organizations?	0	
	Subtotal		11.66 (Level 2)

Table 4: GMEF Results on People

Level	General Descriptors	Scores	Total
1	On the Establishment of GFPS & GAD Champions/Advocates		
	1.1 Has the organization designated people in strategic positions as member of its GAD Focal Point System (GFPS)?	0.83	
	1.2. Has the organization's GAD Focal Point System (GFPS) members attended appropriate and relevant trainings on GAD?	0.83	
	1.3. Has the organization's top management attended Basic GAD Orientation or Gender Sensitivity Training (GST)?	0.83	
	1.4. Has the organization's staff members been oriented on GAD?	0.83	
	1.5. Are the organization's top management and GAD Focal Point System (GFPS) members aware and conscious of GAD-related policies and mandates?	0.83	

	1.6 Does the organization's top management allow staff members to participate in GAD-related activities?	0.83	
			4.98
2	GAD Initiatives & Capacity Development Activities		
	2.1. Does the top management direct the implementation of the GAD Plan and Budget (GAD PB) of the organization?	0.83	
	2.2. Are program implementers trained on gender analysis (GA) and the use of gender analysis (GA) tools?	0.41	
	2.3. Are concerned staff members trained in the importance of collecting sex-disaggregated data (SDD) and gender statistics?	0.41	
	2.4. Are male employees involved and appreciative of the organization's GAD PAPs?	0.41	
	2.5. Are clients (internal and external) aware of the GAD efforts of the organization?	0.83	
	2.6. Are the clients (internal and external) able to articulate their gender needs/issues in the development of the organization's GAD efforts?	0.83	
			3.72
3	GAD Sponsorship & Related Programs		
	3.1. Does the top management direct integration of GAD perspective in the organization's program/activities/ projects (PAPs) and performance indicators?	0.83	
	3.2. Are the GFPS and program implementers able to integrate GAD perspective in the development of the organization's program/activities/ projects (PAPs)?	0.41	
	3.3. Are concerned staff members able to utilize sex-disaggregated data (SDD) and/ or gender statistics for gender analysis (GA) to enhance the organization's GAD PAPs?	0.83	

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	3.4. Does the top management support the appointment of qualified women staff members to leadership positions?	0.83	
	3.5. Do women assume critical roles and authority in the organization?	0.83	
	3.6. Are the clients (internal and external), able to participate in the planning and implementation of the organization's GAD efforts?	0.83	
			4.56
4	GAD Champions as Program Implementers		
	4.1. Are the GAD Focal Point System (GFPS) members able to serve as GAD resource persons within the organization, including to its regional offices and attached agencies?	0.41	
	4.2. Does top management direct the monitoring of the organization's GAD efforts?	0.83	
	4.3. Are concerned staff members able to adjust GAD efforts to address emerging gender issues?	0.83	
	4.4. Do top management and concerned staff members reflect GAD functions in their performance contracts or terms of reference (TORs)?	0.41	
	4.5.Are concerned staff members able to develop tools and/or knowledge products (KPs) on GAD?	0.83	
	4.6. Are clients (internal and external) able to participate in 3 or more levels of the development planning cycle (planning, implementation and management, monitoring and evaluation) of the organization's GAD PAPs?	0.41	
			3.72
5	GAD Experts		
	5.1. Does top management raise GAD concerns during high level meetings/ discussions?	1.67	

	5.2. Are the organization's staff members recognized as GAD experts by other organizations?	1.67	
	5.3. Are external clients of the organization recognized as GAD champions by reputable local, national and international organizations?	1.67	
			5.01
	Subtotal		21.99 (Level 4)

Table 7: GMEF Results on Enabling Mechanisms

Level	General Descriptors	Scores	Total
1	Setting up of Essential GAD Mechanisms		
	1.1. Has the organization created/ reconstituted its GAD Focal Point System (GFPS) in accordance with Magna Carta of Women Implementing Rules and Regulations (MCW IRR) Sec. 37-C and other pertinent policies issued by oversight agencies?	1.67	
	1.2. Has exploratory activities been initiated with the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) or other agencies/ LGUs, institutions and/or individuals to facilitate gender mainstreaming in the organization?	1.67	
	1.3. Has the organization collected information towards the establishment of sex-disaggregated database and enhancement of its M&E system?	0.83	
			4.17
2	Functional GAD Mechanisms		
	2.1. Does the organization have a functional GAD Focal Point System (GFPS) based on the provisions of guidelines issued by relevant oversight agencies? (e.g. PCW 2011-01 for NGAs, JMC 2013-01 for LGUs and CHED MO 2015-01 for SUCs)	1	

	2.2. Has the organization established other GAD mechanisms? *Other GAD Mechanisms refer to those in addition to the GFPS and the GAD Database*	1	
	2.3. Has the organization utilized at least 5% of its budget* to implement GAD PAPs?	0.5	
	2.4. Has engagement with organizations such as PCW, LGUs and/or other agencies, and individuals been established towards the conduct of GAD-related activities for the organization?	1	
	2.5. Is the organization able to collect or generate sex-disaggregated data (SDD) and/or gender statistics*?	0.5	
			4.00
3	Integration of GAD in the Organization's Mechanisms		
	3.1. Does the organization's other GAD mechanisms coordinate, monitor and report progress of implementation of its functions?	0.5	
	3.2. Has the organization utilized 30% or more of its total budget* to implement GAD PAPs?	0	
	3.3. Has the organization judiciously utilized its GAD budget to implement GAD activities based on its GAD Plan (GAD PB)?	0.5	
	3.4. Has the organization partnered with agencies/LGUs, institutions and/or individuals towards the strategic implementation of its GAD PAPs?	0.5	
	3.5. Is the organization utilizing sex-disaggregated data (SDD) and/or gender statistics in the development planning cycle (planning, implementation and management and monitoring and evaluation)?	0.5	
			2.00
4	Advanced GAD Mechanisms		

	4.1. Has the organization's other GAD mechanisms been able to contribute towards the attainment of its desired impact/s?	0	
	4.2. Has the organization utilized 70% or more of its total budget* to implement GAD PAPs?	0	
	4.3 Is the organization's database with sex-disaggregated data (SDD) and/or gender statistics able to generate sector-specific knowledge products (KPs) on GAD?	1	
	4.4 Is the organization's M & E system able to track the desired gender-related impacts of its GAD PAPs on clients (internal and external)?	0.5	
	4.5. Does the organization have a Knowledge Management (KM) System with GAD-related knowledge products (KPs)?	1	
			2.50
5	Model GAD Structures and Systems		
	5.1. Has the organization's GAD Focal Point System (GFPS) been recognized or awarded as a model GAD mechanism by reputable local, national, and international organizations on gender mainstreaming?	0	
	5.2. Has the organization's other GAD mechanisms been recognized as models by other organizations?	0	
	5.3. Has the organization utilized 100% of its total budget* to implement GAD PAPs?	0	
	5.4. Has the organization established a centralized database with sex-disaggregated data (SDD) and/or gender statistics accessible to its regional offices and attached agencies, as well as external clients and partner organizations?	0	
	5.5 Is the Knowledge Management (KM) system of the organization integrated with GAD and replicated by other organizations?	0	
			0

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	Subtotal		12.67 (Level 2)

Table 8: GMEF Results on Projects, Activities and Programs (PAPs)

Level	General Descriptors	Scores	Total
1	Initial Activities to Facilitate GAD Mainstreaming		
	1.1. Is the organization observing international / local / national GAD-related events?	0.83	
	1.2 Has the organization conducted Basic GAD Orientation or Gender Sensitivity Training (GST) for its clients (internal and external)?	0.83	
	1.3 Has the organization conducted consultation activities with clients (internal and external) to identify gender issues and corresponding strategies?	0.83	
	1.4 Has the organization consulted PCW and relevant organizations / individuals on its GAD mainstreaming?	0.83	
	1.5 Has the organization reviewed and revised existing Information / Education / Communication (IEC) materials and knowledge products (KPs) to ensure use of gender-fair language and images?	0.83	
	1.6 Has the organization set-up a GAD corner?	0.83	
			4.98
2	Establishing Commitment towards Gender Mainstreaming		
	2.1 Has the organization formulated GAD agenda or strategic framework on GAD?	0.31	
	2.2 Has the organization developed its GAD Plan and Budget (GAD PB) based on its GAD agenda, emerging gender issues, international / national GAD mandates or results of gender analysis?	0.62	

	2.3 Has the organization conducted deepening sessions on GAD based on the results of the Training Needs Assessment (TNA) or updated GAD policies and tools as part of the continuing capacity development of GAD Focal Point System (GFPS) and concerned staff members?	0.62	
	2.4 Has the organization used gender analysis (GA) tools and techniques in the review, enhancement or development of PAPs?	0.62	
	2.5 Does the organization have facilities and services that address the gender issues and concerns of its clients (internal and external)?	0.62	
	2.6 Has the organization developed orientation modules for new employees with gender sensitivity as a core competency?	0.62	
	2.7 Has the organization developed and disseminated new Information / Education / Communication (IEC) materials on GAD to clients (internal and external)?	0.62	
	2.8 Has the organization created a GAD section in its website?	0.62	
			4.65
3	GAD Application		
	3.1 Has the organization monitored the implementation of its GAD Program / Activities / Projects (PAPs)?	0.71	
	3.2 Has the organization prepared and timely submitted its GAD Plan and Budget (GAD PB) and GAD Accomplishment Report (GAD AR)?	0.71	
	3.3 Has the organization conducted and sustained GAD capacity development for its clients (internal and external)?	0.71	
	3.4 Has the organization conducted GAD capacity development sessions for internal GAD experts?	0.71	

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	3.5 Has the organization regularly applied Gender Analysis (GA) tools in the development planning cycle (planning, implementation and management, and monitoring and evaluation) ?	0.71	
	3.6 Has the organization regularly updated its GAD section in the website?	0.71	
	3.7 Has the organization set-up Knowledge Management (KM) system as a mechanism to transfer knowledge on GAD?	0.71	
			4.97
4	GAD Commitment and Institutionalization		
	4.1 Has the organization sustained implementation and monitoring of international, national, and local GAD mandates in its programs?	1	
	4.2 Has the organization conducted organizational / sector specific capacity development sessions on GAD for clients (internal and external)?	1	
	4.3 Does the organization regularly apply gender analysis (GA) tools to assess gender-responsiveness of programs / activities / projects including Official Development Assistance (ODA) funded projects?	1	
	4.4 Has the organization developed a sustainability action plan for its GAD PAPs?	0	
	4.5 Has the organization conducted impact evaluation of its GAD PAPs?	0	
			3.0
5	Model PAPs		
	5.1 Has the organization been recognized as a GAD learning hub for its notable GAD PAPs?	0	
	5.2 Has the organization's partnership with stakeholders resulted in a convergence model that is recognized and replicated by other organizations?	0	

	5.3 Has the organization's knowledge products (KPs) and Information, Education, Communication (IEC) materials on GAD used by other organizations?	1.25	
	5.4 Has the organization's existing award / incentive system been integrated with GAD perspective?	1.25	
			2.5
	Subtotal		20.1 (Level 4)

LEVEL AND PREVALENCE OF ANXIETY AND QUALITY OF LIFE OF HOUSEWIVES IN METRO MANILA, PHILIPPINES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Marion Abilene Navarro

ABSTRACT

Women are at a higher risk of experiencing anxiety disorders, which may negatively impact their quality of life. Pre-pandemic data shows a global prevalence of 179 million females diagnosed with anxiety disorders. In the Philippines, pre-pandemic estimates on the prevalence of anxiety disorders among women are at 4.13%, which is higher compared to 2.39% among males (Dattani et al. 2023). This pre-pandemic state of women's mental health has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and may lead to increased levels of anxiety and more pronounced gender disparity. This research utilized descriptive and inferential statistics to determine the level of and relationship between anxiety and Quality of Life of Filipino housewives (25-49 years old) in Metro-Manila during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data was collected through an online survey that asked for demographic information, the GAD-7 items, and WHOQOL-BREF items - the latter two are self-assessment instruments for measuring anxiety and the ecological context

and quality of life, respectively. Results showed that 46.91% of participants had high levels of anxiety and low levels of Quality of Life across four domains (physical, psychological, social relations, and environmental), overall Quality of Life facet, and overall quality of health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Anxiety and Quality of Life were found to have a weak inverse relationship in this research, meaning that as anxiety scores increase, the quality of life in all four domains and in the overall QoL decreases. This research supports reports that women's mental health has been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is recommended that follow-up studies on anxiety and QoL of housewives post-pandemic be conducted. The study also recommends the provision of programs that provide a space for women to process their experiences during the pandemic and their current mental health.

Keywords: *Quality of Life, Women, COVID-19, mental health*

ABSTRAK

Mas madalas makaranas ang mga kababaihan ng mataas na antas ng pagkabalisa na maaaring magdulot ng negatibong kalidad ng buhay. Bago pa ang COVID-19 pandemic, ang pandaigdigang bilang ng mga babaeng mayroong karamdaman sa pagkabalisa ay nasa 179 milyon. Sa Pilipinas, tinatayang 4.13% kababaihang ng populasyon ang mayroong karamdaman sa pagkabalisa, antas na mas mataas kumpara sa mga kalalakihan (2.39%) (Dattani et al. 2023). Maaaring makaapekto ang karanasan sa COVID-19 pandemic tungo sa mas mataas na antas ng pagkabalisa. Maaaring maging mas matingkad ang pagkakaiba sa kalusugang pangkaisipan dahil sa kasarian. Upang malaman

ang antas ng pagkabalisa at kaugnayan ng pagkabalisa sa kalidad ng buhay para sa mga kababaihang maybahay (25-49 taong gulang) na nakatira sa Metro Manila sa panahon ng pandemiya, gumamit ang pananaliksik ng deskriptibo at imperensyal na pagdadatos. Ang datos ay nakuha sa pamamagitan ng online sarbey na humihingi ng demograpikong impormasyon, at naglalaman ng mga katanungan mula sa eskala ng GAD-7 at WHOQOL-BREF. Mula sa pagdadatos, naitala na ang mga kalahok ay mayroong mataas na antas ng pagkabalisa (46.91%), at mababang antas ng kalidad ng buhay sa apat na aspeto, pangkabuuang kalidad ng buhay at pangkabuuang kalidad ng kalusugan sa panahon ng pandemiya. Ang pagkabalisa at kalidad ng buhay ay mayroong mahina at negatibong kaugnayan sa pananaliksik na ito. Ibig sabihin, ang pagtaas ng antas ng pagkabalisa ay may kaakibat na pagbaba sa kalidad ng buhay sa apat na aspetong nabanggit at pangkalahatang kalidad ng buhay. Sinusuportahan ng pananaliksik na ito ang mga ulat na ang lusog-isip ng kababaihan ay negatibong naapektuhan sa panahon ng pandemiya. Inirerekomenda na magkaroon ng mga kasunod na pag-aaral sa pagkabalisa at kalidad ng buhay sa mga kababaihan, lalo na ang mga maybahay at maralitang ina. Nananawagan din ito para sa pagbuo ng mga programang maaaring magbigay ng suporta sa mga kababaihan para pag-usapan ang kanilang mga karanasan sa panahon ng pandemiya at pangalagaan ang kanilang lusog-isip sa kasalukuyan.

Susing salita: *pagkabalisa, kalidad ng buhay, kababaihan, COVID-19, lusog-isip*

INTRODUCTION

Studies show that, globally, anxiety disorders are more prevalent among women, who are twice as likely to be diagnosed with anxiety as men (WHO 2017). This gender disparity is evident in the Philippines, with pre-pandemic estimates of 4.13% of women experiencing anxiety disorders as compared to 2.39% of men (Dattani et al. 2023). Gender disparity in anxiety disorders and other mental health concerns are linked to social determinants of health such as socioeconomic status, differential power, resources, risk of violence, and role in society – aspects of life across which women are often disadvantaged. Women constitute 70% of the world's poor, face significant discrimination in both society and the workforce, earn significantly less in paid work, and are at least two and a half times more likely than men to be assigned to unpaid domestic work such as child rearing, cleaning, cooking, and taking care of elderly family members – limiting their time for leisure and other activities that protect their mental health ("Gender and Women's Mental Health" 2020).

Women are more at risk of anxiety disorders during early adulthood (25-49 years) than men (WHO 2017). A study on identity development in early adulthood (Eriksson et al. 2020, 1968) states that a shift in the identity of individuals occurs during this period when long-term relationships are established. This is also the reproductive age as well as the start of paid work – factors that cause stress for women, given the strong social expectations they face to fulfill their reproductive roles. A study by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) found Filipino women are more likely to withdraw from the labor force during their peak childbearing ages of 25 to 29 years old, with marriage, childbearing, patriarchal family culture, religion, and stereotyped gender roles as major factors for the decrease in female labor force participation ("New NEDA Study Identifies Reasons

Behind Filipino Women's Low Labor Participation Rate"
2019).

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines Quality
of Life (QoL) as "an individual's perception of their
position in life in the context of the culture and value
systems in which they live and in relation to their goals,
expectations, standards and concerns" (2012). Anxiety
experienced by women may have an inverse reciprocal
relationship with their QoL. The presence of anxiety
symptoms affects one's subjective assessment of their
quality of life, while specific aspects of quality of life can
also influence anxiety symptoms, possibly leading to the
progression of anxiety symptoms into a disorder.

This pre-pandemic state of women's mental health was
compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has
triggered varying levels of anxiety among individuals.
While anxiety – an adaptive emotion that helps us plan
for anticipated future threats – is a normal reaction to
stress and uncertainty, high levels may interfere with
day-to-day living. Anxiety symptoms interfering with
the ability to function in daily life may be a warning sign
of an anxiety disorder. Unlike transient anxiety, this is
characterized by excessive and uncontrollable worry
that disrupts daily living. In such cases, professional
mental health interventions for proper assessment
and intervention may be beneficial. Evidence pointing
to women being disproportionately at risk for anxiety
disorders warrants the assessment of the prevalence
and levels of anxiety symptoms among this population.

This study aims to contribute to understanding the
implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on Filipino
women's health by asking two primary questions:
(1) What is the prevalence of anxiety among Filipino
housewives during the COVID-19 pandemic? (2) How
does this anxiety correlate with their quality of life across

physical, psychological, social, and environmental domains?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilizes a quantitative research design to assess the levels of anxiety and quality of life among Filipino housewives during the COVID-19 pandemic, employing both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Participants
Purposive sampling was used to recruit married Filipino women aged 25-49 years old who identified as housewives and were living in Metro Manila. To follow safety protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic, a convenience sampling method was used to invite participants.

One limitation of the study was that Metro Manila was under a strict lockdown, making it more feasible and safer for both the researcher and the participants to base the selection on availability and proximity. Another limitation, given the setup of the pandemic that limited data collection to online means, was the inability to meet the original target sample size of 385 respondents, which would have provided the research findings a confidence level of 95%, with a 5% margin of error and 50% population proportion. Only 81 respondents were included.

Data Collection Instruments
An online questionnaire using a Google Form was used to collect data. After the informed consent form, the first section of the questionnaire asked for sociodemographic information such as: the respondent's age, residence, socioeconomic status, number of children, educational attainment, number of hours dedicated to housework,

if living with extended family, if taking care of children, if taking care of other members of the family, and the presence of household help.

This was followed by questions from the GAD-7 Filipino version, a self-report questionnaire with seven items assessing anxiety over the past two weeks. Each question is answered on a four-point Likert scale: 0 for "not at all," 1 for "several days," 2 for "more than half the days," and 3 for "nearly every day." The scores for all questions are totalled and categorized as low (≤9) or high (>9). Based on literature, a cut-off score of 10 balances sensitivity (89%) and specificity (82%) for screening potential anxiety diagnoses (Spitzer et al. 2006). While the GAD-7 is useful for screening, a formal diagnosis requires a complete assessment by a mental health professional. In this study, the GAD-7 score is used to measure and categorize anxiety levels and not to diagnose participants.

Lastly, the third section was adopted from the WHOQOL-BREF Filipino version, a self-report tool with 26 items. It has four domains (Physical, Psychological, Social, and Environmental) spread out over 24 items, with additional items for the overall facet of QoL and the overall facet of perceived health. Responses follow a five-point Likert scale: 1 for "not at all" and 5 for "completely". The scoring guide from the WHOQOL-BREF manual was followed, and mean scores for each domain were computed and tabulated. The scores were classified as low QoL (< 60) or high QoL (≥ 60) per domain to measure QoL (Silva et al. 2014, 395).

In total, the questionnaire has 43 questions, which were administered in Filipino or English, depending on the choice of the respondents, to limit the language barrier among respondents and to ensure cultural

appropriateness. An additional question for feedback and concerns about the research was also added. All data collected through the form was stored in a private Google Drive and was accessible only to the author.

Cronbach's alpha, a measure of scale reliability, was used to compute all scales to ensure reliability. The results are the following:

Scale No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
GAD-7 Scale 7	0.921
Physical Domain of WHOQOL-BREF 7	0.772
Psychological Domain of WHOQOL-BREF 6	0.798
Social Relationships Domain of the WHOQOL-BREF 3	0.767
Environmental Domain of the WHOQOL-BREF 8	0.859

Table 1. Reliability of Scales

The acceptable Cronbach's alpha for a reliable scale is at least 0.6; therefore, all the scales are reliable.

Data Collection Procedure

Participants were recruited through an online call disseminated through Facebook groups and pages, the target audience of which was Filipino mothers and housewives. The online call was also shared within the

network of the author, who may know individuals who fit the inclusion criteria. Before answering the online questionnaire, participants were asked to provide voluntary consent by completing an informed consent form in the first section of the Google Form (with participants who did not consent redirected to the end of the Google Form). Participants were informed that their data would be kept private and confidential, and were not asked for their names, email addresses, or other information that would identify them as participants in the study. The responses to the Google Form were stored in a private Google Drive and were accessible only to the author. The survey was conducted from April 28 to May 8, 2021, when Metro Manila was under Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ), a government policy that limited movement within the containment areas to allow only for essential services and work (a modification of the initial Enhanced Community Quarantine where no movement was allowed).

Data Analysis

In order to achieve the objectives of this quantitative research, descriptive and inferential statistical analysis were conducted. All analyses were conducted using SPSS ver. 20, MS Excel, Google Sheets, and Epi Info. A total of 115 responses were received through the form. However, upon data cleaning, there were 34 respondents who did not satisfy the inclusion criteria (i.e., under 25 years old, over 49 years old, or do not reside in Metro Manila). After cleaning the data, 81 valid responses were analyzed.

To describe the level and prevalence of anxiety among respondents, the tallied score for anxiety was categorized as high or low and cross-tabulated. Moreover, because the data was not normally

distributed, the median and range were obtained. To describe the QoL among respondents, the scoring guide from the WHOQOL-BREF manual was followed. The mean scores for each domain were computed and tabulated. Moreover, the scores were classified as low QoL (less than 60) or high QoL (60 or more) per domain. Lastly, to determine the relationship between anxiety and QoL among respondents, regression analysis was conducted with a 95% confidence level. After regression analysis, Pearson correlation was conducted to find the strength and direction of the relationship. The mean score of anxiety was also analyzed alongside the overall perception of quality of life, the overall perception of their health, physical domain, psychological domain, social domain, and environmental domain separately, with an alpha of 0.05.

Limitations of the Methodology

Because this research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face data collection was not possible. Since it was necessary to conduct convenience sampling via online data collection, this led to 1) the possibility of missing out on capturing the experience of respondents from lower socioeconomic classes without access to the internet and gadgets and with limited digital literacy to answer the online survey and 2) a low number of respondents which limits the generalizability of the results. Nevertheless, the results of this study were compared with available literature and aligned with existing literature while offering relevant data on an understudied subpopulation of Filipino women.

Another limitation of this study was the use of self-report measures, which can lead to social desirability bias. It is noticeable that at least a quarter of the respondents chose a neutral option answer for all items in all domains. This may be due to respondents choosing the most socially acceptable option instead of indicating that they are unwell, which is linked to the Filipino culture of *hiya* or shame. To address this, the instruments that were chosen were those that were already well-used self-report tools. The WHOQOL-BREF was specifically designed with a five-point Likert scale and was tested for use among different populations, including Filipino respondents. It was shown to be highly reliable and valid. Meanwhile, the GAD-7 was also tested for its psychometric properties and is well-tested for reliability and validity among diverse populations.
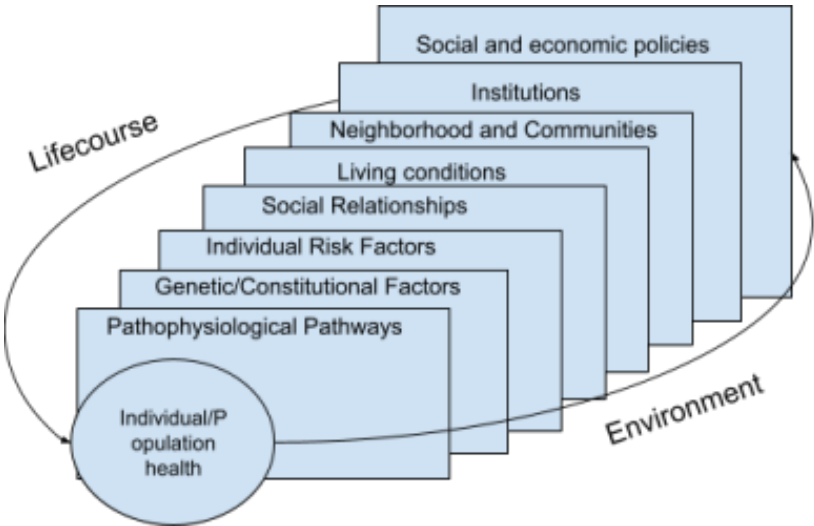
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Fig 1. Ecological Perspective from Smedley and Syme (2000)

This study utilized the ecological perspective based on the work of Smedley and Syme (2000), as mentioned in Rimer and Glanz (2005, 10–12). The ecological perspective is helpful in understanding the multiple layers of influence affecting health behaviors and health outcomes. Health behaviors and outcomes can be analyzed as influenced by different intrapersonal factors (such as individual beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, and personality traits), interpersonal factors (such as social identity and social support), and community factors (such as institutional rules, institutional structure, social network, norms, and policies). Moreover, the ecological perspective emphasizes the reciprocal causation between individuals and their social environment, highlighting that individuals both shape and are shaped by their social environment.

This perspective is particularly suitable for this study because both the ecological perspective and the WHO Quality of Life framework, as used in the WHOQOL-BREF, posit that health is multidimensional and contextualized. It is important in this study to highlight intersectionality in order to better understand women's health outcomes. The WHOQOL-BREF comprehensively assesses intrapersonal, interpersonal, and community-level factors across psychological, physical, social, and environmental domains affecting individual quality of life. The psychological and physical domains of the WHOQOL-BREF closely align with the intrapersonal or individual factors from an ecological perspective, as they pertain to individual well-being. The psychological domain of QoL pertains to personal perception of psychological well-being based on experience of both positive and negative feelings, cognitive ability, and self-perception. Moreover, the physical dimension of QoL refers to personal physical well-being based on experienced physical sensations such as pain and energy, bodily functions such as mobility, and biological needs such as sleep and rest. Meanwhile, the social

dimension of the WHOQOL-BREF closely aligns with the interpersonal level of the ecological perspective as both pertain to the importance of social networks. Lastly, the environmental domain of the WHOQOL-BREF corresponds with community-level factors from an ecological perspective, reflecting broader contextual factors such as access to health and social care, access to information and skills, financial resources, and transport, among others.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Respondents

Survey respondents are women aged 25 to 49 years, with a median age of 34. The 81 respondents are from 15 different cities in Metro Manila. The majority are from Quezon City (23.46%), followed by Caloocan City (19.75%), and Manila (12.35%) – which are the three most populous cities in NCR (Philippine Statistics Authority 2021, 2). Over half of the respondents (55.6%) have a monthly household income of less than ₱25,000 per month, followed by respondents from the ₱25,000-₱49,999 bracket (21%) and ₱50,000-₱74,999 bracket (12.4%).

Interestingly, all respondents are housewives, with a significant majority (76.54%) who finished tertiary education. This is consistent with the 2019 NEDA study on education and labor force participation of women, which found that marriage and childrearing were significantly associated with the decline in female labor force participation, especially for women aged 25-29 years old. It also found that the patriarchal family structure reduces female labor force participation by 8 - 13% ("New NEDA Study Identifies Reasons Behind Filipino Women's Low Labor Participation Rate," 2019).

All but one respondent reported dedicating several hours a day to domestic work, with a median of at least 8 hours per day – equivalent to a full-time work schedule. Out of the 81 respondents, 49.38% reported spending more than 8 hours per day on domestic work. This shows that the respondents dedicated more hours to domestic work during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to pre-pandemic levels, where women spent an average of 6.5 hours of domestic work daily (Oxfam 2017, 8). This aligns with the results of the Oxfam 2021 National Household Care Survey, which found that the COVID-19 pandemic added hours up to 11 hours of unpaid care work for women (Oxfam Pilipinas 2022, 24).

More than half of the respondents (56.79%) do not live with their extended family. Almost all (98.8%) took on the role of primary caregivers for the children in their families. A majority of the respondents (69.14%) also cared for other family members in addition to their children and husbands, whereas 30.68% did not have this additional responsibility. The majority of the respondents (71%) do not avail themselves of paid housekeeping services such as laundry, cooking, or house cleaning services to augment their domestic work. This may be attributed to the large percentage of respondents coming from lower and middle-income families.

Level of Anxiety

Anxiety level of Housewives	Frequency	Percent
Low anxiety (GAD-7 score<=9)	43	53.1
High anxiety (GAD-7 Score>9)	38	46.9
TOTAL	81	100.0

Table 2. Anxiety Levels and Prevalence of Anxiety Among Housewives in Metro Manila During the COVID-19 Pandemic

A significant finding is that, among the 81 respondents, 46.91% of the housewives reported high levels of anxiety symptoms during the COVID-19 pandemic. This closely aligns with the 47.8% prevalence of anxiety symptoms among females and the higher prevalence of anxiety symptoms in females compared to men (27.8%) based on systematic reviews of the prevalence of anxiety in the general population during the COVID-19 pandemic (Kan et al. 2021, 393). The prevalence of anxiety symptoms among respondents of this research is higher compared to pre-pandemic estimates of a 39% prevalence of anxiety among the general Filipino population (Flores et al. 2018, 4), which is also consistent with the global trend of increase in anxiety due to the COVID-19 pandemic and with women being more affected compared to men (Santomauro et al. 2021; Kan et al. 2021; Xiong et al. 2020).

Meeting the GAD-7 cutoff score (GAD-7 Score>9) does not mean a definitive diagnosis of an anxiety disorder. However, it suggests the potential need for a professional assessment to determine whether an individual experiences an anxiety disorder. The elevated levels of anxiety during the past two weeks are characteristic of those commonly present in an anxiety disorder. Results of the study indicate that nearly half of the participants experienced considerable anxiety symptoms, highlighting the severe mental health impact of the pandemic on this demographic.

The questions and responses for the GAD-7 scale are tabulated above. Participants were asked if they experienced any of these symptoms during the past two weeks. Combining the percentage of respondents who experienced a symptom of anxiety more than half of the days in a week and nearly every day in a week, results show that there is a high percentage of participants who experienced symptoms of anxiety. This means

Question		Not at all	Several Days	More than half the days	Nearly every day	Total of more than half the days and nearly every day	Total
Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge?	n	17	32	16	16	32	81
	%	20.99	39.51	19.75	19.17	38.92	100
Not being able to stop or control worrying?	n	19	22	25	15	40	81
	%	23.46	27.16	30.86	18.52	49.38	100
Worrying too much about different things?	n	14	22	23	22	45	81
	%	17.28	27.16	28.4	27.16	55.56	100
Trouble relaxing?	n	15	35	19	12	31	81
	%	18.52	43.21	23.46	14.81	38.27	100
Being so restless that it is hard to sit still?	n	33	20	21	7	28	81
	%	40.74	24.69	25.93	8.64	34.57	100
Becoming easily annoyed or irritable?	n	14	28	17	22	39	81
	%	17.28	34.57	20.99	27.16	48.15	100

Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen?	n	18	30	13	20	33	81
	%	22.22	37.04	16.05	24.69	40.74	100

Table 3. Frequency table for GAD-7 Anxiety scale

that at least four days a week, a third of participants (24 out of 81) reported experiencing symptoms of anxiety. The top three symptoms experienced were worrying too much (55.56%), being unable to control worrying (49.38%), and being irritable (48.15%). In addition, 40.74% felt afraid something awful would happen; 38.92% felt nervous, anxious, or on edge; 38.27% had trouble relaxing; and 34.57% felt restless.

Factor cross-tabulated with anxiety level	p value
Living with extended family	0.122
Taking care of children	0.344
Caring for extended family	0.54
Housekeeping services	0.252
Socioeconomic Status	0.944
Factor tested for relationship with anxiety score	**p value**
Number of children	0.766

Hours dedicated to domestic work	0.315
Socioeconomic status	0.999

Table 4. Cross-tabulation of factors that are expected to increase anxiety

Social factors such as living with extended family, taking care of more children, caring for extended family, not availing of housekeeping services, lower socioeconomic status, and more hours dedicated to domestic work are hypothesized to be the predictors of the level of anxiety among respondents. These factors are expected to increase the disproportionate burden of care, which increases the prevalence of anxiety among women (WHO 2018). However, after testing the association and relationship of these social factors, none were found to have statistical significance, which is not consistent with other studies that have found the lack of stable occupation and lower socioeconomic status (Kindred and Bates 2023, 11; Yoshioka et al. 2021, 3) and the need to provide caregiving to family members (Yoshioka et al. 2021, 3) led to higher risks of severe psychological distress among women during the COVID-19 pandemic. This result may be confounded by the common Filipino setup of living with extended family due to economic benefits. Another possibility is how extended family collaboration on caregiving duties reduces parental burdens during the lockdown (Peng 2023). The Filipino culture of task-shifting duties in child-rearing and shared living spaces may provide social support protective of one's mental health. Lastly, the overall situation of the COVID-19 pandemic and the anxiety of acquiring the COVID-19 virus are possibly the primary factors instead. However, these factors were not explored more in-depth in this research.

Quality of Life

WHOQOL-BREF Domain	Physical		Psychological		Social		Environmental	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
High (QoL ≥ 60)	32	39.5	33	40.7	33	40.7	29	35.8
Low (QoL < 60)	49	60.5	48	59.3	48	59.3	52	64.2
Total	81	100.0	81	100.0	81	100.0	81	100.0

Table 5. Quality of Life

It was evident while examining the quality of life (QoL) scores across four domains–physical, psychological, social, and environmental that most participants reported low QoL scores in each domain (Table 5). Specifically, 60.5% of the respondents had low physical QoL scores, while 59.3% had low psychological and social QoL scores. The environmental domain had the highest percentage of low QoL scores at 64.2%.

Question		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree and strongly disagree combined	Total
How safe do you feel in your daily life?	n	3	17	29	21	11	20	81
	%	3.7	21.0	35.8	25.9	13.6	24.7	100.0
How healthy is your physical environment?	n	1	17	27	28	8	18	81
	%	1.2	21.0	33.3	34.6	9.9	22.2	100.0

Have you enough money to meet your needs?	n	8	29	24	14	6	37	81
	%	9.9	35.8	29.6	17.3	7.4	45.7	100.0
How available to you is the information you need in your daily life?	n	1	10	29	27	14	11	81
	%	1.2	12.4	35.8	33.3	17.3	13.6	100.0
To what extent do you have the opportunity for leisure activities?	n	11	33	27	5	5	44	81
	%	13.6	40.7	33.3	6.2	6.2	54.3	100.0
How satisfied are you with the conditions of your living place?	n	3	17	25	27	9	20	81
	%	3.7	21.0	30.9	33.3	11.1	24.7	100.0
How satisfied are you with your access to health services?	n	6	20	33	17	5	26	81
	%	7.4	24.7	40.7	21.0	6.2	32.1	100.0
How satisfied are you with your transport?	n	12	17	29	15	8	29	81
	%	14.8	21.0	35.8	18.5	9.9	35.8	100.0

Table 6. Combined Frequency for "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" per question in the Environmental Domain

In the environmental domain, a significant portion of respondents (54.35%) indicated disagreement when asked if they had opportunities for leisure activities. This result is consistent with the data on the time dedicated to domestic work, where respondents reported needing to dedicate excessive hours to do domestic work, leaving them with very little time for leisure activities. This finding contrasts with those of Morse, Fine, and

Friedlander (2021, 9) in their study on leisure activities among a general population from 74 countries during the COVID-19 pandemic, where they found an increase in leisure activities across all study groups studied, particularly among young females as compared to males. They concluded that leisure activities contributed positively to overall well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic, underscoring the importance of maintaining leisure activities for better QoL. However, factors such as home responsibilities (including childcare) and lack of resources (such as financial restrictions and inhibited transport) led to lower leisure time (2021, 12).

This conforms with the results of this study, where 45.7% of respondents disagreed when asked if they had financial stability, and 35.8% were unsatisfied with their transport. The majority of respondents came from low to middle-income families, and the survey being conducted during the lockdown likely explains this result. The overall economic instability during the COVID-19 pandemic also explains the financial concerns. Algahtani et al. (2021) similarly found that environmental factors affecting QoL, such as financial stress, lead to lower QoL.

Question		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree and Strongly Agree combined	Total
To what extent do you feel that physical pain prevents you from doing what you need to do?*	n	2	12	23	29	15	44	81
	%	2.5	14.8	28.4	35.8	18.5	54.3	100

How much do you need any medical treatment to function in your daily life?*	n	2	3	19	29	28	57	81
	%	2.5	3.7	23.5	35.8	34.5	70.3	100
Do you have enough energy for everyday life?	n	0	15	29	26	11	37	81
	%	0	18.5	35.8	32.1	13.6	45.7	100
How well are you able to get around physically?	n	7	27	36	8	3	11	81
	%	8.6	33.3	44.4	9.9	3.7	13.6	100
How satisfied are you with your sleep?	n	6	23	24	22	6	28	81
	%	7.4	28.4	29.6	27.2	7.4	34.6	100
How satisfied are you with your ability to perform your daily living activities?	n	1	16	29	27	8	35	81
	%	1.2	19.8	35.8	33.3	9.9	43.2	100

How satisfied are you with your capacity for work?	n	1	16	30	27	7	34	81
	%	1.2	19.8	37.0	33.3	8.6	41.9	100

*Reversed items

Table 7. Combined Frequency for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" per question in the Physical Domain

For the physical domain, 54.3% stated that physical pain gets in the way of their activities, while 70.3% – which is a big percentage – stated that they need medical treatment. However, less than half of the participants reported having enough energy (45.7%), sleeping well (34.6%), satisfaction with their ability to perform daily living activities (43.2%), and satisfaction with their capacity to work (41.9%), with only 13.6% able to get around physically. The possibility of respondents acquiring illnesses during the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected their quality of life in the physical domain. A study by Rashid et al. (2022, 5) found that hospitalization due to COVID-19 significantly led to negative impacts on the physical QoL. However, one limitation of the study was that respondents were not asked if they acquired COVID-19 and were hospitalized for this. Hence, the relationship between these two variables cannot be determined in this study, but it is a possible explanation supported by literature.

Question		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree and Strongly Agree combined	Total
How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?	n	3	11	21	24	22	46	81
	%	3.7	13.6	25.9	29.6	27.2	56.8	100.0

How satisfied are you with your sex life?	n	8	15	21	25	11	36	81
	%	11.1	18.5	25.9	30.9	13.6	44.5	100.0
How satisfied are you with the support you get from your friends?	n	4	20	31	21	5	26	81
	%	4.9	24.7	38.3	25.9	6.2	32.1	100.0

Table 8. Combined Frequency for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" per question in the Social Relationships Domain

In the social relationships domain, only 56.8% reported satisfaction with their personal relationships, and 44.5% were satisfied with their sex life. Considering that all of the respondents are married, making their partners an important social actor in their personal lives, these percentages are considered relatively low. There is literature to support how a decrease in sexual function and pleasure negatively affects quality of life (De Oliveira and Carvalho 2021).

While none of the questions in the WHOQOL-BREF framework tackles violence and abuse in social relationships, which the researcher also avoided given the limited setup of the study, reports show an increase in domestic violence in the Philippines and globally, as well as the inaccessibility of reproductive health services during the pandemic (Valdez et al. 2022; Piquero et al. 2021). These factors also negatively impact the social quality of life of respondents.

Additionally, only 32.1% were satisfied with the support they get from their friends. This low percentage can be attributed to barriers that hinder housewives from socializing during the COVID-19 lockdown. Aside from limited time to socialize, quarantine restrictions impacted face-to-face social gatherings. Studies

show that a huge portion of housewives' socialization comes in the form of gossiping or *tsismis* with other housewives in close-knit communities. Gossiping is a way for housewives to form social bonds and can act as a coping strategy for their well-being (Suing et al. 2024, 6-7).

Lastly, the online survey provided an optional question that allowed participants to state their concerns and feedback about the research. Interestingly, some respondents expressed feeling pressured due to their husband's and children's expectations. Although this was not the main focus of this study, it suggests an area for further research on the social relationships of Filipino women, particularly housewives.

Question		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree and strongly disagree combined	Total
How much do you enjoy life?	n	1	15	29	25	11	36	81
	%	1.2	18.5	35.8	30.9	13.6	44.5	100.0
To what extent do you feel your life to be meaningful?	n	1	12	27	25	16	41	81
	%	1.2	14.8	33.3	30.9	19.8	50.7	100.0
How well are you able to concentrate?	n	1	18	34	22	6	28	81
	%	1.2	22.2	42.0	27.2	7.4	34.6	100.0
Are you able to accept your bodily appearance?	n	6	10	34	19	12	31	81
	%	7.4	12.4	42.0	23.5	14.8	38.3	100.0

How satisfied are you with yourself?	n	6	15	24	31	5	36	81
	%	7.4	18.5	29.6	38.3	6.2	44.5	100.0
How often do you have negative feelings such as blue mood, despair, anxiety or depression?*	n	7	17	27	27	3	30	81
	%	8.6	21.0	33.3	33.3	3.7	37.0	100.0

*Reversed items

Table 9. Combined Frequency for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" per question in the Psychological Domain

For the psychological domain of the QoL, 50.7% stated that they find their lives meaningful, while 44.5% stated that they are satisfied with themselves and that they enjoy life. Despite these positive indicators, only 37% (more than a third of the respondents) reported having negative feelings for the past two weeks, with only 34.6% stating that they were able to concentrate and only 38.3% were accepting of their bodily appearance. A significant portion of respondents showed neutrality, neither agreeing nor disagreeing that they find life meaningful (33.3%), that they enjoy life (35.8%), and that they are satisfied with themselves (29.6%).

A high QoL score requires at least 60 points. However, if respondents answer mostly "neutral to disagree", this would lead the overall domain score to be below the cut-off point, aligning with the overall result where 59.3% of the respondents had low Psychological QoL scores. This is consistent with global trends of declining psychological health during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for females and unemployed individuals (Xiong et al. 2020, 1). Reports have shown a decline in

acceptance of bodily appearance among women during the COVID-19 pandemic due to functional and social restraints during the lockdown, such as social isolation, changes in previous lifestyle routine – including confinement and limited physical activity, and limited access to general healthcare (Schneider et al. 2022, 55), all of which support the results of this study.

Overall Quality of Life and General Health Facets

The WHOQOL-BREF has one item that is scored as an overall facet of QoL and another for general health QOL. For overall QOL, 41.98% (34 respondents) think their overall quality of life is neither poor nor good during this pandemic, 32.10% (26 respondents) answered it is good, and 13.58% (11 respondents) answered that it is poor. For overall health QoL, 33.33% (27 respondents) think they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their general health-related quality of life, 32.10% (26 respondents) answered they are satisfied with their general health-related QoL, and 25.93% (21 respondents) answered it is dissatisfying.

Based on the four domains of QoL, the results indicate a lower QoL compared to pre-pandemic times, as supported by existing literature. It is possible that many respondents chose neutral responses on the self-report tool rather than explicitly stating they have poor QoL due to the stigma and bias associated with admitting a lower quality of life. This limitation is inherent in self-report tools, as they may not fully capture the extent of dissatisfaction due to such biases. This finding presents an opportunity for further exploration through qualitative research, which could provide deeper insights into the subjective experiences of respondents.

Domain	Mean			
	Parents of Filipino Children with Special Needs (Gomez & Gomez 2013)	Women without postpartum depression following childbirth (Webster et al. 2010)	Women with postpartum depression following childbirth (Webster et al. 2010)	Current Study
Physical Health	14.7	16	13.1	13.2
Psychological	14.8	15.5	12.0	13.0
Social	15.3	15.6	12.4	13.1
Environment	13.8	16.2	13.7	12.2
Perceived QOL	3.4	n/a	n/a	3.3
Perceived Health State	3.2	n/a	n/a	3.1

Table 10. Comparison of WHOQOL-BREF mean scores in related literature and current study

After following the WHOQOL-BREF scoring manual, the following mean scores were obtained: 13.2 (physical), 13.0 (psychological), 13.2 (social), 12.2 (environmental), 3.3 (overall quality of life), and 3.1 (general health quality of life). The mean scores of the current study have been compared to the mean QoL scores of previous studies. The mean scores of the current study group are lower compared to women without postpartum depression following childbirth and Filipino parents with children with special needs. The mean QoL scores of the current group are closer to the scores of women with postpartum depression following childbirth. The low QoL mean scores across all domains align with the key findings of Dale et al. (2022), where they found a decrease in QoL across all four QoL domains during the lockdown, particularly among women respondents.

It is also important to note that the environmental domain mean score of the current group is the lowest among all four groups, consistent with the findings of (Handayani, Nurmandhani, and Hinchcliff 2022, 4). This may be due to the environmental dangers and restrictions perceived due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Interestingly, most studies have found that social domain scores are higher in women than in men (Handayani, Nurmandhani, and Hinchcliff 2022, 5). The findings of this study align so that the mean score for the social domain is among the higher scores across the four QoL domains.

Relationship between Anxiety and Quality of Life

Based on the findings, there was a significant relationship between anxiety and quality of life. Anxiety and QoL were found to be weakly inversely correlated (-.313 for OQoL and -.372 for GHQOL). This means that as anxiety scores increase, the quality of life in all four domains and in the overall QoL also decrease. This is consistent with the findings of Tomazoni and Benvegnú (2018) and Flores et al. (2018), who both found that anxiety negatively affects quality of life. In the study of Handayani, Nurmandhani, and Hinchcliff (2022, 5), respondents with anxiety scored significantly lower in QoL compared to those without. The weak inverse relationship suggests that while higher anxiety may be associated with lower quality of life, the relationship is not as strong as expected to majorly explain changes in quality of life. There are other variables that may play a role in this relationship, such as protective factors like demographics, social support, or self-care (Lieneck et al. 2021).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated the prevalence and level of anxiety and its relationship to Quality of Life among housewives in Metro Manila during the COVID-19 pandemic. A key finding is that 46.91% of the study respondents had high levels of anxiety during the COVID-19 Pandemic, which is a prevalence higher compared to pre-pandemic levels. This means that for every 10 participants, almost half had experienced various anxiety symptoms for the most part of the day in a week during the pandemic. Respondents also had low levels of Quality of Life across all domains during the pandemic: physical (60.5%), psychological (59.3%), social relations (59.3%), and environmental (64.2%). The computed QoL mean scores for the four domains, overall QoL facet, and perceived health QoL facet show low QoL among respondents, particularly in the environmental domain, which is expected given the lockdown restrictions during data collection. This shows how the quarantine restrictions, despite being necessary, negatively impacted wellbeing. Lastly, it was also established that there is a weak inverse relationship between anxiety and quality of life, meaning that higher anxiety levels negatively impact quality of life.

While the results of the study are not generalizable due to the low number of respondents, results on the level of anxiety and its relationship with QoL align with related literature while providing relevant data on the pandemic experience of the understudied subpopulation of Filipino women. It supports the conclusion that women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, and there is a need to address this gendered impact of the pandemic. Nevertheless, in future research, it is recommended that studies have a larger number of respondents and use stratified or random sampling to improve the

generalizability of results. Another recommendation is to conduct face-to-face surveys to include housewives with limited access to an internet connection or limited digital literacy, which are the types of participants that the online survey may have missed.

The results of the study point to the need to integrate psychosocial support in disaster and public health initiatives, particularly for vulnerable populations such as women and children. Given high levels of anxiety among respondents, it is important for LGUs to integrate psychosocial interventions, including referrals for possible clinical assessments for individuals exhibiting persistent elevated levels of anxiety symptoms. Post-pandemic, there is still a need to assess the level of anxiety and QoL of Filipino housewives. Since the research was conducted during the lockdown, resulting in limited options for data collection, it is recommended that the study be replicated to investigate the prevalence and level of anxiety and quality of life among housewives, particularly urban poor women who may not have been part of the study due to its limitations. There is also merit in investigating participants' ways of coping that helped them manage their symptoms of anxiety and continue day-to-day tasks despite changes in quality of life in order to reinforce these positive ways of coping.

Moreover, it is important to conduct qualitative studies on the anxiety and quality of life of housewives. In the online survey, there was an optional question to raise concerns and feedback about the research, by which some respondents expressed concerns over difficulties managing the work-from-home setup, financial struggles, and pressure due to husband and children's expectations. These were not analyzed and included in this study but could be explored in other research.

Creating programs that aim to improve the well-being of women, particularly housewives, is also recommended. Results of the study show that financial struggles negatively affect the QoL of housewives. Despite the huge percentage of the respondents finishing tertiary education, many do not participate in the labor force. This can be attributed to the assignment of caregiving roles to women, and shows the need for interventions that tackle gender stereotypes that limit women's roles in society. Moreover, a key finding of this research is the respondents' perception of having inadequate support from friends and limited time for leisure activities (which may include socializing with others) negatively affecting their QoL. There is a need to create community-based mental health interventions that tackle the burden of caregiving among women and provide spaces for them to connect with other women in the community to talk about their experiences and receive collective care. This can be in the form of community discussions on women's situation and their mental health, intervention workshops for women's mental health, and community women support groups.

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ADAPTING TO THE NEW NORMAL: POST-PANDEMIC CARE WORK DYNAMICS IN WORKING-CLASS FILIPINO HOUSEHOLDS WITH FULL-TIME WORKING MOTHERS IN METRO MANILA

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the socio-economic landscape in the Philippines, particularly for the low-income working class. This has led to transformative shifts in communities, blurring family roles and increasing the strain on employed mothers who face the double burden of paid and unpaid labor. Despite this, the bulk of current research often focuses on traditional breadwinners, usually men, neglecting the experiences of full-time employed mothers. This underscored the need to explore the evolving roles of men and women in the post-pandemic era and its impact on the domestic division of labor. Given this, the study scrutinized the lived experiences of full-time employed mothers in Metro Manila as they navigated the evolving dynamics of post-pandemic care work. Through the use of the hermeneutic

phenomenological approach, a total of 13 working mothers were purposefully selected to participate in this study. Individual interviews with photo elicitation and reflexive thematic analysis were used as data collection and analysis tools. The resulting data were interpreted through the feminist lens. These highlighted the persistent double burden experienced by working mothers and the prevalent notion that women are more suited for domestic work. Despite increased male participation in care work during the pandemic, men have reduced their involvement in these tasks as communities transition to the new normal with lenient protocols. This suggests that their increased participation was only a temporary response to the circumstances of the pandemic. Nonetheless, the participants' resilience in balancing caregiving and employment amid financial strains, gender norms, and societal pressures was highlighted, further emphasizing the need for systemic changes, support, and empowerment of working mothers.

Keywords: *Care work, New Normal, Pandemic, Double burden, Working mothers*

ABSTRAK

Napakalaki ng epekto ng pandemya dulot ng COVID-19 sa kalagayang sosyo-ekonomiko ng Pilipinas, lalo na sa mga maralitang manggagawa. Buhat nito ang mga transpormatibong pagbabago sa mga komunidad, pagkabura ng mga nakagisnang tungkulin sa pamilya, at sa matinding pasanin sa mga nagtatrabahong ina na nahaharap sa dobleng pasanin ng bayad at hindi bayad na gawain. Sa kabila

nito, karamihan pa rin ng mga pananaliksik sa kasalukuyan ay nakatuon sa mga tradisyunal na tagapagtaguyod ng pamilya (kadalasan ay kalalakihan), dahilan para makaligtaan ang mga karanasan ng mga inang nagtatrabaho nang *full-time*. Ito ang pangunahing dahilan kung bakit nararapat at kailangang tuklasin ang mga nagbabagong tungkulin ng kalalakihan at kababaihan matapos ang pandemya, pati na rin ang impluwensiya nito sa pagkakahati ng mga gawaing pantahanan. Kaya naman sa pag-aaral na ito, siniyasat ang mga aktuwal na karanasan ng mga *full-time* na nagtatrabahong ina sa Metro Manila kaugnay ng nagbabagong dinamiko ng gawaing pangangalaga, pagkatapos ng pandemya. Ginamitan ang pag-aaral na ito ng *hermeneutic phenomenological approach* kung saan 13 na mangagawang ina ang pinili para lumahok. Indibidwal na mga panayam katuwang ng *photo elicitation* ang ginamit na metodo para sa pagkuha ng pangunahing datos mula sa mga kalahok. Ang resultang impormasyon ay ginamitan ng *reflexive thematic analysis* at binigyang kahulugan sa tulong ng pemenistang lente. Sa pangkabuuan, ang naging resulta ng pag-aaral ay nagpapatibay sa pagpapatuloy ng dobleng pasanin na nararanasan ng mga inang nagtatrabaho at ang umiiral na ideyang mas nababagay ang kababaihan sa gawaing pantahanan. Sa kabila ng pagtaas ng partisipasyon ng kalalakihan sa gawaing pangangalaga noong kasagsagan ng pandemya, mapapansing bumaba ito sa kasalukuyan dulot ng *new normal* at pagkakaroon ng mga mas maluluwag na protokol. Iminumungkahi ng datos na ito na ang pagtaas ng partisipasyon ng kalalakihan sa gawaing pangangalaga ay isang panandaliang tugon lamang sa sitwasyon noong pandemya.

Gayunpaman, ang malinaw na pagpapakita ng katatagan ng mga kalahok sa pagbabalanse ng kanilang mga responsibilidad sa trabaho at gawaing pangangalaga sa gitna ng pinansiyal na krisis, mga inaasahang asal ng bawat kasarian, at *pressure* mula sa lipunan ay binibigyang diin sa pag-aaral na ito, na siya ring nagtutulak para sa pagkakaroon ng sistematikong pagbabago, suporta, at pagsasakapangyarihan para sa mga nagtatrabahong ina.

Susing salita: *gawaing pangangalaga, bagong karaniwan, pandemya, dobleng pasanin, nagtatrabahong ina*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed socio-economic landscapes worldwide. In the Philippines, this has led to a major economic shock that has severely affected household financial stability. This disruption is particularly felt by the low-income working class, whose livelihoods were compromised by reduced working hours and widespread job losses (Cho et al. 2021). In response, communities have adapted to a "new normal," a term that now describes the broad changes brought about by the pandemic (Manuti et al. 2022). These changes have not only influenced professional identities, education, and work dynamics but also family roles and boundaries (Gao et al. 2022).

The overlapping of social roles during the pandemic has been especially challenging for households with employed mothers. These women face the dual burdens of paid jobs and unpaid care work (Mendonca et al., 2023). This phenomenon is often referred to as the "double burden," which emphasizes the greater

responsibility shouldered by women in a given household, and a "second shift," which describes the duality of work undertaken by women on a day-to-day basis. This highlights the significant responsibility women bear in balancing their work duties with domestic obligations (Chen et al. 2018).

Despite the increasing participation of women in the labor force, traditional gender norms continue to dictate that women do most of the unpaid household and caregiving tasks (Tronto 2013). This is particularly entrenched in patriarchal societies like the Philippines (Cerrato & Cifre 2018; Espartinez 2022). Moreover, the gendered distribution of unpaid care work is also highlighted by a large and persistent gap between men and women, wherein women around the world are essentially performing the majority of unpaid care and housework (Samtleben and Muller 2022). Hence, despite having additional hours of remunerated work, women do not experience reduced responsibilities at home, signifying men's resistance to the redistribution of care work responsibilities within a household (Pocock, 2010). This consequently serves as a significant hurdle to achieving gender equality in relation to care work and domestic duties. On top of this, the gender wage gap also puts women from low-income working-class households in an even more disadvantaged position since women are compared to men from the same socioeconomic class (Samtleben & Müller 2022). Belghith et al. found that in low-paying jobs, women's daily wage can go as low as 50% of a man's daily wage (2022). High-paying positions, on the other hand, have women's salaries at 20% more than men's; however, achieving their full potential and job productivity tend to be restricted by their family responsibilities. This reflects how the gender division of labor reinforces economic inequalities and vice versa.

This division of labor benefits men economically and professionally, while women's efforts remain unrecognized and underappreciated (Elson 2017; Oksala 2016). These entrenched gender ideologies are upheld as cultural norms and present significant barriers to women's advancement in education and employment (Subrahmanian 2005). In the Philippines, traditional roles are emphasized through cultural norms and reinforced by religious beliefs, further complicating women's efforts to balance labor and domestic responsibilities (Medina 1992; Ramos-Shahani 1988). According to the International Labour Organization, "Women spend 4.1 times more time in Asia and the Pacific in unpaid care work than men" (2018). In the Philippines, women spend at least 16.4 hours a week on unpaid care work, highlighting the uneven distribution of labor within households (Karimli et al. 2016).

Unpaid care work, often seen as part of the domestic sphere and thus invisible, perpetuates gender inequality by undervaluing women's contributions while allowing men to focus on paid employment (Baldoz et al. 2001; Vogel 2013). While both care work and domestic work are kinds of labor performed within a household, the latter is oftentimes associated with the complementary aspects of labor done by both men and women within a heterosexual household. In the words of Gorman-Murray (2012), as adapted from Chapman (2004), these complements find themselves within the realm of feminine housework, including care work, as practiced by mothers, and the fathers' masculine performance of being the handyman in charge of do-it-yourself (DIY) home maintenance. Notably, with this definition, the mothers assume day-to-day chores while the fathers take on theirs sporadically. Similarly, domestic work can also be performed for remuneration by nonfamily workers – referred to as domestic workers – who enter into an employee-employer relationship with the members of a certain household (ILO 2015).

Simply put, domestic work is a general term under which the more specific concept of care work falls. Nonetheless, both these notions share the idea that women are assigned to perform undervalued labors of love, which is founded upon the assumption that "women are 'natural' carers and nurturers" (Yeoh & Huang 2012). Furthermore, when undertaken for economic purposes, this line of work is given less attention and valuation than other forms of career that are considered less personal and more professional and, more often than not, prone to exploitation (Pocock 2010).

It should be noted, however, that for the bulk of this paper, the term "care work" shall be treated synonymously with "unpaid care work". Thus, it should be assumed as the unremunerated or unpaid labor performed primarily for the benefit of the husband and children within the domestic setting and is commonly seen as a feminized undertaking unless stated otherwise. This study also sought to explore how the participants view the concept of care work and thereby attempted to come up with a more holistic definition for this term towards the culmination of this study.

Moving forward, during the pandemic, there have been indications that men have taken on more household chores and caregiving responsibilities, possibly signaling a shift in traditional gender roles (Larraz et al. 2023). However, it remains unclear whether this change is temporary or if it represents a lasting transformation in care work dynamics. As lockdowns ease and routines return to normal, gender disparities in care work may have re-emerged, particularly affecting working-class families who face economic constraints (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific [UN ESCAP] 2022). For these families, alternative care arrangements are often limited, placing additional burdens on mothers and constraining their opportunities

for labor force participation (Abrigo & Francisco-Abrigo 2019).

This study aims to explore how the gendered dynamics of care work have changed in the post-pandemic context, focusing on full-time employed mothers in working-class households. More specifically, by examining how these women navigate their dual roles, the study seeks to identify changes in gender ideologies and division of care work by analyzing how these women enact their dual roles in the 'new normal' arrangement. The paper also intends to examine how socio-economic class influences care work distribution and the broader implications for gender equality within the household.

Methodology

Study Design. This study employed a qualitative approach, specifically phenomenology, to explore the post-pandemic gendered division of care work in working-class Filipino households. This approach allowed for the collection of rich, nuanced data through an in-depth exploration of the diverse experiences, attitudes, behaviors, interactions, coping, and adaptive strategies of working-class mothers during and after the pandemic (Neubauer et al. 2019; Alhazmi & Kaufmann 2022).

Study Setting. The study was conducted in Quezon City, one of the most prominent urban areas in Metro Manila, Philippines. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Quezon City has the highest number of establishments and total employment in the region, making it an ideal location for the study (PSA 2022). The city's diverse population and high employment rates provided a sufficient sample size for the study. Furthermore, Quezon City was significantly affected by

COVID-19, with high case numbers and deaths, making it a relevant setting for exploring post-pandemic care work dynamics (UP Resilience Institute 2020). Over the years, among the 142 barangays comprising Quezon City, the population of Pasong Tamo has increased by 3.1 percent, reflecting the growing urbanization and employment opportunities in the area (PSA 2013).

Inclusion-Exclusion Criteria. The study focused on full-time employed mothers in working-class Filipino households to understand the dual responsibilities they navigate in their work and caregiving roles. Participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) at least 18 years of age; (2) employed full-time in industry, contractual, or informal work; (3) engaged in post-pandemic work; (4) with at least one child under 18 living in the same household; (5) living with a nuclear family with an employed heterosexual partner; (6) belonging to a working-class socio-economic background, with a monthly income of at most P21,194.3 (Peña-Reyes 2022); and (7) residents of Pasong Tamo, Quezon City. Exclusion criteria included individuals currently studying, those with diagnosed mental health disorders, single mothers, and mothers who identify as lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer. Participants could withdraw from the study if they found the nature of the study sensitive or triggering, experienced physical or mental illness, faced emergencies, or were non-compliant.

Study Participants. The study employed purposive sampling to select participants who would best fit the study characteristics and are likely to provide information that is relevant to the study (Nikolopoulou 2023). More specifically, homogeneous sampling was used to ensure that the participants shared similar characteristics relevant to the study's focus (Crossman 2020). The researchers, in close coordination with the Barangay Pasong Tamo

officials, located suitable participants for the study and took into consideration the age, employment status, engagement in post-pandemic work, family structure, socio-economic background, and place of residence of the potential participants in the recruitment process. Additionally, snowball sampling was utilized, which enabled the initial qualified participants to identify and refer other eligible participants for the study, enhancing the overall recruitment process. Intersectionality in the women's experiences was deliberately sought through this method by ensuring that referrals included mothers from diverse occupations, family structures, and cultural backgrounds, thereby reflecting the overlapping of various social identities.

A total of 13 participants were interviewed, allowing for comprehensive data collection and analysis. This sample size was consistent with recommendations for qualitative phenomenological studies and ensured a balance between depth of information and manageability of data (Creswell 2013; Tembo et al. 2013; Andersen et al. 2017). The participants' ages range from 29 to 57 years, and they have between 1 and 7 children. Most of the participants finished high school, and only two completed bachelor's degrees. They also held a variety of full-time jobs, representing diverse roles within the working class. The mothers are employed full-time in various occupations, including three storekeepers managing retail spaces, one canteen service crew providing food services, one caregiver offering elderly care, one saleslady working in retail, one street food seller running a small food business, one midwife and one health worker in the healthcare service, one administrative staff handling office tasks, one water station worker, one independent small business owner, and one customer service representative managing client interactions. Among the participants, eight are married, and five are in domestic partnerships. Through

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self-reporting, all 13 mothers affirmed that their gender identity corresponds with the sex assigned to them at birth, which goes the same for their respective partners.

Data Collection Procedures. The study used semi-structured interviews, incorporating a photo-elicitation technique, to gather in-depth data on the lived experiences of full-time employed mothers. Photo elicitation, a visual methodology, helped uncover layers of meaning by prompting memories and emotions that might not surface through verbal questioning alone (Glaw et al. 2017). Elaborating further, each question in the interview schedule, excluding follow-up and probe questions, was accompanied by a photo image that demonstrated key elements and symbolisms relevant to the focus of the study. As such, while verbally reading the question to the participant, a photo is also simultaneously being shown (1 question: 1 photo). These illustrations depict real-life circumstances that are set before, during, or after the pandemic, with emphasis on unpaid care work duties and paid job responsibilities. These images included scenes of domestic chores, childcare, remote work, and moments of family interaction. By presenting these visual prompts, participants were encouraged to reflect on their own experiences, comparing them with the scenarios shown in the photos. This approach allowed the researchers to gain deeper insights into how the participants' caregiving responsibilities are shaped by societal norms and personal experiences, as well as how they evolved during and after the pandemic. Notably, all photo images used had subjects whose physical appearances were reflective of Asian, Southeast Asian, or Filipino features. This was done in an effort to elicit responses from the participants seamlessly as the photos depict contents to which they can relate and resonate. Overall, this method provided a rich source of data, enhancing the depth and quality of the interviews. The interview schedule and photo elicitation materials

were reviewed by experts in the fields of Anthropology, Sociology, and Psychology. The questions were then translated into Filipino to ensure comprehension and avoid confusion of concepts for the participants. Informed consent was obtained, and permission for field notes, photographs, and voice recordings was secured. Interviews were conducted in participants' homes or at the barangay hall, lasting 15 to 35 minutes.

Data Analysis. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying recurring patterns and themes within the transcribed information (Caufield 2020). A reflexive approach to thematic analysis was adopted by actively engaging in the interpretation process (Terry & Hayfield 2020). Particularly, the interview data collected from the series of semi-structured interviews with the incorporation of a photo-elicitation technique were transcribed verbatim and translated from Filipino into English. The semi-structured interviews gave a verbal insight into the experience of mothers, while the photo-elicitation technique enabled the researchers to capture other emotional impressions not easily voiced during the interview process. Upon transcription, relevant responses and experiences from the mothers were highlighted and categorized based on concepts. These were then interpreted according to recurring patterns and codes. By using data coding, similar responses were grouped together and clustered with other related anecdotes from the participants. These were then designated overarching themes, providing a comprehensive description of their experiences.

Moreover, data validation procedures such as data triangulation, member-checking, and peer debriefing were used to ensure that the findings accurately represented the participants' lived experiences. Data triangulation was achieved by comparing findings across different data sources—interview transcripts, researchers'

observations, field notes, and related literature—thereby enhancing the robustness of the analysis. Member-checking was employed to validate the findings, ensuring accuracy and resonance with participants' experiences (Alele & Malau-Aduli 2023; Birt et al. 2016). Peer debriefing allowed for a thorough review of the research materials and findings, adding more credibility to the study (Janesick 2007).

Ultimately, in the process of conducting the study, ethical considerations were strictly observed and adhered to. The recruited participants were given informed consent with a verbal briefing prior to the interview, which advised them of the purpose, methods, potential risks, benefits, and objectives of the study being conducted. This consequently served as an agreement that their involvement in the study is voluntary, and they were neither forced nor coerced to do so. The participants were also made aware that they have the option to decline or terminate participation in the study should they deem themselves vulnerable and unable to continue further at any time during the interview. Furthermore, the anonymity of the participants was maintained by being assigned a pseudonym, and some details relating to their personal information were omitted as deemed necessary. All information and data acquired during the interview were treated with utmost confidentiality in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, Republic Act 10173.

Theoretical Paradigms. This study employed a feminist theoretical framework to critically examine the gender division of labor within working-class Filipino households, particularly focusing on the systemic power dynamics that perpetuate gender roles and inequalities (Few-Demo & Allen 2020). Specifically, Marxist feminist theory was utilized to address the economic dimensions of gender roles, challenging the undervaluation of

unpaid care work and advocating for its recognition as a vital economic component (Armstrong 2020). Moreover, the Marxist feminist theory emphasizes the oppression of women being linked to the gendered structures of capitalism, wherein unpaid care work and limited economic participation are associated with women's existence (Griffin 2017). Grounded in feminist theory, the research posits that gender roles are not merely static social expectations but are deeply connected to power dynamics that sustain the subordination of women and the valorization of male roles (Tamunomiegbam & Arinze 2024). The gender division of labor, as defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN ESCWA) is the societal allocation of work between genders based on socially established roles (n.d.). This highlights that care work is predominantly assumed by women (Parrenas 2015). The pandemic has brought to light two contrasting perspectives: one suggesting that the bulk of care work reinforces gender inequalities and another proposing that the closure of care facilities has led to increased male participation in household tasks (Jessen et al. 2022). The framework scrutinizes institutional and cultural forces that maintain the gendered division of labor, such as legal structures, media representations, and educational systems, which collectively favor male dominance in the public sphere while relegating women to domestic roles. This study further integrates the concept of intersectionality to acknowledge that gender roles and socio-economic factors intersect with other identities and structures, such as class, race, and cultural norms, providing a comprehensive understanding of the diverse experiences of Filipino mothers in both household and labor market contexts.

Framing of the Problem. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened pre-existing gender inequalities, especially in relation to unpaid care work within households. Working-

class households in the Philippines have been sharply affected, with women, especially mothers, bearing a disproportionate share of both paid and unpaid work. The present study is founded on Marxist feminist theory, which argues that gender inequalities are connected to capitalist systems that diminish the worth of care work, primarily carried out by women, by failing to compensate and acknowledge it despite its crucial contribution to the labor force and overall economy. This current concern pertains not only to the continuing existence of gender-based work inequalities but also to the manner in which these differences have been heightened or altered by the pandemic.

Since the objective of the study is to investigate the lived experiences of employed mothers in Metro Manila who cope with the changing dynamics of care work, the integration of gender and socio-economic class is crucial in this context. This is due to the fact that women from the working class may have unique obstacles in comparison to those from the middle or upper classes. Furthermore, this study utilizes an intersectional perspective to comprehend how these experiences influenced by gender are also manifested by other identities and systems, such as race, socioeconomic status, and cultural conventions.

The concept of intersectionality emphasizes that gender roles and socio-economic variables are not independent but rather interrelated, resulting in diverse experiences among women belonging to different socio-economic groups (Makhanya 2024). Through an analysis of these intersections, this study seeks to reveal the impact of economic class on the allocation of care work within a working-class community, namely in the post-pandemic landscape.

Findings

The study revealed that full-time employed mothers in working-class Filipino households faced significant challenges in balancing paid work and domestic responsibilities, especially during the post-pandemic period.

Perception of Work at Home, Job, and Care Work. The findings reveal a multifaceted understanding of care work among the participants, as shown in Table 1. Participants' perceptions of care work varied significantly based on their individual circumstances, particularly in how they balanced household responsibilities with full-time jobs. First, work at home is perceived as the epitome of sacrifices, struggles, and boundless labor. Participants described care work as involving significant sacrifices and struggles, requiring balance to achieve positive family dynamics. These challenges were especially true for mothers juggling routine household tasks with the financial pressures that necessitated full-time jobs. For example, Lily mentioned, *"Pero syempre pag nanay ka na lahat kaya mong gawin. Hindi pwedeng tunganga ka lang... Kailangan natin maghanap-buhay kasi kailangan natin tulungan 'yung partner mo..."* ("But as a mom, you are able to do everything. You can't just sit around. We need to work because we need to help our partners…"). On a positive note, Liway emphasizes the advantages of having work as a mother and says, *"Sa totoo lang talaga, malaking tulong talaga ngayong nagtatatrabaho ako kasi hindi ko na inaasahan yung sahod ng asawa ko. Kasi doon na namin kinukuha yung pambayad ng tubig, (at) ng kuryente. Kung sa sahod ko naman ayun na yung pambaon nila, (at) pangkain namin. Ganun"* ("To be honest, having a job of my own is very beneficial for us because then I don't need to rely solely on my husband's salary. Because through his salary we get to pay our water and electricity bills and from

my salary, allowances of my children and our budget for food"). Hence, despite the struggles involved in balancing family and work, mothers still tend to go for the latter because they believe that caring for the family is not only confined to the home but also doing everything it takes to provide for the family, even if it means having to sacrifice personal time.

In addition, for working mothers, having a job is seen as a means of respite, autonomy, and empowerment. For these women, their jobs offered a break from the relentless demands of household chores. Lala noted, *"Ako mas gusto kong pumasok sa trabaho kasi pag nasa bahay ako nasi-tress ako eh… Kapag may baby ka kasi syempre nandun lang yung time mo sa baby mo, parang nakakapagod. Kaya parang 'pag nandito ka [sa trabaho], yun yung pinakapahinga mo. Ako ah, sa sarili ko. Kasi kapag may baby ka syempre 24 hours mo na ano yan – bantayan kaya kapag pumapasok ako parang nakakapagrelax ako dito."* ("As for me, I prefer going to work more than I want to stay at home because I get stressed out there. When you have a newborn, of course all your time is dedicated to her, so it is tiring. So when you are at work, you get to rest. Well, that's for me, in my experience. Because when you have a newborn, you need to watch over her for 24 hours a day. As such, when I go to work, I take it as a time of relaxation"). Lala's preference for work outside the household underscores the role of having a job not only to ease her financial burden but also as a means of respite. Similarly, having a job is also viewed as a chance to exercise personal agency and a source of empowerment as a woman who performs both domestic and economic roles. Lala continued *"...Tingin nila kapag may trabaho ka [isang ina], na tinutulungan mo yung asawa mo -- 'di mo pinapabayaan… At saka hindi [na] kasi talaga kaya yung pagka kahit malaki yung sahod kung ikaw lang yung mag-isa nagtatrabaho. Yung mga expenses niyo sa*

bahay – lahat ng bilihin, hindi siya kasya. Kahit anong tipid mo hindi talaga kakasya. Kaya gusto ko rin magtrabaho" ("People think that when you [a mother] are working, you are able to help your husband. [It means that] you are not neglecting him… And even if the salary is high, one income is not enough. The expenses at home – everything you need to buy, it's [the salary] not enough. No matter how frugal you are, it is still insufficient. That's why I want to work as well").

However, it was also noted that the majority of the participants (eight out of 13) had more difficulty undertaking care work, which is perceived as more demanding than paid work. As noted by Els, *"Kasi kung halimbawa nag-wowork ka sa labas, mas parang, iintindihin mo lang yung work mo sa labas samantalang dito, ah, nagtitinda ka, nagluluto, nagsasaing, naglilinis so talagang mas mahirap yung dito sa loob ng bahay kasi lahat sayo gagawin mo… Napakahirap, bale ang kinakatawan mo eh, mga sampung tao yung kinakatawan mo. Kakayanin mo basta kailangan, basta kailangan"* ("If, for example, you are employed, it's more like, you'll just focus on your work outside, whereas here, you're selling, cooking, doing laundry, and cleaning, so it's really harder here inside the house because you'll be doing everything. It is very difficult, as if you are performing the role of 10 people. But you'll push through it because you need to"). Participants also emphasized that adapting to evolving family dynamics was necessary during the pandemic. Liway shared, *"Pero nung dumating na siya [bunsong anak], ayun na, nauutusan ko na sila [mga panganay na anak] maghugas, magsaing, ganyan. Kasi ito talaga alagain siya kasi may sakit kasi siya sa puso kaya kailangan minsan talaga kailangan mo po silang turuan na para kahit papaano matulungan nila ako."* ("But when this one [points to baby] came, I started asking my older children to help with washing dishes and cooking rice. Because I really have to take care of this one since

she has a heart condition, so I have to teach them to help me out."). This experience highlights self-reliance and the need to delegate tasks within the family due to the added pressures of the pandemic. The mothers were also compelled to adapt through multitasking and time management, as highlighted by Julz, *"Magbahagi ng oras para sa mga bata at para sa trabaho, challenge yun 'di ba, kailangang maaga gumising para bago umalis ng bahay ay nakapagluto na, o edi pupunta na sa trabaho"* ("To provide time for the kids and my job is a challenge, right? I need to wake up early so that before I leave the house, I have already cooked for them. Then I'll go straight to work").

Similarly, 6 of the 13 mothers found the pandemic period as most challenging as they juggled home and job responsibilities as compared to pre- and post-pandemic landscapes. Liezel recalled, *"Mas mahirap noong pandemic dahil limitado ang paggalaw noon. Marami ang pinagbabawal, kesyo ang mga quarantine na 'yan, mga pagkakasakit… nakakatakot"* ("It is harder during the pandemic because everything you do is limited by it. There are a lot of restrictions, there is the need for the so-called 'quarantine', there are a lot who get sick. I felt fear"). On the other hand, the remaining 4 mothers appealed that it was in the aftermath of the pandemic when they heavily felt struggles as working mothers. Cacay shared, *"Mas magastos ngayon. Ayun yung pinaka-stress ngayon eh. Ngayong panahon, biglang taas ng bilihin. So nung pandemic halos hindi ka pa hirap eh, hindi kami (masyadong) stress sa panggastos. So sa akin… mas mahirap ngayon kasi dahil sa budget na tumaas sa ano – sa bilihin"* ("It is more costly to live nowadays (after the pandemic). Right now, the prices of goods abruptly spiked. That's what stresses me the most right now. During the pandemic, it was not that hard, and we were not very stressed about budgeting our expenses. So for me, it is really harder nowadays

since you have to budget your finances in the midst of inflation"). The remaining 3 participants either found the pre-pandemic as the most difficult period or did not find a specific period more challenging than the others.

The overlap of personal and work responsibilities is also a constant challenge, often requiring self-reliance. Lily illustrated this experience of juggling multiple roles simultaneously, *"Bata, asikaso sa bahay, laba, luto, at hugas, sayo lahat yun… Siyempre multitasking tayo 'pag nanay pag nasa bahay – ganun kahirap"* ("You do all the household chores: taking care of the kids, cleaning the house, doing laundry, cooking, and washing dishes. Everything falls on you…You need to multitask when you're a mom—that's how hard it is"). Notably, it was evident for the mothers that the core of motherhood is the art of multitasking.

Lastly, care work is viewed as holistic labor, encompassing caregiving, prioritizing family, and addressing emotional and physical well-being. Lala shared her notion of this concept as *"… pag-alaga sa sarili at sa mga mahal sa buhay, lalo na sa panahon na meron silang sakit"* ("Taking care of oneself and loved ones, especially during times when they're sick"). Similarly, for Michelle, care work is a concept that encapsulates all the responsibilities and expectations that a mother has. She expressed, *"Ang nanay, lahat nasa isip niya lahat ng gagawin niya – yung kakainin ng anak niya, yung isusuot ng mga anak niya, uniporme, lahat. Maglalaba ka, maglilinis ka, kahit anong trabaho mo, mga anak mo pa rin"* ("A mother is always thinking about the things that need to get done – her children's meal, as well as the clothes and uniform they will wear. You will do the laundry and clean [the house], no matter what your job is, you still think about [the well-being] of your children"). Evidently, care work is viewed as prioritizing family and attending to their needs, whether it is physical or emotional.

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Lived Experiences of Care Work. Participants' experiences were influenced diversely by the pandemic. Recurrent patterns of themes in participants' responses are shown in Table 2. In journeying through the pandemic and transitioning to the new normal, participants experienced financial strain, adaptation challenges, and varied benefits from remote work. These experiences highlighted both commonalities and differences in how the pandemic affected their roles. Kristina found remote work beneficial, stating, *"Well actually…mas napadali nga kung tutuusin kasi naging work from home na nga yung setup namin. So yun, hindi ko na kailangang magising ng maaga para magprepare ng pagkain, mag-travel…So mas madali siya para sakin"* ("It [work] was actually made easier because our setup was remote [during the pandemic], so I didn't have to wake up early, prepare food, commute… So it was easy for me"). However, not all participants found remote work to be advantageous; for some, it added to their burden by blending the boundaries between work and home life. Cynthia shared, *"Ako every day ko kasama yung anak ko. Ayaw magpabantay sa iba. Struggle is real talaga. Kasi minsan may online [classes] siya. 'Di ba 'no nag-aaway pa kami – sagot ka diyan, sagot ka diyan. Ganun, mahirap talaga kung iisipin mo. Ayan ang pinagsasabay ko: alaga at saka trabaho"* ("Every day, I was with my child. He did not want anyone else to look after him. The struggle is real, indeed. Sometimes, when he had online classes, we'd argue about it, and I would force him to participate in class. It's really difficult when you think about it. I did my work and looked after my child simultaneously").

Attitudes toward how unpaid care work responsibilities are being distributed also influence the unending cycle of gendered distribution of unpaid care work, which includes preference and flexibility. Eden mentioned, *"'Pag lalaki kasi 'pagka gusto nila, gusto lang nila. Hindi katulad sa babae na nakikita nila yung mga dumi talaga*

sa bahay, mga gawain. Sila kasi parang may gusto lang sila. 'Pagka gusto nila malinis, ayun malinis. 'Pag hindi, hindi" ("For men, [they only clean] if they want. It's not the same with women, who really notice the mess in the house and the chores that need to be done. Meanwhile, men only have preferences [whether they will clean or not]. If they want it to be cleaned, then it will be cleaned. If they do not prefer to do so, then they won't").

Notably, challenges in navigating care work responsibilities included resilience and coping, among the others. For Liezel, it takes a lot to be a mother, to which she expressed, *"Marami rin akong pagsubok na kinakaharap dito sa bahay. Kung 'di ka talaga magtatiyaga o hindi ka pasensyoso dahil mainitin ang ulo, eh mahirap. Kailangan talaga yung patience, pang-unawa, at talino bilang isang ina"* ("I face a lot of challenges at home. If you are not patient or diligent enough because your temper easily gets in the way, it is difficult. Patience is really needed, as well as understanding and knowledge as a mother"). Similarly, dealing with care work means having to deal with emotions such as fear and anxiety, especially regarding the health of the family. Liezel continues, *"Kapag nagkasakit ang isang miyembro ng pamilya, ayan na, mahirap na. Challenging na. Andiyan na yung namomroblema ka, andiyan na yung mapapaiyak ka, mag-iisip, mai-istress"* ("When a family member gets sick, it becomes very difficult. Very challenging. Consequently, you will be thinking about it all the time to the point that you will cry and stress about it").

It was also evident that the overlap of both responsibilities at home and at work has an impact on the well-being and stress of mothers. The mothers shared anecdotes about being unable to rest in the midst of these dual responsibilities, such as Lily, who shared, *"Kung tutuusin nga sa 8-5 mos sa trabaho mas*

mahirap ang sa bahay. Kasi siyempre sa bahay walang pahinga" ("In fact, considering your 8-5 job, it's even harder at home. Because, of course, there's no rest at home… When you're at home, you are restless"). The same goes for Els, whose sentiments resonated with Lily, *"Napakahirap talaga kasi… maraming nagsasabi na wala silang ginagawa sa buong maghapon ako hindi eh, hindi ako humihinto hangga't – ang hinto ko lang dito tulog eh"* ("It is very difficult… many people say that they don't have things to accomplish the whole day but it's not the same for me. I don't stop attending to things [in the house] – the only time I get to stop is when I'm sleeping").

Navigating the Balance between Care Work and Job Responsibilities. The complex interplay between work duties and familial obligations was a recurring theme among participants (refer to Table 3). They emphasized the need to balance these responsibilities, often at the cost of personal time and well-being. For instance, Julz talked about how she manages to balance her day job as an employee and care work as the mother of their household. She shared, *"Kapag uuwi galing sa trabaho, pwede mong ituloy yung naiwang gawain sa bahay. At yung magagawa mo naman sa umaga, gagawin na bago umalis"* ("After you get home from work, you can continue the chores you left [before going to work]. As for the chores you can easily accomplish, you can do them in the morning before you leave for work").

Furthermore, balancing work responsibilities and household care work involved various coping strategies for participants, including social media use, family bonding, and personal care. Lily detailed her leisure activities, stating, *"Pag-fe-Facebook. Magso-scroll muna ako sa Shopee pero kahit wala akong pambili. Add to cart na lang, add to cart kahit papaano nakakatulong din yung ano – social media, shopping, Facebook pero*

siyempre panooorin mo lang yung mga positive kasi kapag negative wala ding mangyayari sayo. Madadala ka" ("Using Facebook. I'll scroll through Shopee even if I don't have money to buy anything. Just add to cart, add to cart. Somehow, social media, shopping, and Facebook – all help, but of course, you have to watch only the positive stuff because if it's negative, it won't do you any good. It will affect you").

Support from family, spouses, and friends also played a crucial role in coping. For Cris, it was her husband's emotional support that gets her through tough times, *"Yung asawa ko ang pinagsasabihan ko"* ("I confide in my husband"). Similarly, Els relies on her siblings for comfort, *"[Mga] kapatid ko. Nag-aano lang kami nag-vi-video call. [Sila] yung kinakausap ko at pinaglalabasan ko ng sama ng loob"* ("My siblings, we see each other via video call. They are the ones that I talk to and share all my problems with, especially my ill feelings").

Furthermore, participants often relied on informal support systems to navigate work and household responsibilities, frequently delegating tasks to older children or nearby relatives. According to Cacay, *"Pero may ano kasi ako, may anak akong panganay so siya yung nagmamanage sa bahay. So kapag may kailangan, siya yung tatawag sa akin. 'Ma', ganyan kapag may kailangan yung mga kapatid niya 'Ma' basta tumatawag lang sila"* ("But I have an eldest child so she is the one who manages our home [when I'm not around]. So when they need something, she is the one who will call me. "Mom," she will say when her siblings need something, so they just call me whenever"). Similarly, Kristina noted, *"Well, actually since may mga tao na malapit lang sa amin, may mapaguutus-utusan ako kahit papaano"* ("Well, actually, since there are people close by, I can ask for help. So, it's convenient").

Being guided by religious beliefs and family support has also proven valuable in the journey of motherhood. Liezel talked about how she finds wisdom in navigating the balance between unpaid care work and job responsibilities: "*Unang-una, nagdadasal ako. Humihingi ako ng gabay. Gabayan ako sa challenge na kinakaharap ko. Nagtatanong-tanong ako sa mga inay, sa mga kapatid ko. Natawag ako upang mapagpayuhan nila ako sa mga dapat kong gawin*" ("First of all, I pray. I ask for guidance. To guide me in every challenge I encounter. I also ask my mother and my siblings. I call for advice regarding what I should do").

It was also highlighted that voicing out concerns and having a support system were essential avenues in dealing with balancing the unpaid care work and job responsibilities, which include aspects of support, frustration, a safe environment, and communication. As shared by Cacay, "*Depresyon-depresyon ang pagiging working mom. Kung iisipin mo mababaliw ka. Kapag nagmeet na kami sa center [kasama ang mga katrabaho] – parang navo-voice out mo yung ano, problema mo ganun*" ("Being a working mom is depressing. If you think about it, you'll go crazy. Whenever we meet at the center [with my colleagues] – I am able to voice out my problems"). These anecdotes reflect how creating a supportive and safe environment at home was essential for participants to manage stress and responsibilities since the participants mentioned that they take on multiple roles, especially in the household, in addition to the fact that they still perform their respective duties at their jobs.

In terms of suggested interventions, the participants proposed livelihood programs, reduced costs of goods, and streamlined government processes to ease their burdens. Cheryl shared her frustration, stating, "*Wala, hindi ko nga alam bakit hindi ako nakuha sa 4Ps eh.*

Siguro sabi nila hindi naman kasi halatang naghihirap kasi ang laki ng katawan ko" ("No, I don't know why I wasn't accepted into the 4Ps. Maybe they think I'm not struggling because I look well-fed"), referring to the economic support program of the government for indigent households. Michelle also shared her sentiments regarding her view of the government, saying, *"Alam mo, maraming pera ang gobyerno. Kung ilalagay sa tama... [Dapat] ibigay nila yung karapatan ng bawat tao. 'Di ba? Kung tutuusin maraming pera ang gobyerno, kung walang kurakot"* ("You know, our government has a big budget. If it will be utilized appropriately. They should be able to provide for the rights of every citizen. Right? Indeed, if there are no corrupt officials in the government, there will be a lot more money available"). Reducing the cost of essential goods was also a common suggestion among participants, aiming to ease the economic burden on families. Kristina mentioned, *"Kung kaya nilang [gobyerno]...do something about sa bilihin, siyempre it will be beneficiary sa lahat naman"* ("If they [the government] could do something about the high market prices, it would benefit everyone)". Furthermore, advocating for salary increases to reflect the true cost of living and the added pressure of care work was another common suggestion, emphasizing the need for fair compensation and the acknowledgement of the dual roles many working mothers need to fulfill. Recognizing the value of household responsibilities through both social and financial support was deemed necessary by the participants.

Factors Affecting the Division of Care Work within Households. The division of care work responsibilities as reflected in the interviews also highlighted the shifting roles within the household. Michelle illustrated this by noting, *"Ay mga anak ko na, kasi medyo may edad naman na sila. Yung anak kong lalaki nagsasaing, ako nagluluto ng ulam, yung anak kong babae maghuhugas ng plato,*

magma-mop, maglilinis. Si mister ko sya yung naglalaba sa washing" ("Ah, my children do that [chores] since they are already of age. My son cooks and prepares the rice, I cook the food, then my daughter wash the dishes, mop, and clean the house; my husband washes the clothes"). The same goes for Eden who shared, "Oo, ako, dati [pero] ngayon kasi malalaki na sila. Nakakatulong na sila… sila na naglilinis, naghuhugas ng plato tapos sila na naglalaba ng kanilang mga damit ngayon. Dati, ako lahat" ("Yes, before, I used to do it all but now, my children are already grown. They are already able to help… They clean, wash the dishes, and do the laundry. Before, these chores were all on me"). These anecdotes by Michelle and Eden note the consideration put on mothers who, more often than not, bear most of the weight of care work. As time passes by, they are able to share household responsibilities with family members who willingly undertake these tasks.

Similarly, the interviews emphasize the importance of shared care work responsibilities whenever the mothers are unable to attend to them. Cynthia explained, "Ako, nasa trabaho kasi ako e buong araw. Kaya maganda rin na may partner ka kasi minsan yung partner mo yung gagawa sa bahay…" ("I'm at work the whole day, that is why having a partner is also beneficial, because sometimes your partner is the one who is in charge of chores needed to be done in the house"). Liway also shared the same sentiments, clarifying that although the majority of the care work responsibilities are still on her, she has her husband to help her: "Kahit naman may trabaho [din] siya, pag-uwi niya ng hapon, magluluto na siya, (at) maghuhugas, ganyan. Kapag alam niyang hindi ako nakapaghugas, siya talaga" ("Even if he has work as well, once he comes home in the afternoon, he will already cook our meal and do the dishes after. When he knows that I will not be able to do the dishes, he will do it").

Another factor affecting the division of unpaid care work within households can be attributed to inherited behaviors and responsibilities, as well as inculcated gender roles and stereotypes. As mentioned by Julz, *"Dahil noong unang panahon, ang mga babae ay laging sinasabing pambahay lang at ang mga lalaki ang maghahanapbuhay. Kaya mas laging mga babae ang nasa gawaing bahay"* ("Because in the past, women were always perceived as being in charge of domestic work while men are in charge of working. Hence, women are mostly assigned to household chores").

The role of men in domestic settings revealed significant gender dynamics. Many participants noted that their partners became more involved in care work (eight of 13 participants) during the pandemic but became less involved post-pandemic. For Cris, however, this is not the case, as she shared that her husband does not contribute to any care work activity at all. She highlighted this by sharing, *"Hindi.. hindi siya natulong. Kasi siya ay ano na siya.. Basta't siya ay dumating sa pagmamaneho, wala. Kakain na lang yan, ako na ang bahala sa lahat"* ("No… he doesn't get to help [with the household chores]. When he gets home from driving [work], he's done. He will just eat, then I'm the one who will have to do everything afterwards"). Similarly, Els resonated with this as she frustratingly said, *"Sa iba—inggit nga ako eh, kasi ang ibang mga lalaki tumutulong sa loob ng bahay, akin kakaiba [kasi hindi tumutulong] - kakaiba ako"* ("I am actually jealous of others because the men in their households help with the chores, but the men in our house do not. Our household is different"). Notably, despite increased male participation in care work, this is not the same for every household.

Societal perceptions and expectations placed on women in the household further exacerbate the burdens of gender stereotypes. This is an added weight that the

majority of the participants carry within themselves. Cris shared, *"Dahil ang iniisip kasi ng tao eh babae ako… Nanay ako, kailangan ko tong gawin. Kasi kung hindi ko to gawin, sinong gagawa"* (Because people think that I am a woman, a mother, so I need to do this [chores]. Because if I don't do it, then who will")? Similarly, Kristina expressed, *"'Pag babae ka parang, [sinasabihan ka na] 'babae ka pa naman, ang kalat-kalat ng bahay!'… So ayun bilang babae, obligasyon mo maging malinis ang bahay… Kailangan anak mo mataba. [Kapag] mapayat, 'di niyo pinapakain, kapag mataba, sobra-sobra pinapakain niyo. Kahit anong sabihin [at gawin mo] mo, may masasabi sila sa 'yo"* (If you are a woman, [you get told that] 'for a woman like you, the house is very messy!' So as the woman of the household, it is your obligation to keep the house clean… Then your child should be healthy because if not, people will say that you do not feed your child. But if he gets a little fat, people will still criticize you for feeding him a lot. No matter what you say and do, people will always have something to say about you").

In contrast, for Cynthia and Lala, despite these expectations, they are still able to voice out their beliefs and do what they want to do. Cynthia proudly stated, *"Meron kasi minsan, may lalaking sasabihin 'babae ka, dapat wala kang trabaho'; 'babae ka, dapat nasa loob ka ng bahay'… Ako, malakas loob ko, kaya kong sagutin eh. Basta kapag sinabi ko sa asawa kong nagtatrabaho ako wala siyang angal eh"* ("Sometimes, there are men who will say 'you are a woman, you should not work' or 'you should be inside your home because you are a woman'… But me, I am confident and courageous so I can respond to them. So when I told my husband that I am working, he does not argue with me anymore"). Lala also shared her experience: *"Ano yun… nag-usap kami. Gusto niya magbuntis ako, edi pinagbigyan ko siya. Sabi ko kasi sa kanya, magbubuntis ako pero ayokong matengga sa*

bahay. Gusto kong magtrabaho" ("We talked about it. My husband wanted to have a child so I got pregnant. [But] I told my husband that I will get pregnant but I will not stay at home all the time. I want to have a job").

Overall, the findings highlight deeply entrenched gender norms, with women still bearing a disproportionate burden of care work despite having full employment outside the home. These findings suggest that within the post-pandemic landscape among working-class households, most of the care work responsibilities still fall upon the majority of the participants, even with the reported support from their families. Additionally, it was noted that the increased male participation within households was a rather temporary response to the circumstances brought upon by the pandemic. The changes and struggles the participants underwent as a result of the COVID-19 health crisis were also highlighted as they called for interventions that necessitate systemic changes to support equitable distribution of household duties and alleviate financial burdens.

Discussion and Analysis

Entrenched gender roles. The findings on the concept of care work among the participants highlight the deeply entrenched gender roles and expectations within Filipino households, especially during and post-pandemic. This is consistent with the feminist framework emphasizing the persistent undervaluation and invisibility of women's unpaid labor and the need for policy shifts to acknowledge and value these contributions (Himmelweit & Plomien 2014). The participants' experiences exemplify this dual burden, showing how societal expectations mandate that mothers take on an extensive range of responsibilities without respite.

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Despite increased male participation in care work during the pandemic, men have reduced their involvement in these tasks as communities transition to the new normal with more lenient protocols. This shift back to traditional roles illustrates the temporary nature of the changes brought by the pandemic. Studies suggest that the unique circumstances, such as lockdowns and the shutdown of educational institutions and childcare facilities, required a fairer distribution of household duties (Jessen et al. 2022). Nevertheless, once these external pressures diminished, the conventional gender roles were promptly re-established, resulting in a decline in male involvement in caregiving responsibilities (Gravel 2023). This indicates that the increased male participation was merely a reaction to the exceptional conditions brought about by the pandemic rather than a permanent shift.

The persistence of patriarchal norms in Filipino society continues to enforce gendered expectations around care work. These norms dictate that caregiving is an intrinsic duty of women, while men contribute relatively little to caregiving tasks, reinforcing an unequal division of labor (Stefanova et al. 2023). This inequity is rooted in socio-cultural and religious expectations that view women as primary caregivers (Villar 2022), which the participants' experiences corroborated. The findings of this study are consistent with Karimli et al. (2016), who noted that Filipino women spend significantly more time on unpaid care work than men, and Parreñas (2015), who argued that gender norms and power relations deeply influence household labor divisions.

As a result, women often face a disproportionate burden of unpaid labor, reinforcing the gendered division of labor (Razavi & Staab 2012). This burden not only affects their physical and mental well-being but also limits their opportunities for professional growth. The pandemic's

disruption of traditional gender roles, particularly in households where women took on breadwinner roles, has led to a re-evaluation of care work dynamics (Cera et al. 2024). The increase in responsibilities and stress experienced by the participants exacerbates the "double burden" phenomenon. This shift highlights the need for a more equitable distribution of care responsibilities and reflects broader changes in societal norms (Brannen & Wilson 2023).

Balancing Work Duties and Familial Obligations. The study's findings highlight the significant challenges that full-time employed mothers face in balancing work responsibilities and household care work, especially in the post-pandemic context. Participants' narratives reflect the dual burden that these women bear, revealing how deeply entrenched gender norms and expectations shape their daily lives. This underscores the urgent need for policy interventions that support working mothers, such as flexible work arrangements and accessible childcare services. According to feminist theory, particularly the works of West and Zimmerman (1987) and Lupton (2017), these gender roles are reinforced through societal and cultural norms that prioritize women's responsibilities in the domestic sphere over their work duties. The ongoing struggle to manage these dual responsibilities underscores the pervasive influence of patriarchal structures, which often leave women with little support in navigating their dual roles. Espartinez (2022) highlighted the dissatisfaction among working mothers regarding the dual burden they bear, confirming the theory that societal expectations contribute to gender inequality in both home and workplace settings. Such biases not only reinforce traditional gender roles but also hinder women's labor advancement (Badgett 1999; Forbes et al. 2020). Addressing these biases requires a multi-faceted approach, including educational campaigns and workplace policies that promote gender equality.

Participants in this study reported significant stress and challenges in balancing increased caregiving duties with work responsibilities. This stress is compounded by the lack of institutional support and the expectation to maintain high performance in both roles. This supports Lindau et al. (2021), who found that the pandemic intensified the socioeconomic burdens on women, particularly mothers, who faced heightened caregiving demands alongside job-related pressures. While balancing paid and unpaid work is challenging, having a job provides financial independence and personal empowerment. Paid jobs reduce women's reliance on their husbands' salaries, reflecting the dual benefit of economic support and self-worth. Work serves as a form of empowerment and autonomy for these women, allowing them a temporary escape from the relentless demands of domestic labor (Munte & Monica 2023). This aligns with feminist perspectives that argue for the recognition of women's economic contributions as essential for their empowerment (Muniz 2023). The shifting of traditional roles during the pandemic further illustrates how being employed can challenge and redefine gender norms (Espartinez 2022).

The necessity for mothers to adapt to evolving family dynamics during the pandemic highlights the additional pressures placed on women to ensure family well-being amidst crises (Holmes 2023). This adaptability, often requiring self-reliance, underscores the resilience of women but also points to the lack of systemic support for caregiving responsibilities (Tendero 2023). This lack of support is a critical issue that needs to be addressed through comprehensive social policies that recognize and redistribute caregiving responsibilities. Feminist theory critiques the societal structures that perpetuate the invisibility of such labor and advocates for policies that recognize and redistribute caregiving responsibilities more equitably.

Moreover, the need to balance work responsibilities and familial obligations often comes at the cost of personal time and well-being. This intersectionality aligns with Crenshaw's (1991) framework, acknowledging that multiple identities and structural constraints influence decisions about care work. Similarly, literature shows that working-class parents struggle to balance home and work duties (Anderson & Kelliher 2020). To add to this, according to Shockley et al. (2021), cultural norms strongly impact women's key duties in domestic tasks and childcare, indicating a gendered division of labor in households. The socioeconomic impact of the pandemic underscores the external factors that exacerbate these challenges (Aglipay-Villar 2022).

Changes in Household Dynamics During the Pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically altered household dynamics, compelling Filipino families to adapt to a new normal where work, school, and home life intersected. This transition was particularly burdensome for women, who traditionally bear the brunt of caregiving responsibilities (Corsi & Ilkkaracan 2023). The pandemic exacerbated existing gender disparities in household labor, as highlighted by feminist perspectives, which argue that crises often reinforce traditional gender roles (Lupton 2017).

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the entrenched gender norms influencing the division of household labor, with women continuing to shoulder a disproportionate share of caregiving and domestic duties. The findings of this study resonate with Kwaśniewska & Lebuda's (2017) assertion that traditional gender roles significantly dictate the allocation of household responsibilities. Despite incremental progress in gender equality, societal expectations still largely position women as primary caregivers, thereby perpetuating an unequal distribution of domestic labor. This persistent imbalance

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is evident in the accounts of the study participants, who highlighted the challenges they faced in balancing work and caregiving roles. Tronto (2013) provides a historical context for these norms, illustrating how patriarchal systems have long designated women as the main caregivers, reinforcing their role in domestic settings.

Mental and Emotional Toll and Coping Mechanisms. The COVID-19 pandemic also intensified the mental and emotional toll on working mothers as they juggled increased domestic responsibilities with work demands (Seedat & Rondon 2021). The mental strain of this dual burden was evident in participants' experiences, emphasizing the need for mental health support and recognition of the emotional labor involved in care work. According to studies, many working-class mothers used adaptive techniques to reconcile employment and caring, demonstrating their resilience and capacity to overcome pandemic problems (Wood et al. 2020; Roslan et al. 2021).

Women employed various coping mechanisms to manage the increased pressures during the pandemic. These included seeking social support from family and friends, utilizing time management strategies, and engaging in mindfulness practices to alleviate stress (Seedat & Rondon 2021). However, the reliance on such strategies also underscores the lack of institutional support for working mothers, a gap that feminist theory critiques as a significant barrier to achieving gender equality (Armstrong 2020).

Economic Dimensions of Gender Roles. This study's analysis further connects to Marxist feminist theory, particularly in addressing the economic dimensions of gender roles. The undervaluation of care work, predominantly performed by women, is a critical issue highlighted by Armstrong (2020) and England (2005).

Contemporary society fails to recognize the essential nature of domestic labor, thereby perpetuating women's financial dependence and limiting their economic and professional opportunities. The narratives from the participants reveal the stark reality of this undervaluation, where the lack of institutional support and the persistent wage gap exacerbate the pressures on working mothers. The pandemic has intensified these issues, making it even more challenging for women to balance their work and personal lives.

Intersectionality and the diverse experiences of mothers. Intersectionality plays a crucial role in understanding the diverse experiences of these mothers. The overlap of gender with class significantly influences how care work is distributed and managed within households. Women are outright exploited by capitalism, where power dynamics in play extend beyond the private sphere, as the professional world is also influenced by these gendered expectations, often leading to occupational segregation and wage gaps (Lee & Adair 2007). Statistically speaking, women in the Philippines earn a significant percentage less than what men receive, highlighting the pay disparity that amounts to a 78% total pay reduction among women as compared to men (ILO 2018) . This gap is remarkably heightened in areas that do not conform to urban standards, such as rural and remote areas with smaller wage and pay guides (PSA 2018). This is despite the fact that on a global scale, the Philippines has long been considered a gender-equal nation, ranking 8th among the ASEAN countries (World Economic Forum 2021). Hence, such a situation puts women at a disadvantage when it comes to valuing labor rendered as compared to men. Consequently, this becomes a clear indicator of the unequal value that society places on women, who endlessly navigate such oppressive forces reinforced through societal and cultural norms that prioritize women's responsibilities in

the domestic sphere over their professional lives. The ongoing struggle to manage these dual responsibilities underscores the pervasive influence of patriarchal structures, which often leave women with little support in navigating their dual roles as a mother first and as a worker second.

Thus, while employment provides financial independence and personal empowerment, it also imposes a dual burden on women, who continue to shoulder the majority of caregiving responsibilities. This is exacerbated by entrenched gender norms and societal expectations that prioritize women's roles in the domestic sphere and alienate them in professional settings. Forbes et al. (2020) also discuss how prejudices against women support traditional gender norms by pushing women out of jobs. It implies that societal expectations and views keep gender inequality in both professional and home care work reinforced. For instance, in the local setting, before the passing of the Expanded Maternity Leave (EML) Law, which seeks to provide female workers with prolonged time for recovery and nurturing their newborns, there was rampant opposition from employers, proving the institutions' bias to protect their profits at the expense of their female workers (Raquiza et al. 2024). Consequently, this perpetuates gender discrimination in the workplace as employers have been consciously avoiding hiring new female employees to evade the payment of maternity benefits (Senate of the Philippines, 2019).

In summary, the economic valuation of care work, or the lack thereof, is a critical factor in understanding the burden placed on women in the household (England 2005). Despite the critical nature of care work for family well-being, it remains mentally and physically exhausting yet economically unrecognized. This reflects Dodds' (2007) and Folbre's (2001) discussions on the invisibility

of care work in economic metrics and the need for policy shifts to acknowledge and value these contributions.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study. The strength of this study lies in the participants' lived experience accounts, which provide insight into the phenomenon of the double burden and the second shift, as well as the pressures women have doing paid and family care work. By adopting this concept together with intersectionality, where gender is combined with other social categories such as class and culture, it becomes easier to explain how all these aspects interact and shape care work environments. The qualitative data were also essential for narrating and assessing the detailed accounts of the experiences of working mothers by capturing their lived experiences and personal challenges and examining the issues in detail and in-depth (Anderson, 2010).

Similarly, by shedding light on mothers' experiences of juggling work and caregiving duties, the study finds its social value in acknowledging the difficulties these women confront and emphasizing the necessity for societal support that will enable their full involvement and potential in the workforce. Lastly, considering that developing targeted interventions and policies require an understanding of the institutional and informal support systems as well as the coping strategies adopted by full-time working mothers, the possibility of reforming policies through the findings of this study is where its academic relevance ultimately lies. Such relevance makes the study highly significant, especially regarding the fluid changes in gender dynamics influenced by the COVID-19 health crisis and its implications for future social relations.

However, the study does have its own set of limitations, especially with regard to the generality of the findings and the extent of the methodology used. The details

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presented in the findings may be culturally bound, especially given the Filipino cultural background of the study and participants. Bias in the sample selection in relation to attracting only mothers from similar socioeconomic backgrounds may lead to the omission of the experiences of women from diverse or other less privileged backgrounds. In addition, the analytical framework of the study leans evidently on the feminist perspective, which, as enlightening as it is, can still be enriched by a variety of other theories. It also only considers the difficulties and undesirable consequences of stereotyped male and female roles and, consequently, may overemphasize negative findings and omit potential positive changes, awareness of the gender problem during the pandemic, or shifts in the household division of labor. As for the methodological considerations and restrictions of this study, since the focus of the research was full-time employed mothers in working-class households, the exclusion of the perspectives of other pertinent family members was at risk. Thus, while there is a given emphasis on the challenges and changes in the double roles mothers play in this setup, the study may not be able to fully capture the nuances of gendered care work in Filipino families due to the limited number of family members purposefully selected for this endeavor. Additionally, while this research specifically considered including dual-earning households (i.e., both the mother and her partner are employed) in the inclusion criteria, the nature of the job of the husband was not taken into consideration (e.g., full-time or part-time). Moreover, the criteria set only required a mother to have at least one minor or dependent child in the household but did not take into consideration if the same household is characterized by other children who may be financially independent already. In the same way, this study was done without considering the age of the mother when she had children and started her own family. Lastly, this study did not employ lesbian,

gay, transgender, and queer mothers or single mothers, which are complexities that could be further looked at in subsequent studies.

Conclusion and Implications

Despite progress in gender equality, patriarchal views and traditional gender norms still influence the unequal division of household labor, with women performing much of the caregiving. The lived experiences of the participants during and after the pandemic shed light on the different factors that influence the amount and division of care work responsibilities in a household. While the majority of the participants evidently pointed to their lives during the pandemic as the hardest they have experienced as compared to before and after the pandemic, the increased responsibilities and stress they have reported while balancing work and life at home during this period visibly displays the "double burden" phenomenon. Different factors, such as the increase in the cost of living, gender roles, and the emotional and psychological impacts of the pandemic, have contributed to the challenges that are faced by these individuals. Although there are participants who share the responsibilities of care work with other members of the household, a number of participants still suffer from the lack of adequate partitioning of care work in the household. The findings of the study also highlight that the increased involvement of men in domestic work was largely due to this phenomenon being rather temporary. The return to pre-pandemic norms in the aftermath of COVID-19 once again reduced male participation in caregiving duties. Thus, as noted in the experiences of the study participants, the strain of balancing work and caregiving responsibilities remains largely unmitigated by male involvement in the post-pandemic setting.

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This study also uncovered the intricate strategies participants employed to balance work responsibilities with household care work as they struggled with increased tension and conflict in relationships, exhaustion from juggling multiple roles, and the constant need for effective time management. The shift to remote work and the blending of professional and personal spaces also emerged as an issue that working mothers face, which often led to frustration and a feeling of being overwhelmed. Women employed various coping mechanisms to manage the increased pressures during the pandemic. Primarily, support systems played a crucial role in navigating these responsibilities. Social and emotional support from spouses, siblings, and friends, as well as a positive environment, were essential in helping participants manage their dual roles. The importance of communication and delegation of tasks within the family were also highlighted as some of the effective strategies that alleviate the burden of working mothers. The mothers also underscored the value of time management and budgeting, which allows them to get through multiple hours of work both in and out of their households. Engaging in religious exercises and use of technology such as mobile devices for leisure and entertainment have also been their go-to activities to alleviate stress. However, the reliance on such strategies aptly underscores the lack of institutional support for working mothers. Hence, while the study highlights the resilience and adaptive strategies employed by the participants, it also emphasizes the necessity for formal government support to relieve the overwhelming pressure surrounding the everyday lives of working mothers in the new normal.

To put it succinctly, the integration of feminist and intersectional frameworks provides a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and facilitates the development of more equitable solutions for working

mothers in the post-pandemic era. Similarly, the findings underscore the need for systemic change to address these deep-rooted inequalities, denoting a call for policies that support shared caregiving responsibilities and promote gender equity in both workplace and domestic contexts. Looking further beyond post-pandemic care work, this study offers new insights into the socio-economic and cultural contexts of Metro Manila's working-class households, revealing how these factors intensify the challenges faced by working mothers. It was also derived from the study that the patriarchal structures are persistent and resilient, considering how they reasserted themselves as pressures eased during the post-pandemic. Men's uptake of care work rose during the pandemic and, however, failed to remain a reality when conditions went back to normality. On the other hand, the "dual burden" experienced by working mothers could also be a topic to elaborate further as it underscores the implications of undervalued domestic labor. Hence, the study linked the lack of remuneration for care work back to the structural factors that hinder women's economic rights and also varied the degree to which care work is valued by class, color, or cultural standards that the concept of intersectionality implicates.

Overall, the experiences of the participants in this study highlight the need for more robust support systems, both at the workplace and in broader societal structures, to address the gendered impacts of caregiving responsibilities. By acknowledging the invaluable contributions of care work to household survival and well-being, both policymakers and society can strive for a more equitable division of labor and the empowerment of working mothers. Encouraging supportive work environments and community-based initiatives can help alleviate some of the burdens on working mothers, enabling them to thrive both

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personally and economically. Ultimately, achieving a fair balance between work and personal lives requires collective efforts to challenge deeply ingrained gender norms and create supportive, inclusive environments for all.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Themes and Codes

Table 1. Participants Perception of Work at Home, Job, and Care Work

Themes	Codes
Work at home as the epitome of sacrifices, struggles, and boundless labor	Parental sacrifice and struggles Gender and societal pressures Motherhood and domestic work Financial challenges Balance and family dynamics Routine and attention
Job as a means of respite, autonomy, and empowerment	Empowerment and autonomy Work and respite Value and motivation in work
Overlap of personal and work responsibilities	Family and priorities Multitasking and self-reliance Gender dynamics Emotional labor Division of labor Social engagement Financial strain Adaptation Challenges in work environment Work-life balance and conflict Fortitude
Care work as holistic labor	Caregiving Prioritizing family Household responsibilities Routine and Self-care Emotional Aspects and Well-being Role Expectations Responsibility Gender dynamics inside a household
Multitasking at the core of motherhood	Impact on well-being and stress

Adapting to the evolving family dynamics	Need for support and structure Adaptation and teaching Multitasking and time management Role and circumstances

Table 2. Participants' Experiences of Care Work Responsibilities

Themes	Codes
Journeying through the pandemic and transitioning to the new normal	Financial strain brought about by the pandemic Benefits of remote work Adaptation and sacrifice Resilience and determination Perception of restrictions Vaccine hesitancy Community bonding Economic inequality Resilience amidst hardship Health and safety measures
Challenges in navigating care work responsibilities	Resilience and coping responsibilities Sacrifice Financial strain Adaptation to new circumstances Importance of support systems Fear and anxiety Impact of health on family dynamics

Table 3. Navigating the Balance between Work Responsibilities and Care Work at Home

Themes	Codes
Balancing Work Responsibilities and Household Care Work	Motherhood Family responsibilities Adaptation Flexibility Exhaustion Time management Support Persistence
Support from Family, Spouse, and Friends in Coping	Leisure Use of social media Family bonding Entertainment Personal care and rest Work schedule Time management Frustration Prioritization Challenges in relationships
Support systems available to participants in navigating work and household responsibilities	Delegating tasks to nearby people Emotional support Support from spouse Support from siblings Supportive and safe environment Self-reliance at home Advice from friends

Suggested interventions by working mothers for working mothers	Positive use of social interaction Communication Financial assistance Government privileges Livelihood programs for additional income Desire for reduced cost of goods Streamlined government processes Education program Recognition of mother's household responsibilities Debt support Sustainable support Issues with government assistance programs Salary increase Scholarship Healthcare Financial strain of tertiary education Call for government accountability Benefits and discounts

Table 4. Division of Care Work Responsibilities

Themes	Codes
Rationale for household care work division	Shared responsibilities Decision making Support and assistance Prioritization Inherited behaviors and responsibilities Household duties Division of Labor Consideration Acceptance

Role of men in domestic settings	Commitment and support Gender dynamics and perceptions Adaptability Practicality Household management Income disparity Parental roles Shared responsibilities in marriage
Societal perceptions and expectations placed on women in a household	Expectations in household maintenance Gender roles and stereotypes Importance of household skills and independence Supportive partner Work-life balance and juggling obligations

COVID-19 AND GENDERED REALITIES: ASSESSING THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON RURAL WOMEN IN PAMPANGA[1]

Eden H. Terol, Ph.D., RPsy, Emmanuel M. Luna, Ph.D., EnP, Flordeliz A. Agra, RFP, MSc, Hazel C. Lamberte, RSW, MSW

ABSTRACT

This study is part of a broader investigation into the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Filipinos in both rural and urban settings. This segment focuses on women from four Porac, Pampanga, Philippines communities during the pandemic. Using a basic interpretive design, the study explores the women's experiences and the pandemic's impact on them, explicitly addressing two key questions: First, how have the women experienced the impact of COVID-19 in their daily lives?; Second, how coping strategies have the women employed to manage the challenges of the pandemic? The study adopted the Conceptual Framework for Gender Dynamics and Disaster Impacts (World Bank 2024) for analyzing women and disasters. Ethics approval and institutional

permissions were secured prior to data collection. Sixty-seven women aged 18 to 60 participated in eight focus group discussions. The transcribed data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed the pandemic's impact on the women respondents, including financial hardship, increased caregiving and other forms of reproductive work, physical health strain, family relationship issues, mental health pressures, and demanding community work. The women employed various coping strategies to address the financial and psychosocial challenges they faced. The study highlights the need for community programs to address medical emergencies and socioeconomic issues.

Keywords: Filipino Women, Rural Women, COVID-19 Pandemic

ABSTRAK

Ang pag-aaral na ito ay bahagi ng mas malawak na imbestigasyon sa sosyo-ekonomikong epekto ng pandemya ng COVID-19 sa mga Pilipino sa rural at urban. Nakatutok sa pag-aaral na ito sa mga kababaihan mula sa apat na komunidad sa Porac, Pampanga, Pilipinas sa panahon ng pandemya. Gamit ang pangunahing interpretatibong disenyo, sinasaliksik ng pag-aaral ang mga karanasan ng mga kababaihan at ang epekto ng pandemya sa kanila, partikular na tinutugunan ang dalawang pangunahing tanong: una, paano naranasan ng mga kababaihan ang epekto ng COVID-19 sa kanilang pang-araw-araw na buhay?; At pangalawa, anong mga estratehiya sa pagharap ang kanilang ginamit upang malampasan ang mga hamon ng pandemya? Ginamit ng pag-aaral ang

Conceptual Framework for Gender Dynamics and Disaster Impacts (World Bank 2024) sa pagsusuri ng kababaihan at sakuna. Nakuha ang pahintulot sa etika at institusyunal na awtorisasyon bago simulan ang pangangalap ng datos. Animnapu't pitong kababaihan na may edad na 18 hanggang 60 ang lumahok sa walong talakayang pangkat. Ang datos na isinatitik ay sinuri gamit ang tematikong pagsusuri. Ipinakita ng mga natuklasan ang epekto ng pandemya sa mga kababaihang kalahok, kabilang ang labis na hirap sa pinansyal, pagdami ng mga tungkulin sa pangangalaga at iba pang anyo ng gawaing reproduktibo, pisikal na pagod, isyu sa relasyon ng pamilya, presyon sa mental na kalusugan, at mabibigat na gawaing pamayanan. Gumamit ang mga kababaihan ng iba't ibang estratehiya upang matugunan ang mga pinansyal at sikosyal na hamon na kanilang hinarap. Itinampok ng pag-aaral ang pangangailangan para sa mga programang pangkomunidad na tutugon sa mga *medical emergency* at mga isyung sosyo-ekonomiko.

Mga susing salita: kababaihang Pilipino, kababaihan sa kanayunan, COVID-19 pandemya

Introduction:

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented global challenges that impact various demographics in distinct ways. Women from rural areas are usually at the crossroads of economic vulnerability, limited access to healthcare, and traditional gender roles that can be a source of disadvantages. The COVID-19 pandemic likely highlighted existing inequalities, emphasizing the need to understand how women from rural areas might navigate these challenges and strategize to cope with socioeconomic and emotional stressors associated with the pandemic (Smith and Doe 2021).

A qualitative basic interpretive study is utilized for this research, offering a nuanced exploration of rural women's lived experiences during the pandemic. This approach emphasizes understanding how individuals make meaning of their circumstances, providing deep insights into how women interpreted and responded to the challenges of COVID-19 given their context.

The pandemic has exacerbated gender disparities, with pre-existing issues like violence against women becoming more pronounced. Before the pandemic, one in three women was expected to experience violence in her lifetime, with less than 40% seeking assistance (UN Women 2021). COVID-19, along with the associated economic and social stresses, movement restrictions, and crowded living conditions, heightened gender-based violence and disparities (UN Women 2021; Almeida et al. 2020).

The pandemic's impact has been severe, leading to the closure of schools, workplaces, public transit, and entertainment venues. Governments also restricted gatherings, disrupting business operations, travel, and trade shows. Lockdowns displaced migrant laborers,

created shortages of essentials, increased domestic violence, deteriorated mental health, strained healthcare systems, and significantly impacted income and financial security. These effects have been particularly harmful to women and girls, threatening to reverse decades of progress in gender equality. Early reports from civil society organizations, research groups, and the media highlight the crisis's devastating impact on marginalized populations, particularly women and girls (Siriwardhane & Khan 2021).

Unexpected lockdowns and closures forced migrant workers to return to difficult conditions in rural areas. The state failed to adequately address the financial, emotional, and social difficulties faced by migrants who remained in cities (International Labour Organization 2021). Women, who are often responsible for domestic tasks, childcare, and eldercare, have found these responsibilities exacerbated by the pandemic, especially for employed women or single parents (Almeida et al. 2020).

This study examines the experiences of women participants from four rural communities in Porac, Pampanga. It seeks to answer the following questions:

- How have the women experienced the impact of COVID-19 in their daily lives?
- What coping strategies have the women employed to manage the challenges of the pandemic?

This research aims to shed light on the lived experiences of women during the pandemic, identify and understand their coping strategies, and provide insights to inform support systems and interventions for rural women in future crises. The findings may serve as a foundation for developing programs and/or improving existing ones that help women better cope with the challenges of the pandemic or other disasters.

Review of Related Literature:

The existing literature on COVID-19's impact has predominantly centered on urban populations, leaving a gap in understanding how rural women, who face unique challenges such as economic vulnerability, limited healthcare access, and cultural expectations, were affected. Previous research indicates that rural women rely on community networks, informal economies, and traditional practices for support. Yet, there is a lack of studies focusing on how women in rural communities coped with the pandemic's specific challenges (Salcedo-La Vina and Elwell 2020). This study addresses this gap by exploring rural women's experiences and coping mechanisms during COVID-19.

The pandemic has disproportionately impacted women, affecting their relationships and overall well-being. Reports indicate a 25% increase in domestic violence since the onset of social distancing measures (UN Women 2021). Lockdowns and movement restrictions have trapped women with their abusers and limited access to support services (Khullar 2020). Women experiencing intimate partner violence during the pandemic, including those recently giving birth or pregnant, face heightened mental health risks (Almeida et al. 2020).

COVID-19 has also posed significant risks to women's physical health and well-being. Women, including nurses and community health workers, represent 70% of the global health workforce, making them more vulnerable to COVID-19 exposure (UN Women 2021; Almeida et al. 2020). This exposure threatens their safety and that of their families.

Research suggests that the increased vulnerability of women to disasters is less about inherent gender differences and more about societal norms that

exacerbate their risks during crises (Pallavi and Kaushal 2021; Pawar 2024). The pandemic has threatened women's economic stability globally, taking on more childcare and homeschooling responsibilities, often working part-time or resigning to manage family care (UN Women 2020; Kelly 2021). Senior women have also been disproportionately affected, with some leaving their jobs due to COVID-19 risks, while mothers face increased domestic burdens (Luna and Mackenzie 2024).

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) projected that global gender equality would be severely threatened by COVID-19. It predicted higher job losses for women, increased care responsibilities, and rising maternity and infant mortality rates due to disrupted health services (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2022).

Plan International Philippines found that the pandemic had a profound impact on the education, health, and economic well-being of girls and young women, with a significant portion reporting violence, including cyberbullying (Gamboa 2021). Despite receiving some relief assistance, these individuals identified a need for better access to information on gender-based violence, mental health support, and safe reporting mechanisms (Gamboa 2021).

Exploring the experiences of women from four rural communities in the Philippines during COVID-19 can provide valuable insights into their resilience and coping strategies, contributing to a better understanding of their needs and supporting their recovery in future crises.

Conceptual Framework:

Disasters such as COVID-19 are natural hazards that challenge people regardless of gender and status (World Bank 2024). COVID-19 aggravated the inequalities and hardships of those who belong to the vulnerable sectors, especially women. The threat of the virus and the structures created by society to combat COVID-19 affected women in various aspects of their lives (UN Women 2021). Using coping strategies is essential to cushion the impact of disasters and promote resilience among women. In exploring the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women from rural areas, this study adopts the Conceptual Framework for Gender Dynamics and Disaster Impacts (World Bank, 2024).

The World Bank (2024) surmises that disaster impacts depend on the type and intensity of hazard and exposure of affected individuals, their vulnerability to damage, their preparedness, and their coping capacities. Gender inequality, which stems from societal expectations of gender roles and is influenced by the individual's socioeconomic status and individual's level of agency, impacts how people prepare for, react to, are affected by, and recover from disasters.

The impact of disaster and gender inequality converge to represent an overlay or a factor driving disaster impacts and is influenced by gender dynamics. Disaster and gender inequality converge to exacerbate gender inequality and worsen women's resilience in current and future pandemics. Also operating in this convergence area are disaster risk management policies and interventions that may use available tools to mitigate disaster impacts and close the gender gap in outcomes. Policymakers and implementers must take into account gender dynamics and how these can influence disaster impacts in various areas to be effective in decision-making and policy or project design in disaster risk
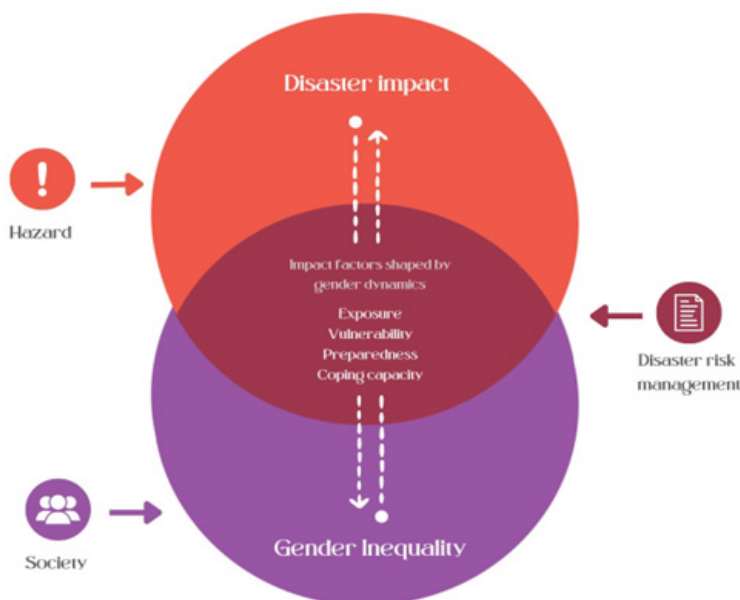
management.

Figure 1: A Conceptual Framework for Gender Dynamics and Disaster Impacts

Figure 1 illustrates the complex interplay between disaster impacts and gender inequality, showing how disaster outcomes are shaped by the societal roles of men and women. Gender dynamics and inequalities not only influence vulnerability, preparedness, response, and recovery but also perpetuate gender-differentiated impacts. These disparities, in turn, can exacerbate existing gender inequalities and weaken resilience to future disasters (World Bank 2024).

This study examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on rural women in selected communities in Porac, Pampanga, Philippines. By exploring their

experiences within the outlined framework, the study aims to contribute to the discourse on women and disaster. The findings may also inform the review and development of programs designed to help women overcome the adverse effects of such crises.

Methods:

This study employs a basic interpretive inquiry to explore the experiences of women from Porac, Pampanga, and how the pandemic has impacted their lives. This qualitative approach focuses on understanding how individuals make sense of their experiences and the meaning they attribute to specific situations or phenomena (Elliott and Timulak 2021). By capturing the participants' subjective experiences, this approach provides deep insights into their personal and collective responses to the pandemic.

Situated in Central Luzon, Philippines, Porac is a first-class municipality in the Province of Pampanga. The municipality is in close proximity to the University of the Philippines in Clark, where the lead investigator is affiliated. Nestled in the western part of Pampanga and bordered by Tarlac to the north and Zambales to the west, it covers 314.00 square kilometers and has a population of approximately 140,751 as of the 2020 census. The municipality's economy is mostly agricultural; however, it has experienced industrial growth in recent years. This can be partly attributed to its proximity to the Clark Freeport Zone and Alviera Development, which bring in greater economic and employment opportunities (Peopleplaid 2020).

The Porac communities visited included Brgy Pio, Brgy Manibaug Pasig, Brgy Sinura, and Brgy Palat. Data collection took place at the Local Government Unit

(LGU) offices, where barangay workers, serving as front liners, invited participants from their communities. Most respondents in the study were drawn from a randomly selected survey sample of 400 individuals from Porac, Pampanga, as part of a larger study. Participation in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was voluntary, and many of the volunteers were front liners in their communities.

The data gathering was conducted from March 17 to 25, 2022, as part of a year-long (2022) project on the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in selected communities in the Philippines. Proper coordination and arrangements were made with the local government officials to facilitate the data-gathering process. Approval of the Ethics Review Board was sought before data gathering.

Sixty-seven (67) women aged 18 to 60 participated in the FGDs. These women participants were recruited by the barangay personnel who served as contact persons. The facilitators introduced the research activity to the participants, emphasizing its voluntary nature, after which they signed the informed consent forms. The research team of 4 members facilitated the focus group discussions. Two FGDs were conducted per barangay with 8 to 9 participants per group. The FGD meetings were conducted to explore participants' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on its impact on their daily lives and their coping strategies. The FGD guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed narratives about the participants' experiences, including challenges faced, support systems, and coping mechanisms. The guide consisted of questions such as *"What was the experience like during the pandemic?"* *"What were the challenges that you experienced during the pandemic?"* and *"How did you cope with these challenges?"* Given the nature of the research being a part of a more extensive multimethod study with four

hundred participants, qualitative data collection was designed to allow exhaustion of all possible themes to emerge, hence the large FGD group with several groupings. The participants willingly volunteered to participate in the study, allowing them to gather together with neighbors and friends.

The discussions were recorded while the co-facilitator also took down notes during data gathering. The recorded women's narratives were transcribed and further analyzed using thematic analysis (Clarke and Braun 2017) to identify and interpret patterns and themes related to the impact of COVID-19 on women and their coping strategies. Using metacards, data analysis was conducted by the researchers with a 100 percent agreement rate. The study results were presented and validated through an online meeting with barangay representatives and other participants three months after the data collection.

Participants Profile

A total of 67 women respondents participated in four FGDs. Their ages range from 18 to 60 years old. The women were either married or cohabiting (90%). The rest were either single, widows, or separated. Most were barangay workers and front liners (60%) assigned to various posts (i.e., Brgy. Kagawad, Brgy. Secretary, Brgy. Health Worker, Brgy. Nutrition Scholars, Brgy. Peacekeeping and Safety Officer), receiving minimal monthly compensation. Other respondents (40%) work as laundry women, housemaids, and salesladies and engage in home-based income-generating activities to supplement their husband's or adult/working children's income. Some women's husbands lost their jobs due to the pandemic. Other women respondents also lost their regular jobs or sources of income during the pandemic.

They used to be fish vendors, manicurists, workers engaged in catering businesses, and an OFW. Most of the women (80%) had children in grade school and/or high school, while a few (20%) had adult children working or studying in college. Pseudonyms were assigned to these women in the presentation of their narratives.

FINDINGS

The Impact of COVID-19 on the Women

Disaster impact is a comprehensive concept encompassing the total effect of a hazardous event or disaster. It includes both negative (e.g., economic losses) and positive (e.g., economic gains) effects and spans financial, human, and environmental impacts. The term also covers the human toll, such as death, injuries, disease, and other adverse effects on physical, mental, and social well-being (UNDRR n.d.). This section discusses the different impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily on the respondents. These include being overburdened with finance-related stress, being overburdened with caregiver/reproductive work, strain on physical health, issues with family relations, pressure on mental health, and the challenging demands of community work.

Managing burden of financial stress

Loss of source of income. The pandemic led to a severe loss of income for many respondents, primarily those employed in the service or hospitality sectors or running informal small businesses. COVID-19 restrictions drastically affected their livelihoods. For instance, one respondent, Anita, said, "Mahirap kasi walang trabaho, hindi nakalalabas" (It is hard because we have no work since we cannot go out), while another noted a reduction

in work hours from eight (8) to six (6) hours, leading to lower wages: *"Nabawasan ang oras sa trabaho mula walong oras naging anim na oras na lang"* (hours at work decreased from eight to six).

Ditas, a laundress who earned PHP 500 per week prior to the pandemic, could no longer support her family after losing her job. Similarly, a vegetable vendor, Clara, lost her income due to restrictions on street vending. A market stall owner, Zita, reported a PHP 4,000 to PHP 5,000 reduction in earnings. Other respondents, such as a water fetcher and a housemaid, experienced similar hardships, while a halo-halo vendor, whose customers were students, had no income due to school closures.

In Nepo Mart, Angeles City, a clothing seller named Angie faced a three-month work stoppage due to the mall's closure and ongoing transportation issues: *"Kami po walang pasok. Walang trabaho"* (We have no office, no work). Ambi, a cleaner in Angeles City, echoed these struggles, saying, *"Walang pasok, walang masakyan. Walang income"* (No work, no transportation, no income). Those reliant on family income were also affected. In Barangay Palat, a construction worker's son lost his job and only received a three-month allowance. Similarly, a tricycle driver's wife, Lorna, reported reduced income due to a lack of passengers: *"Nabawasan ang kanilang kita dahil wala namang mga pasahero"* (Our income decreased because there were no passengers).

Increased daily household expenses/ cost of living. Respondents reported that rising prices for essential goods and services compounded their economic difficulties. One respondent from Barangay Pio, Sylvia, noted, *"Tumaas ang presyo ng mga bilihin"* (prices of goods increased). Additionally, the consumption of utilities like water and electricity rose, as all family members were at home throughout the day, unlike when they were out for school or work.

Increase in children's education expenses.
Respondents noted that boredom at home led to frequent requests for money to purchase online goods. Children, in particular, quickly became bored when left home, prompting constant demands for money (*"Mga bata madaling ma-bore[d], palaging hihingi ng pera lalo 'pag naiwan sa bahay"*). The transition to modular and asynchronous classes further strained their finances, requiring additional materials like bond and colored paper for school activities (*"Mas marami ang kailangang papel ng mga bata ngayon"*).

The cost of internet/Wi-Fi also added to household expenses *("nagbabayad rin ng Wi-Fi/internet na dagdag gastos")*. The situation worsened when internet connectivity issues forced families to purchase telephone prepaid loads for data to ensure their children could attend classes. One respondent, Anna, expressed frustration with this, saying, *"Kung wala ka pang pera, papaano na? Paano kung wala kang pang-load?"* (How can you buy a prepaid load if you don't have money?).
Another significant challenge faced by the participants was acquiring gadgets for online classes. The expense of securing a cell phone, the most affordable device for students, added to their financial stress. Dindi shared, *"Na-stress dahil may dalawang monthly cellphone loan; naging sanhi din ito ng pag-init ng ulo ko dahil lalo kung walang maipambayad"* (I was stressed out by having to pay for two cellphone loans monthly, which also made me hot-tempered especially when I couldn't afford to pay the bills).

Being Overburdened with Caregiver/Reproductive Work

Respondents faced significant caregiving and other reproductive work challenges due to their children's

online education. With family members, especially children, at home all day, respondents had to manage both domestic chores and educational responsibilities. Previously, they only needed to prepare breakfast and ensure their children arrived on time, allowing them to attend to other household tasks while waiting for school to end. However, with the shift to modular classes, they became caregivers, tutors, and teachers.

One respondent, Lea, from Barangay Sinayura, expressed frustration, saying, *"Hindi ko naabot ang level ng pag-aaral ng anak kaya ako hirap magturo, gustuhin ko mang turuan pero hindi ko kaya"* (I was not able to reach my child's grade level, so I have difficulty teaching. Even though I wanted to help, I just couldn't). Similarly, participants from Barangay Palat like Andrea, noted, *"Mas mahirap, dahil yung ibang itinuturo ay hindi napag-aralan"* (It is difficult because we did not study the material we need to teach), leading them to spend extra time learning the material themselves. Many respondents admitted to occasionally completing their children's modules, adding to their burden as mothers.

Respondents who had to work outside the home felt particularly guilty and anxious about their children's education. They struggled with the dual pressure of wanting their children to learn and succeed academically while balancing their work commitments.

Strain in Physical Health

One major fear among respondents was contracting the virus and being separated from their loved ones. Respondent Gina recounted her experience of having COVID-19, stating, *"Nagka-COVID, self-quarantine lang ngunit hirap dahil may mga anak, hindi maalagaan"* (I contracted COVID and had to self-quarantine, which

was difficult because I have children and couldn't care for them).

Barangay volunteers also expressed concerns about being stigmatized, as people avoided frontline workers out of fear of infection. Respondent Clara, who continued working, mentioned, *"Labas ako nang labas kasi ako ang breadwinner, natatakot ako sa mga tao na nilalayuan ka kasi baka makahawa ka"* (I go out frequently because I am the breadwinner. I fear that people might avoid me, thinking I could infect them). These worries contributed to sleepless nights and significant stress for many respondents.

Changes in Family Relations

Conflict and Cooperation. The pandemic had varied impacts on respondents' relationships with their families. Despite the numerous stressors, some positive outcomes emerged. For many women, the pandemic fostered improved communication and strengthened bonds with their partners. Respondent Sandra from Manibaug Pasig remarked, *"Naging mas malapit kami sa isa't-isa"* (We have become closer to each other), highlighting a hopeful shift towards deeper connections amidst the challenges. However, the pandemic also introduced strains in some marriages. With everyone at home, differing parenting styles became more apparent, leading to conflicts. Tita, from Barangay Sinura shared, *"Ako nagdidisiplina sa anak ko dati, kaso nung nawalan ng trabaho ang asawa ko at ako nakapagtinda ng gulay, yun anak ko napapagalitan ko pag-uwi, pero ang asawa ko inaawat ako at kinakampihan anak ko"* (I used to discipline our child, but after my husband lost his job and I started selling vegetables, he would side with our child whenever I reprimanded her). This shift created tension between her and her husband. Similarly, another respondent, Gina, mentioned that her

husband's attempts at household chores did not meet her standards, leading to disagreements. To maintain peace, she often redid his work herself.

Financial strain also emerged as a significant source of conflict. In Manibaug Pasig, Mara, a respondent who lost her job as a laundry woman, struggled with daily expenses, leading to arguments about securing money for basic needs. Their financial difficulties included borrowing from others and relying on porridge, which was what they had for meals all day. This financial strain even led to a respondent's separation from her husband, who left her amid mounting debts and vices.

Additionally, the demands of barangay/community work left many respondents with little time for their families, causing misunderstandings. One respondent, Sandra from Barangay Palat noted, *"Kawalan ng oras sa pamilya bilang barangay worker na nagdudulot ng kaunting tampuhan"* (Lack of time for family due to barangay work causes minor conflicts).

Pressure on Mental Health

Worrying about their daily budget. Respondents' constant worry about securing money for their family's needs significantly increased their stress levels. Linda noted that the loss of income led to frequent arguments with her husband, exacerbating tensions: *"Mainit ang ulo sa asawa dahil walang maibigay na pera ang asawa"* (I am hot-headed towards my husband because he cannot provide money). This stress often resulted in conflicts over where to find money to feed the family, as expressed in, *"Laging kaming nag-aaway kakaisip kung saan kukuha ng pera na ipangkakain kinabukasan ng pamilya"* (We often fight about where to get money to ensure our family eats the next day), shared Cristy.
Another respondent, Glenda, shared her anxieties about

their livelihood: *"Iniisip ko na may agam-agam kung paano na kami mabubuhay ng mga anak namin, nawalan ng trabaho ang mister ko bilang isang construction worker. Para mairaos ang pang-araw-araw, ang mga tanim na gulay minsan ang nagsisilbing pagkain namin"* (I worry about how we will survive since my husband, who worked as a construction worker, lost his job. To make ends meet, we rely on the vegetables we grow).

Another respondent, Cindy, described the severe impact of financial stress on her mental well-being: *"Halos 'mabaliw' ako sa kakaisip ng pagkukunan ng pang-araw-araw na pangangailangan dahil ang aking asawa ay nagbo-boundary lamang sa jeep at natigil ang pasada nito"* (I was on the verge of a mental breakdown, thinking about where to get our daily needs because my husband, who used to drive a jeepney, lost his job).

Fear of losing a job. Respondents expressed significant anxiety about losing their jobs and the financial instability associated with illness or quarantine. Their concerns included: *"Natakot ako na mawalan ng trabaho, magkasakit, mahawa"* (I fear losing my job, getting sick, and contracting the COVID virus), as shared by Donna. Respondent Carlita, also said, *"Nangamba ako dahil hindi makalabas, walang trabaho, walang kita"* (I was worried because we couldn't go out, had no work, and no income), and Marie, disclosed, *"Nahirapan dahil gusto ko magtrabaho (manicurista) pero takot lumabas at magpa-manicure ang mga customers"* (It was difficult because I wanted to work as a manicurist, but I didn't have customers as most were afraid to go out).

Fear of being stigmatized. In addition to the primary fear of contracting COVID-19, respondents also experienced stigma within their communities. They were concerned about the potential for being labeled as infected, which sometimes prevented them from

seeking medical help. The following narratives illustrate these fears: Celia shared that *"Natatakot sabihin kung ano man ang nararamdaman sa katawan tulad ng sipon, lagnat, trangkaso"* (Afraid to disclose symptoms like colds, fever, or flu). Meanwhile, Chloe was worried about getting her child checked, *"Natatakot akong ipacheck up ang anak ko dahil baka sabihin COVID-19 ang sakit. Nag-search na lang anak ko at mukhang dengue naman ang kanyang symptoms, noong pumunta na kami ng ospital dengue nga raw. Lumuwag na ang aking pakiramdam"* (I was afraid to have my child undergo a medical check-up for fear it might be COVID. My child searched online and found his symptoms were dengue-like, and when we finally went to the hospital, it was confirmed as dengue. I felt relieved).

Meanwhile, Liza felt overburdened with her family members getting sick one after another, *"Sunod-sunod nagkasakit ang anak, pagkatapos ay ang asawa ko naman (lagnat, sipon). Hindi rin kami nagpacheck up dahil sa takot na baka COVID"* (My children and husband got sick one after another (fever, colds). We didn't have them checked because we were afraid it might be COVID). Similarly, Andi shared her fear of getting medical help, *"Hindi makapagpacheck up dahil takot pumunta sa ospital sa kadahilanang baka mahawa, lalo na at may kasama sa bahay na immuno-compromised o may comorbidity"* (We did not get checked by a doctor because we were afraid of going to the hospital and contracting COVID, especially since we have a household member who is immuno-compromised or has comorbidities).

Fear of being infected by the COVID-19 virus. The pandemic induced significant anxiety among respondents due to the fear of contracting and spreading the virus. This led to frequent hand washing and the use of alcohol, as one respondent, Dindi, described it,

"Nababalisa, maya't maya nag-aalcohol o naghuhugas ng kamay" (I am anxious and keep using alcohol or washing my hands frequently). The constant worry about bringing the virus home added to their stress. Similarly, Pearl expressed her concern: *"Natatakot na maiuwi ko ang virus at mahawaan ko ang mga anak ko sa bahay dahil ako ang laging lumalabas tuwing may trabaho"* (I am afraid I might bring the virus home and infect my children since I go out constantly for work).

Other respondents shared similar fears: Lin, a frontliner from Barangay Pio said *"Takot na baka mahawaan kami ng mga tinutulungan namin"* (Fear of contracting the virus from the community we are helping) - *"Natakot ako na malaman ng mga tao na may sakit ako kaya kahit three weeks na ang sakit ko, di ako nagpa-doctor. Tingin hindi naman COVID kasi wala namang nahawa sa akin sa aming pamilya. Dumating sa punto na naiisip ko pa na kapag ako mamatay, ayaw ko magpa-cremate"* (I was afraid that people would think I had COVID, so even though I was sick for three weeks, I did not see a doctor. I am sure it wasn't COVID since no one else in my family got infected. I even thought that if I died, I wouldn't want to be cremated). For some, the fear was compounded by the potential for family members who frequently went out for work—such as tricycle drivers or laborers—to bring the virus home and affect the entire family, especially the children. Gracia from Barangay Manibaug Pasig reported heightened anxiety after her in-law died from COVID-19. Her pre-existing conditions of diabetes and hypertension only intensified her fear.

The overwhelmingly negative news, including reports of alleged kidnappings in their areas, further exacerbated the anxiety of respondents, adding to their already significant stress from domestic work and financial concerns. Having to safeguard young children from the COVID-19 infection and from kidnapping left the respondents fearful and anxious.

Impact of COVID-19 protocols. Another source of stress for respondents was the COVID-19 protocols, which contributed to increased anxiety and difficulties. Respondents from Barangay Manibaug Pasig expressed the following concerns: Lou shared, *"Na-stress ako kakaisip kung paano papadaanin ang asawa ko kung walang S-pass lalo na't ang trabaho niya ay pamimili ng baboy. Inisip ko paano na kami magkakahanapbuhay"* (I felt distressed thinking about how my husband would manage his work without an S-pass, especially since his job involves buying pigs. I wondered how we would sustain our livelihood). She added, *"Takot ako kung wala akong pass dahil hindi ako palalabasin. Takot rin ako sa mga health protocols dahil kakailanganin kong magsuot ng face mask o minsan pati face shield. Mas takot ako dahil naninibago ako sa mga ito"* (I feared not being allowed to go out without a pass. I was also anxious about health protocols that require wearing a face mask or sometimes a face shield. I felt more fearful because these measures were unfamiliar to me). The S-pass that Lou was referring to was a Special Pass or travel pass issued to individuals who needed to travel between regions for essential work or activities, especially in situations where strict travel restrictions were in place. It was typically used by workers in industries deemed essential, such as medical staff, those working in government offices, or individuals involved in critical services.

The restrictions on movement complicated the daily tasks. Hilda noted, *"Mahirap lumabas dahil isang tao lang ang pwede kada isang bahay, may quarantine pass"* (It's hard to go out because only one person per household is allowed, and a quarantine pass is required).

Additionally, the protocols prevented them from observing customary practices related to family deaths and personal rituals. Connie lamented, *"Namatayan ako ng kapatid pero hindi dahil sa COVID, pero hindi pa rin*

pinayagan maiburol" (My sibling died from an illness other than COVID, but we were still not allowed to hold a wake).

Challenging Demands of Community Work

Community and volunteer work. As barangay volunteers and frontliners, respondents were deeply affected by the community's perception of their work. They found it disheartening when their efforts were not always appreciated. Despite encountering negative comments, they remained focused on serving their communities. Barangay Pio resident, Nancy, disclosed, *"Madaming naririnig na hindi maganda sa ibang tao pero hindi na lang pinapansin dahil ang hangad namin ay makapagbigay ng serbisyo sa mga nangangailangan"* (We hear a lot of negative comments from others, but we choose to ignore them because our goal is to provide services to those in need).

How the Women Coped with the Challenges:

Respondents employed various strategies to cope with the financial and psychosocial challenges brought about by the pandemic. These strategies helped them navigate the difficulties and mitigate the impact of the pandemic on their lives.

Borrowing/loaning money/food. Some respondents resorted to borrowing money to manage the stress and financial strain caused by the pandemic. Participant Dindi shared, *"Umutang ako dahil bawal mag-cash advance sa trabaho at naputulan na kami ng kuryente sa bahay"* (I borrowed money because cash advances are not allowed at work and our electricity was disconnected). Meanwhile, Ruth shared, *"Na-stress dahil hindi makapagtrabaho*

ang asawa't anak ko; nanghingi ng tulong mula sa mga kamag-anak lalo na't ang asawa ko ay nagdia-dialysis" (Stressed out because my husband and children cannot work; we sought help from relatives, especially since my husband is undergoing dialysis).

To make ends meet, they borrowed food from neighbors and sari-sari stores or sought financial help from local businesses. Some turned to the "5-6" system, where they borrow money with the agreement to pay back with high interest (a common informal but usurious lending practice in the Philippines). Others took on part-time jobs. For example, Trish, a respondent from Barangay Palat mentioned working as a household helper on an on-call basis, stating, *"Nag-part time bilang tagalinis at tagalaba. Mayroon pa rin nagpapalinis ng mga panahon ng lockdown, on call"* (I did part-time cleaning and laundry work. There were still people needing these services during the lockdown, and I was on-call).

Others engaged in selling products to generate income. A respondent from Barangay Palat, Lea, shared that she asked her husband to sell soda and coffee at his work site when the lockdown restrictions eased. She also sold "balut" (a fertilized bird egg) and other Filipino street food, including soft drinks.

Gardening. Some respondents also turned to gardening as a coping mechanism during the pandemic. Their experiences include vegetable gardening and backyard/container gardening. Some planted vegetables to ensure a steady food supply. Respondent Lala, mentioned, *"Kami nag-gugulay, naghahanap sa bukid, meron sa likod-likod po. Yun po kasi sa 4Ps, may backyard garden"* (We planted vegetables and searched for food in the fields and backyard garden provided by the 4Ps program). The 4Ps refers to the "Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program," a government social welfare program aimed at reducing

poverty. It provides conditional cash transfers to low-income families to improve their health, education, and nutrition. The program requires beneficiaries to comply with certain conditions, such as ensuring children attend school and receive health check-ups. Another respondent, Glenda, also shared, *"Nagtatanim po ako, nag-gagarden po ako, para may lulutuin kami. Backyard, sa mga paso po, mineral water"* (I do gardening in our backyard and in pots or empty mineral water bottles so we have something to cook). Some respondents relied on community support for fresh produce. One said, referring to a friend, *"Humihingi lang ako sa kanya, kapag gusto namin ng papaya, sitaw"* (I just asked her for vegetables like papaya and string beans).

Others took up planting ornamental plants to supplement their income. The rise of the "*plantito-plantita*" trend during the lockdown made this a viable source of income. As one respondent Sylvia, noted, *"Nakatulong yung kinikita sa mga gastusin lalo na't nawalan ng trabaho ang asawa ko"* (The income from selling plants helped with our expenses, especially since my husband lost his job).

Increased Spirituality: Many respondents found solace in their spirituality, which they turned to as a coping mechanism during the pandemic. Their expressions of faith included prayers, bible study, and fasting. Vilma, initiated their prayer group in the community. She said, *"Nagdadasal palagi, iniisip na kaya naming lampasan ang mga problema dahil hindi magbibigay ng problema ang Diyos na hindi namin kaya."* (We prayed constantly, believing that we can overcome these problems because God would not give us challenges we couldn't handle.); She added, *"Nag-bible study through phone para mabawasan ang stress."* (We attended Bible study via phone to reduce stress.); Ayen also shared, *"Nanalangin na lang kami sa Panginoon na maproteksyonan kami."* (We prayed to God for protection.) Several respondents

gave each other mutual encouragement, *"Nagpapalakas kami ng loob ng bawa't isa at pinanatili ang pananalig sa Diyos"* (We supported each other and maintained our faith in God). Praying and fasting as indications of faith were also practiced. Vilma shared: *"Mas naging maka-Diyos kami. Nagdadasal kami kahit hindi kami makapunta sa simbahan, at nakilahok sa 20 hanggang 120 araw ng pagdarasal at fasting"* (We grew closer to God we prayed even though we couldn't go to church and participated in 20 to 120 days of prayer and fasting).

Community Sharing/Support: Participants found a silver lining in their COVID-19 experiences and that is their improved relationships. They said that the pandemic also led to stronger bonds with neighbors, as they supported each other. Pura expressed, *"Napaisip ako kung ano ang mangyayari sa buhay namin at kung paano namin natatamasa ang blessings. Bakit mag-aaway kung baka mamatay o magkasakit ang isa sa amin? Binabahagi namin ang kung ano ang mayroon kami"* (I reflected on our lives and the blessings we have, questioning why we should fight when we could all be at risk of illness or death. We shared whatever we had with one another).

The respondents expressed appreciation for the support from their communities. Frontline workers, in particular, benefited from transportation assistance provided by their barangays, which helped them continue working. The regular patrols during curfew hours were also valued for reducing virus transmission and enhancing community safety.

Socialization: Engaging with others was a key coping strategy for participants. They found that staying connected with family, friends, and neighbors provided crucial support. Conversations, even light ones or local gossip, helped stabilize their mental health. For some, participating in church activities, like being a choir

member, offered additional comfort and a chance to express their emotions.

Positive Distractions: To cope with stress, respondents engaged in activities that kept their minds busy, such as cleaning their surroundings, sewing, and occasionally crying to release their emotions. They also adopted frugal habits to manage their finances, which sometimes involved cutting back on healthy foods and vitamins.

Reflections on the Findings

Preparedness and Exposure

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed significant gaps in preparedness at various levels of society. Gaps in health infrastructures exacerbated the impact of the pandemic (Lal et al. 2022). Among the women, many were mainly from low socioeconomic backgrounds and were unprepared for the financial impact of lockdowns as they had no savings or other sources of income. They struggled with social distancing due to their crowded living conditions and tiny homes. Barangay volunteers were also unprepared for the extensive relief operations and the negative reactions to government responses. Their roles as barangay volunteers and frontliners heightened their exposure to COVID-19. They were involved in relief operations, including distributing aid, attending to medical emergencies, and conducting curfew rounds. Their interactions with community members and the airborne nature of the virus increased their risk of infection. The frontline workers, including barangay volunteers, faced increased exposure to the virus due to their physical exposure and interactions with their type of work. Due to their poverty, constricted living spaces and lack of open spaces increased the risk of infection and tension over social distancing measures experienced by poorer respondents.

On Vulnerability: Economic, Physical, Psychosocial

The pandemic led to severe financial problems, with many surviving through various informal jobs or selling goods. Many respondents often depended on aid and low-paying jobs. The constant fear of contracting the virus, losing income, and inability to provide for their families contributed to significant stress and anxiety. These psychosocial issues were deeply intertwined with their economic and physical vulnerabilities. Studies have shown that the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately burdens individuals and families from low socio-economic status and those from black and minority ethnic groups who are more at risk of suffering from severe COVID-19 cases (Raisi-Estabragh et al. 2020). Other studies explain that women and others with caring responsibilities are disadvantaged as their unpaid care work, already heavy before the pandemic, intensified during the lockdown (Power 2020; United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2022). This is consistently shown in the experiences of the women in this study.

Gender Dynamics and Pandemic Impact on Women

The study reveals various dimensions of gender dynamics and the pandemic's effects on women. The profiles of the respondents—rural women from Pampanga—highlight their engagement in informal and insecure employment, including vending, domestic work, and small businesses. These women juggle multiple roles as mothers, wives, barangay health workers, and the like, reflecting their strengths and vulnerabilities. The following diagram illustrates the interrelation of these factors: employment, wherein women are primarily involved in informal and insecure jobs; roles in which the women fulfill multiple roles within their families and communities; and strengths

and vulnerabilities. Their multifaceted roles contribute to both resilience and susceptibility to the impacts of the pandemic.

The diagram below illustrates how these elements are interconnected, showing the complex interplay between their roles, employment conditions, and the pandemic's impact.

Impact of COVID-19 on the Women Respondents and Their Families

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound effect on the biopsychosocial and spiritual well-being of the respondents and their families. This impact can be categorized into several dimensions: biological, psychological, socio-economic, and spiritual. In terms of their physical well-being, the pandemic affected the respondents' physical health, including illnesses and exacerbation of pre-existing comorbidities. With women on the frontlines and having to deal with multiple burdens at work and home, they became susceptible to undesired health outcomes. Moeti et al. (2022) suggested that social reforms to address disasters like the COVID-19 pandemic involve investment in "social care architecture, including social safety nets, education, infrastructure, and other necessities required to lead a healthy life." Gender-sensitive support and preparations will consider the roles that women assume in their families and communities. The pandemic underscores the crucial role of women within their families and communities.

In terms of psychological factors that involve emotional and psychological well-being, the respondents experienced significant psychological stress, including anxieties, sleep disturbances, and fear of infection. Concerns included their health and their families,

financial insecurity due to job loss or reduced income, and the stigma associated with their roles as frontliners. Delpino et al (2022) suggest that one in three people suffered from anxiety disorder during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the long-term consequences of this mental health trend are yet to be seen. The stress experienced by women was more pronounced during the pandemic, as they carried the bulk of domestic tasks, including childcare and eldercare, under conditions of severe financial difficulties.

Economic status and family dynamics play crucial roles when examining the social factors affecting women during the pandemic. The pandemic severely affected the economic stability of respondents, primarily those involved in informal employment and small businesses. Rising household expenses and the cost of children's education further intensified their financial difficulties. Moreover, respondents felt overwhelmed by caregiving duties, faced strained family relationships, and struggled with the adverse effects of COVID-19 protocols. For community health workers, the community's negative perception of their roles as frontliners also added to their social challenges. Phillips et al. (2023) explored the gendered experience of healthcare workers positively influencing the healthcare system as they face ethical challenges of work and family responsibilities. In like manner, Filipino women frontliners braved the tide of the pandemic and helped carry the burden of taking care of the welfare of their families and communities (UN Women 2020).

Economic relief could be a critical support for rural women. The pandemic's economic impact was especially harsh, with significant income loss and rising living costs exacerbating their financial strain. Job loss and reduced income severely affected their financial stability, while increased living expenses and educational costs for children further compounded their economic difficulties.

Studies have shown the disproportionate burden among mothers, primarily due to their roles in caregiving and additional responsibilities, especially during the pandemic (Human Rights Watch 2017; Bandiera 2018; UN Women 2020).

To cope with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the respondents employed various strategies, including financial endeavors, increased spirituality, socialization, seeking community support, and engaging in various hobbies. On their financial strategy, the respondents sought loans from others, although this sometimes proved challenging as potential lenders were also financially strained; some took on additional work to supplement their income. They also engaged in informal vending, including selling food and other items, which provided additional revenue. Reducing spending was also practiced to cope with the mounting bills and lean wallets.

Some engaged in gardening for food as a diversion or hobby. Growing their food was a significant way to save money. Others participated in the "plantita" (plant aunties) trend by tending to plants, offering them emotional relief and a way to connect with nature, which was particularly beneficial during the pandemic (Egerer et al. 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the spiritual lives of these women as they held onto their faith during the health challenge. Despite the inability to attend church physically, the pandemic led to a deepening of faith and belief among respondents. They found solace and strength through increased spirituality and observing religious practices. Rosales (2021) suggested that among the Catholics, the virtual mass celebrations provide hope and support to people as they inched toward the post-pandemic "new normal." Among the women, spiritual

practices, such as prayers and fellowship/worship activities, helped them manage the stress caused by the pandemic. Waila and Lindsay (2024) highlighted the therapeutic potential of spirituality during the pandemic as they promote a sense of hope and meaning amidst chaos, facilitating growth and mental fortitude. Religious and spiritual practices were also associated with reduced worry, fear, sadness, and higher hopefulness (Lucchetti et al. 2020). For these women, prayer groups, bible studies, and mass celebration as a community lightened their burden as they source their strength from their faith and fellow believers.

While the COVID-19 pandemic brought numerous challenges to the women, it also led to positive outcomes, such as strengthened relationships with their husbands, driven by their mutual efforts to address resource shortages. Hendrick and Hendrick (2020) noted that the pandemic allowed romantic partners to spend more time together, significantly strengthening their bonds. On the other hand, financial stress and issues in child discipline were highlighted as the hurdles couples had to overcome during the pandemic, which certainly tested the strength of their partnership. While some marital partnerships faltered, for some women, familial conflicts may have been buffered by other systems of support that negate other evidence of serious domestic challenges, such as violence against women and children (Gamboa 2021).

Socialization and communication played a crucial role in helping women maintain connections with friends, family, and community members. Engaging in conversations and social interactions (albeit online for most) provided emotional support and helped alleviate stress. The pandemic, to some, led to stronger relationships with family and neighbors. Zangger (2023) highlighted that

social relations significantly reduced the psychosocial impact of the COVID-19 crisis. As financial pressures grew, the women found comfort in the solidarity and cooperation within their community. To ease the strain of pandemic-related issues on their families, concerned citizens shared resources with others and volunteered for community work. Despite the widespread distress faced by many Filipinos during the pandemic, communities came together to offer relief, exemplified by initiatives like community pantries established to address hunger in communities (Gozum 2021).

Overall, these coping strategies reflect the adaptability and resourcefulness of the respondents as they navigated the numerous challenges posed by the pandemic. While it was typically the women's responsibility to manage household food security and women were generally burdened with unpaid caring responsibilities (Davies et al. 2024; Almeida et al. 2020; UN Women 2020), family and community networks played an important role in mitigating the negative impact of the pandemic to the women in the study. While there were conflicts along the way that brought distress among the women, such as in personal relations, caring roles, resource generation and distribution, and the implementation of guidelines, community members joined forces, so to speak, to combat the impact of the pandemic. Equally crucial is the personal initiative of *diskarte - resourcefulness* - in resource generation and gaining access to resources in the women's fight against the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study reveals that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women in Pampanga is deeply intertwined with their demographic profiles and preparedness levels. Due to the unprecedented nature of the pandemic,

preparedness was minimal at both personal and governmental levels. This lack of preparation highlighted the vulnerability of the respondents.

The pandemic's impact on women was multidimensional, affecting their biological, psychological, social, and spiritual well-being. Aside from the risk of infection, the impact of the pandemic was also influenced by the women's personal circumstances and their available support systems. Exacerbating the women's challenges, government-imposed measures such as lockdowns and social distancing affected their income sources, subsequently affecting their financial situation and psychological well-being.

The impacts experienced by the women from Pampanga are interconnected, influencing each other and their coping mechanisms. Their strategies include leveraging personal attributes like resourcefulness and social support, which results in resilience and adaptability amid the threats associated with the pandemic. Evident among these women from the rural setting is the presence of a network of support or their social capital. While gender-based violence and human rights violations add to the burden of economic insecurity among women and girls country-wide during the pandemic (UN Women 202 1; Plan International 2020), the women from Porac, Pampanga seem to have significant social buffers to address the blow of the pandemic crisis. The women's coping strategies reflect their creative thinking and resourcefulness (*diskarte*) and reliance on social networks for material, emotional, and spiritual support. These strategies indicate their resilience and capacity to navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic.

The women's roles as caregivers, not only within their families but also in their communities, significantly shaped their responses to the pandemic. Their focus on

the safety and well-being of their families underscores their intention and capacity to navigate the tricky terrain of the pandemic, adapt, and utilize creative strategies and social networks in the face of adversity. The study highlights the complex interplay of individual attributes and social support in shaping the respondents' responses to the pandemic. Their experiences highlight the critical role of community and personal resilience in coping with crises.

Based on the study's results, the following recommendations are forwarded:

To further develop women's agency during the pandemic, it is essential to strengthen and organize women-led community organizations, such as Community Health Workers (CHWs), by providing resources and platforms to expand their influence. These organizations should be supported through capacity-building programs focused on enhancing women's skills in leadership, public health, community organizing, and financial management. These educational programs, whether through workshops or online courses, will equip women with the necessary tools to contribute effectively to pandemic responses and community resilience.

Additionally, fostering collaboration between women's organizations and government agencies is critical for ensuring that women's voices are integrated into health policies and social protection programs. Establishing safe spaces for women's advocacy and participation—both physical and virtual—will allow them to engage in decision-making and advocacy efforts without fear of retribution. By implementing these recommendations, we can enhance women's roles in shaping community health outcomes and creating long-term social impact. It is crucial to enhance community preparedness to ensure the well-being of individuals. These may

include implementing regular community-based disaster preparedness programs at the barangay level, developing disaster protocols focused on safety and respect, and avoiding punitive measures that may worsen trauma.

Enhanced social services at the community level could provide essential medical and financial assistance during disasters. Referral pathways through the LGU for accessing resources from agencies like DSWD, PCSO, and the Red Cross may be created. Calamity funds need to be accessible, and calamity funds (5% of their total budget) should be used for emergencies, including health crises like COVID-19.

To support the livelihood of the community members, training programs may be offered to help individuals in informal and insecure employment secure alternative livelihoods. Likewise, government—and NGO-supported lending facilities may be established to assist in starting businesses and exploring new income sources.

For online education to thrive, providing free internet access, Wi-Fi, essential gadgets, and learning tools is key, with the government playing a vital role in ensuring faster, more reliable connectivity. Parents should form support networks to enhance their roles as learning assistants, while teachers deserve fair compensation for their additional efforts, along with training programs for both educators and parents. Expanding scholarships, financial aid, and emotional support is crucial to students, and creating community learning hubs is essential for those lacking proper study spaces or equipment at home (DOST 2023).

Additional support services that will examine the psychosocial well-being of community residents may be provided, such as online and walk-in counseling and

support centers for tutoring, parenting, mental health, and domestic issues. Access to psychosocial and spiritual well-being services, including individual and group counseling and therapy, will give community members an added sense of security.

Lastly, integrating response and recovery plans will ensure effective resource utilization in the community. Developing interconnected response and recovery plans is key to providing comprehensive support during and after disasters.

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FILIPINO MEN IN CRISIS: NEGOTIATING MASCULINITIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted various societal structures, including long-standing constructions of masculinity. While discussions on masculinity continue, Filipino masculine identity remains underexamined, particularly regarding its renegotiation during the crisis. This study employs a constructivist framework and narrative research method to examine how Filipino men's experiences, practices, and ideas of masculinity evolved throughout the pandemic. The research reveals that hegemonic masculinity persisted, especially through responsibilities at home and family care, alongside local constructs such as *diskarte* (resourcefulness) and *matibay na loob* (strong will). However, this hegemony was tested by economic and psychological hardships. Men who were seen as *mahina ang loob* (weak-willed), *tamad* (lazy), and *matigas ang ulo* (stubborn) were subordinated within this masculine hierarchy. Yet, this subordination often overlooked the structural difficulties faced by lower-income and psychologically distressed men during the pandemic. My findings suggest that while hegemonic masculinity endured, it also faced significant challenges, reflecting the complexity

of Filipino men's attempts to adapt and assert their masculinity amid the crisis. In their pursuit of overcoming these challenges, variations of hegemonic masculinity emerged, underscoring both the dynamic nature of masculine ideals and the continued dominance of men within these frameworks.

Keywords: Masculinities, Filipino Masculinity, Hegemonic Masculinity, Subordinated Masculinity, COVID-19 pandemic

ABSTRAK

Ang pandemyang COVID-19 ay nagdulot ng malalaking hamon sa mga istrukturang panlipunan, kabilang na ang matagal nang mga pananaw ukol sa pagkalalaki. Bagamat patuloy ang mga talakayan tungkol sa pagkalalaki, hindi pa rin lubusang napag-aaralan ang identidad ng mga lalaking Pilipino, partikular na sa paraan ng pag-aangkop nito sa gitna ng krisis. Ginamit sa pag-aaral na ito ang konstruksyonistang teorya at naratibong pamamaraan upang suriin kung paano nabago ang mga pananaw, gawi, at karanasan ng mga lalaking Pilipino patungkol sa pagkalalaki sa panahon ng pandemya. Natuklasan na ang hegemonikong pagkalalaki ay nanatiling matatag, lalo na sa mga responsibilidad sa pamilya at tahanan, habang sinusuportahan ng mga lokal na konsepto gaya ng diskarte at tibay ng loob. Sa kabila nito, naharap sa pagsubok ang mga kalalakihan dahil sa mga hamong ekonomiko at sikolohikal. Ang mga lalaking itinuturing na mahina ang loob, tamad, at matigas ang ulo ay sumailalim sa subordinasyon ng hegemonikong pagkalalaki. Samantala,

ang ganitong subordinasyon ay hindi sapat na kumikilala sa mga paghihirap na naranasan ng mga mas maralitang kalalakihan at ng mga nakararanas ng suliraning pangkaisipan sa panahon ng krisis. Ang aking mga natuklasan ay nagpapahiwatig na habang nanatili ang hegemonikong pagkalalaki, ito ay naharap din sa mga seryosong hamon, na nagpapakita ng komplikasyon sa pagsisikap ng mga lalaking Pilipino na muling ipahayag ang kanilang pagkalalaki sa harap ng krisis. Sa kanilang pagnanais na malampasan ang mga pagsubok, lumitaw ang iba't ibang anyo ng hegemonikong pagkalalaki, na nagpapakita ng patuloy na dinamismo ng mga ideyal na pagkalalaki at ng kanilang kapangyarihan sa lipunan.

Mga Keyword: Mga Pagkalalaki, Pagkalalaki, Hegemonikong Pagkalalaki, Isinailalim na Pagkalalaki, COVID-19 pandemic

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly impacted various facets of life, stretching beyond our imagination. The spread of the disease, mass unemployment, and social isolation posed numerous challenges to economic, psychological, and cultural spheres. In the Philippines, the militaristic lockdown measures imposed by the national government failed to effectively curb infections and mortality, resulting in over 57,000 deaths from COVID-19 between 2020 and 2022 (Tomacruz and Magsambol 2022). Alongside this, the pandemic significantly affected the mental and emotional health of the population, exacerbating psychological distress among Filipinos (Seriño et al. 2021).

Furthermore, families were forced to collectively respond to these drastic changes. Many Filipino families experienced financial strain due to job losses and the need to adjust to the "new normal," including the shift to online schooling and the psychological stress of confinement. As families adapted to the demands of remote work and education, the burden of managing the household often fell on the family unit, particularly in lower-income households (Cleofas et al. 2021). At the same time, families were required to play a more active role in supporting students during online classes and modular learning. However, this increased involvement was an additional burden for many, particularly for poor families that had to balance educational supervision with household management. Thus, the pandemic exacerbated existing inequalities, with wealthier families being able to afford better access to technology while poorer families struggled with limited resources (Marquez et al. 2020).

As presented, the pandemic caused significant shifts within families in various ways. Economic challenges,

the shift to online schooling, and psychological stress led to changes in family roles and responsibilities. For instance, many men found themselves renegotiating their identities as financial providers, while others took on increased caregiving roles due to job losses or the need to assist with childcare and home management (Cleofas et al. 2021). While substantial research has appropriately highlighted the disproportionate burdens faced by women and LGBTQ+ individuals during the pandemic, focusing on how their struggles intersect with systemic gender inequalities (Ofreneo 2020; UN Women 2020), the experiences and meaning-making of Filipino men remain underexamined in the literature.

This gap does not reflect a lack of relevance or being in competition with other gender studies but rather highlights the need to further examine how men's roles and masculinities are shaped by – and in turn shape – family dynamics during crises. Though men have often been studied within the broader context of family structures, exploring their specific experiences during the pandemic can provide a clearer understanding of how they negotiate shifts in expectations, isolation, and economic uncertainty. As Castillo (2021) highlights, incorporating a gender-sensitive perspective that includes men and masculinities in policy discussions can help reshape the Philippine government's pandemic response to be more gender-sensitive.

In the Philippines, idealized notions of Filipino masculinity are generally characterized by a sense of responsibility, family-orientedness, and strong will (Rubio and Green 2009; Valledor-Lukey 2012; Aguiling-Dalisay et al. 2010). These ideals are rooted in local stereotypes and societal expectations among men, emphasizing *lakas ng loob* (strength of will) and *panindigan* (conviction). With this, men and fathers commonly assume the roles of financial providers and breadwinners in the Filipino

family (Guthrie and Azores 1967; Licuanan 1979). These idealized constructions became hegemonic—not necessarily dominantly practiced among the population but rather aspired (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

Despite the hegemony of certain ideals, masculinity is not static. It changes over time and is shaped by varying contexts and circumstances (Ruxton and Burrell 2020). Hence, masculinities must be understood and contextualized within different classes, cultures, ethnicities, periods, and societies simultaneously. Unfortunately, as Angeles (2001) argues, scholarship on Filipino men and masculinities centers on the "problematic" and toxic kind of masculinity. Moreover, studies show that masculinity's dynamic nature becomes more evident during times of crisis. Men transcend and renegotiate traditional or hegemonic notions of masculinity during periods of change, such as instances of unemployment or assumption of childcare responsibilities (Morgan 1992; Brandth and Kvande 1998).

This research engages with the ongoing discussion and literature on Filipino masculinities. By examining Filipino masculinity at specific moments in time, more specifically during the COVID-19 crisis, I explore nuanced perspectives on men's construction of being a man by answering the following research questions:

a. What forms of hegemonic and subordinated masculinities manifest during the pandemic?

b. What negotiated forms of masculinities emerged during the pandemic?

In this research, I problematize how the pandemic impacted the idea and practice of masculinity among Filipino men. Specifically, I seek to identify characteristics

of hegemonic masculinity during the pandemic and pinpoint how certain masculinities deviated from it. Additionally, I make sense of the negotiation process by Filipino men as confronted by the crisis where they claim, rework, or reject masculine roles and scripts.

Moreover, this article discusses *pagkalalaki* (masculinity) both as a social construction and as informed by Connell's (1987) conceptualization of hegemonic and marginalized or subordinated masculinities. I contrast this perspective with a nuanced understanding of masculinity in the Philippines following the work of Rubio and Green (2009) on the ideal characteristics of Filipino masculinity and the emphasis of Valledor-Lukey (2012) on the multidimensionality of *pagkalalaki*. Lastly, I present the emerging themes of idealized and subordinated masculinities during the COVID-19 pandemic and describe the negotiation and reworking of hegemonic Filipino masculinities in contrast with subordinated masculinities as storied by the respondents in evolving contexts.

Review of Related Literature

In this section, I discuss masculinity as a social construction and as informed by Connell's (1987) conceptualization of hegemonic, marginalized, and subordinated masculinities. This paper heavily recognizes the intricacies and differences between Western constructs of masculinities and the locally structured and conceived notions of masculinities. As such, I contrast this perspective with a nuanced understanding of masculinity as *pagkalalaki* – a Filipino local construct. Lastly, I present various characterizations of Filipino masculinity as grounded by sociocultural factors in the Philippines.

Masculinity

Masculinity refers to aspects of men's behaviors, roles, and meanings that fluctuate over time. It is often prescribed to men and shaped by social institutions and interactions (Connell 1995; Kimmel 2000). Masculinity can be understood using the sex-role theory, which highlights the functions of men to participate in the labor force, represent the family, and make decisions as head of the household (Parsons 1942). Alternatively, masculinity can be seen as a performance of roles and social scripts, borrowing from Butler's (1999) notion of gender performativity. In the case of fathers, the performance of the paternal role establishes the identity not only as the father but also as a man because gender is a continuous identity construction. Both the role of the breadwinner and its performance are constantly linked to the performance of masculinity because work is assumed to be a major basis of masculine identity (Morgan 1992).

In contrast, Connell problematizes how such functions came to be and why these should be rigidly imposed. She has created numerous works on masculinities to show that gender roles are complex, and while men do dominate over women, men may also dominate other men within a patriarchal society. Instead of viewing gender roles as something static - based on sex and assigned at birth, Connell states that gender roles are dynamic and acquired through socialization (Atkinson et al. 2015). They also highlight that there are actually different types and hierarchies of masculinities and femininities, which also marginalize each other (Yang 2020). Hence, Carrigan et al. (1985) theorized the concept of hegemonic masculinity.

According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 832), hegemonic masculinity "embodied the currently most

honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it." However, not all men are able to perform this type of masculinity. When men do not or cannot conform to the hegemonic standards of the ideal man, such masculinities are subordinated and marginalized. Yang (2020) emphasizes that hegemonic masculinity maintains its dominance through domination and consent, often subordinating other masculinities, such as those associated with gay men or men who exhibit emotional vulnerability. These subordinated masculinities are often stigmatized or delegitimized by the hegemonic form (Connell 1995). As Yang (2020) argues, hegemonic masculinity operates by reinforcing this hierarchy, where subordinated masculinities are marginalized through cultural consent, discursive dominance, and institutionalization. This relational nature underscores how masculinities are defined in opposition to one another, with certain masculinities legitimizing the dominance of others.

As an illustration, gay men may exhibit traits viewed as 'feminine' or 'androgynous,' leading to marginalization by other men. Hence, within a group of men, there is marginalization and conflict (Cheng 1999). Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity provides a framework to analyze the hierarchies of masculinity that exist within Filipino society.

Pagkalalaki as Filipino Masculinity

In the Philippines, it is a popular assumption that the concept of 'masculinity' is equivalent to our own thinking and perception in fleshing out the concept of '*pagkalalaki*'. However, according to Rogelia Pe-Pua and Elizabeth Protacio-Marcelino (2000: 59), there is no word that perfectly captures the essence of the concept of pagkalalaki in the English language, "but approximately,

it means 'masculinity', 'maleness', 'manhood', or all of these."

De Castro (1995) shared a well-detailed account of the various dimensions of *pagiging lalaki* and how this is determined according to aspects such as physical characteristics, overcoming obstacles, *palagay ng puso*, *loob*, and intuition - all of which show the flexibility of the concept as it is a reflection of our real, lived experiences. He also adds *pagiging lalaki* is a term based more on the sex assigned at birth. Meanwhile, *pagkalalaki* is more of a sociological construct concerning roles and expectations of men in society, particularly within institutions like family and community. In addition, it is psychological because the personal perspective of the person concerned cannot be ignored. In the end, this is the only perspective that will allow a person to express their own views (136).

For this study, I use the term masculinity to refer to *pagkalalaki* in the sociological sense, focusing on the tension between positive, hegemonic traits and those subordinated characteristics within the larger ideals of masculinities.

Filipino Family, Fatherhood and Masculinity

In the Philippines, traditional fatherhood has long emphasized the role of the father as the provider and disciplinarian (Guthrie and Azores 1967; Licuanan 1979). This aligns with the concept of hegemonic masculinity, where financial provision and authority within the family reinforce the father's masculine identity (Connell 1995). However, recent decades have seen Filipino fathers taking on more nurturing and supportive roles with their children, reflecting a shift towards emotional involvement alongside traditional responsibilities (Medina 2001).

Tan (1989) described many overseas Filipino fathers as "dilettantes"—affectionate but unable to be physically present in their children's lives, underscoring the tension between providing financially and being emotionally available.

Filipino fathers also navigate changes in their roles due to economic or social challenges. Jurilla's study (1986) highlights that fathers in rural areas, facing economic insecurity, may assert their masculinity through dominance and emotional withdrawal. Yet, some fathers still engage in activities like storytelling, helping with homework, and spending time with their children (Medina 2001). These actions reflect a broader negotiation of masculinity, where fathers balance traditional roles with caregiving and emotional support. This balance illustrates how paternal identity in the Philippines is continually reshaped by social expectations and in different situations, as fathers incorporate nurturing roles alongside their duties as breadwinners.

Filipino Masculinity

Conceptualizations of masculinity by Filipino men are largely defined by physical strength and the ability to fulfill obligations. One is considered a 'real' man or *tunay na lalaki* if they are principled. Meanwhile, having a family and a stable job to provide for their needs means fulfillment (Aguiling-Dalisay et al. 2000).

As such, Rubio and Green (2009) describe seven constructs to define the ideal characteristics of Filipino masculinity: a sense of responsibility, family-orientedness, respect for women and elders, integrity, intellectual pursuit, strength, and a sense of community. A sense of responsibility was seen in being able to prepare for one's future role as head of the family through a commitment

to hard work. Related to this is the concept of family-orientedness. As the future head of the family, one should be able to value one's family and provide for their needs. This is seen as the "ultimate indicator of a truly masculine male in the Philippines" (Aguiling-Dalisay et al. 2000; Tan 1989, as cited in Rubio & Green 2009, 62). Respect for women and elders is related to adopting a more egalitarian approach in the family, where the wife is seen as a partner. Integrity is seen as following ethical standards such as honesty, trustworthiness, morality, and *palabra de honor*. Intellectual pursuit was transformed into Intelligence and Academic Achievement, as shown through affinity for school. Strength is related to physical strength and conviction. Lastly, a sense of community is related to *pakikisama* (Rubio and Green 2009; 2011). I elaborate on the following characteristics of Filipino masculinity in the context of the pandemic.

At the time of the pandemic, upon which social conditions and institutions change, this basis of Filipino masculinity can be further understood and explored through possible manifestations and departures from it. I also highlight Valledor-Lukey's (2012) work on femininity and masculinity, which emphasizes the relationship between gender and self-concept. This provides further insight into Filipino masculinity. According to Valledor-Lukey, Filipino masculinity is multidimensional, featuring positive and negative characteristics. It can be disciplined (*disiplinado*) and brave (*matapang*) and, at the same time, stubborn (*matigas ang ulo*) and rash (*padalos-dalos*). As I navigate through Filipino masculinities during the pandemic, these shall help in the observation of the characteristics of Filipino masculinity. Moreover, grounding my study on these theoretical pinnings of Filipino masculinity shall provide a nuanced understanding of our own sense of self and the construction of gender in the local setting.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study, I utilized a qualitative approach to make sense of Filipino men's constructed meanings of masculinities - particularly hegemonic and peripheral masculinities - during the pandemic. I conducted in-depth interviews in Filipino and used open-ended questions to converse with key participants. I also applied the insights of Holstein and Gubrium (1997) on active interviewing, which views respondents' insights as co-constructed realities rather than static reports, fostering a dynamic interaction between interviewer and interviewee. With a semi-structured guide, interviews generally lasted between 35 to 55 minutes. These were recorded for transcription, stored securely, and kept confidential.

Cresswell's (2006) narrative research method, which is ideal for exploring life stories and the evolution of identities over time, was used to trace the men's experiences across various life stages, specifically during the pandemic - such as early lockdown responses, role changes in family life, and evolving work responsibilities - to better understand their identity as men. These stages include their coping mechanism, responsibilities, work situations, family arrangements, and domestic and public activities. I also made them reflect on these stages to flesh out and understand their identities as men, their constructions of meaning, and the influence of the pandemic, all as shaped by their sociocultural context and familial responsibilities. Additionally, as Connell (1991) notes, studying shifts in the constitution of masculinity can be challenging because of the dynamic environment. Anchoring these life stages and narratives guided the respondents effectively in reflecting on their experiences and the evolution of their masculine identities during the crisis.

Thus, the respondents' life stories and reflections or "epiphanies" on their experiences during the pandemic became the primary data that I memoed and coded to identify emerging themes and categories. Through a thematic analysis, I interpret and present the data in this research through the emergent themes and by constructing archetypes of how men navigated masculinities during the COVID-19 crisis.

I developed a set of open-ended interview questions designed to allow respondents to freely share their personal experiences and perspectives. The questions covered various aspects of their lives during the pandemic, including their experiences, responsibilities, work, family dynamics, and notions of masculinity. These questions were intended to explore themes organically without imposing specific preconceived frameworks. For instance, questions like "*Paano niyo po mailalarawan ang karanasan niyo noong nagsimula ang pandemya?*" and "*Ano po ang mga tungkulin na sinusubukan niyo pong gampanan nitong pandemiya?*" encouraged respondents to reflect deeply on their roles and challenges, allowing for a nuanced understanding of how their masculine identities were constructed and negotiated. By focusing on the experiences of the respondents, the themes related to men's masculinities, roles, and practices during the pandemic emerged from their narratives, ensuring that the data gathered was grounded in the realities of the participants rather than being shaped by predetermined categories.

Data collection was conducted from April to May 2022 during the "tail end" end of the pandemic, and with ethical considerations for this study still including the observation of pandemic health protocols, all data collection was conducted online. Through online messaging platforms, I sent invitation letters to participants stating pertinent research information such as the overview, objectives,

procedures, and my contact details. Upon confirmation and signing of consent forms, the respondents were reminded of their rights to confidentiality, the secure handling of their information, and their right to withdraw at any time. These were reiterated throughout the study. Interviews were conducted via online communication platforms such as Zoom, Viber, and Facebook Messenger, all selected based on the participants' accessibility and convenience. Because participants may share unpleasant pandemic experiences, I made sure to be more sensitive and careful in conducting the interviews. I also assigned them pseudonyms to protect their privacy and identities.

As a cis-heterosexual man, I acknowledge that my positionality may have influenced the interpretation of masculinities in this study. However, I maintained a reflexive approach throughout the research process to center the respondents' perspectives. In instances where participants would say, "*Bilang lalaki, alam mo yun*" (As a man, you know what I mean), I made a conscious effort to probe further rather than accept their statements at face value. I would often clarify that I did not fully understand what they were referring to, encouraging them to elaborate. This reflexivity allowed for a deeper exploration of their experiences rather than assuming shared knowledge. At the same time, my positionality also provided certain privileges, as participants may have felt more comfortable sharing personal insights with a fellow man. Despite these dynamics, this study provides valuable insights into how Filipino men reflect on and navigate their identities during the pandemic, contributing meaningfully to broader discussions of masculinity in times of crisis.

Sampling

To recruit participants for this study, I primarily used purposive non-random sampling to find individuals

whose life stories reflected diverse experiences of masculinity during the pandemic. This approach enabled me to focus on men aged 18 to 59, residing in Manila, and who were either employed or had lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic. These criteria followed the categories outlined by Rubio and Green (2009).

In addition, I employed snowball sampling to extend the participant pool, particularly due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. Snowball sampling, as defined by Roberts (2014), utilizes a "chain-referral technique," wherein participants refer others within their social networks who meet the recruitment criteria. This method was particularly useful during the pandemic when traditional means of recruiting participants were constrained by mobility and technological limitations. I started by asking friends, neighbors, and acquaintances to recommend potential respondents, which enabled me to reach men from various socioeconomic backgrounds and employment statuses.

While I initially aimed to use quota sampling to ensure representation across different classes and age brackets, I did not predefine specific quotas for each category. Instead, my primary focus was to ensure a diverse sample reflective of varying masculinities and pandemic experiences. As such, the recruitment process can best be described as a combination of purposive and convenience sampling since I primarily relied on my personal network and their referrals to recruit respondents who were willing and available to participate.

In total, I interviewed thirteen (13) Filipino men, as shown in Table 1. They all reside in Manila. Their ages range from 18 to 59 years old, with the majority in the age range of 30 to 49 years old. Class representation is diverse, covering low-, middle-, and high-income groups, with

most participants belonging to the middle-income class. I based these groupings on a study from the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (Albert et al. 2020), which defined a middle-income class of a family of five as earning between Php 23,000 and Php 140,000 in 2018 - later adjusted to Php 25,000 to Php 150,000 due to the economic impacts of the pandemic. In addition to the occupations mentioned during the interviews, several participants also detailed how they sought alternative sources of income and livelihood during the crisis (which I call their 'pandemic occupation'). Some relied on freelance projects (Ramon and Erwin), online selling of goods (Jeff, Robert, Franco, and Mark), home gardening (Kyle), and other sideline jobs such as being a truck driver and tattoo artist (Jimbet) and shipper (*kargador*) and tricycle driver (Jun).

Table 1. Profile of Respondents

Code Name	Age Bracket	Class	Occupation
Raf	18-29	C	Psychotherapy Officer
Isaac	18-29	C	Microbiology Scientist
Mike	18-29	C	Teacher
Jeff	30-39	A/B	Lawyer
Ramon	30-39	C	Art Director
Erwin	30-39	C	Doctor
Kyle	30-39	D/E	Security Guard
Robert	40-49	A/B	Chief Finance Officer
Enrico	40-49	C	Bank Employee
Franco	40-49	C	Room Attendant
Jun	40-49	D/E	Barangay Councilor
Robin	40-49	D/E	Tricycle Driver
Mark	50-59	C	Overseas Filipino Worker

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using memoing, coding, and thematic analysis, guided by Connell's (1995) framework on masculinities. This framework views hegemonic masculinity as not necessarily the most prevalent form of masculinity in practice but as the idealized version, often aspired to by men within a given social context. In this study, I conceptualized hegemonic masculinity as the dominant ideal that men seek to embody despite the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Connell's work emphasizes that this form of masculinity maintains its dominance through relations of power with other masculinities, which are either marginalized or subordinated.

To operationalize hegemonic and subordinated masculinities in the context of this research, I drew on Yang's (2020) insights, which emphasize that hegemonic masculinity operates within a broader ecology of masculinities, where masculinity is constructed through both domination and consent, with other forms of masculinity either complicit with or subordinated by the hegemonic form. This helped identify subordinated masculinities – those that are actively oppressed or stigmatized – that may aspire to be hegemonic ideals but are prevented from fully participating due to factors like class or age. By coding the data, I traced how these power relations manifested in the narratives, focusing on how masculinities are socially constructed through hierarchies.

Limitations

I recognize the limitations of this study within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to mobility and health restrictions, most respondents came from

nearby communities in Manila and were referred by friends and colleagues. That respondents belong to the Manila urban setting and mostly come from the middle class could affect the "kind" of masculinities posed in this research and the ways in which the city is hardly hit by the pandemic (Broñio 2021). Meanwhile, the virtual interview setup also limited spatial interactions, and this could also pose a factor in their openness to discussing the topic at hand.

The following sections delve into the themes that emerged from the analysis, illustrating how Filipino men navigated the dynamics of hegemonic and subordinated masculinities during the COVID-19 pandemic. By organizing the narratives around key themes identified through coding, this study presents a nuanced exploration of Filipino masculinity, shaped by both societal expectations and individual experiences.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study explores how Filipino men make meaning of and perform their masculinities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a constructivist framework, the research considers the dynamic interplay between multiple forms of masculinities within the Philippine context. Specifically, it highlights the negotiation between hegemonic masculinity – the dominant and idealized form of masculinity – and subordinated masculinities, which are often marginalized or oppressed, as conceptualized by Connell (1995). Through this lens, I examine how Filipino men construct their identities as men, navigating societal expectations and adjusting their behaviors to either align with or resist these ideals during the unique circumstances of the pandemic.

The coding process and thematic analysis, informed by Connell's understanding of hegemonic and subordinated masculinities, revealed how pandemic conditions influenced traditional masculine roles and led to the emergence of negotiated forms of masculinities. These themes align with previous studies by Rubio and Green (2009) and Valledor-Lukey (2012), which describe Filipino masculinity as rooted in family orientation and strength. However, these studies show how these traditionally masculine traits were reworked during the pandemic into what can be seen as a (re)claimed masculinity — a set of renegotiated traits adapted to the challenges of economic uncertainty, domestic pressures, and evolving societal conditions. The succeeding sections delve into these emergent themes, illustrating how Filipino men reconciled aspirational masculinities with the realities of the pandemic, offering insights into how masculinities are continuously redefined in response to crises.

HEGEMONIC MASCULINITIES

In the interviews, I explored participants' reflections on their idealized visions of manhood during the pandemic, focusing on their responsibilities, expectations, and the quintessential traits of a man. This section examines how hegemonic masculinity is manifested in these reflections, organized using Connell's (1995) theorizing. I conceptualized hegemonic masculinity not only as an ideal but also through the responsibilities and experiences that men performed at home and at work during the pandemic. These actions helped reveal how men aligned with or resisted societal expectations of Filipino masculinity. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) describe hegemonic masculinity, it is the "currently most honored way of being a man," requiring men to position themselves in relation to it, either by striving to achieve it or being subordinated by it.

The manifestations of hegemonic masculinity found in this study parallel earlier research on Filipino masculinity, particularly those described by Rubio and Green (2009), Valledor-Lukey (2012), and Aguiling-Dalisay et al. (2010). Idealized Filipino masculinity remains characterized by family-orientedness, a strong sense of responsibility, and *tibay ng loob* (strength of will). However, the pandemic context reshaped these traits, revealing both continuity and adaptation.

Three key themes of hegemonic masculinity emerged from the narratives: family-oriented, emphasizing men's roles as protectors and providers in the family; *madiskarte*, resourcefulness and adaptability, showcasing their ability to navigate difficult circumstances; and *matibay ang loob* (strength of will), symbolizing the need to be resilient in the face of adversities. While these traits align with previous studies on Filipino masculinity, the pandemic context highlighted how these idealizations of being a man were renegotiated and redefined as men adapted to heightened economic, social, and emotional pressures.

Family-oriented

The pandemic posed significant threats and challenges to Filipino men, prompting them to prioritize the security and safety of their families. Among the respondents, family-orientedness emerged as a dominant theme, with men emphasizing their roles as overseer, protector, disciplinarian, and role model. These responsibilities, while long-standing in Filipino culture, took on heightened importance during the crisis. Enrico, a married man with no kids, reflected on this, stating, "*[Y]ung matibay ang loob na lalaki na ang unang iisipin ay yung pamilya, kaya kailangan kumita dahil meron siyang pamilya na kailangan i-provide*" (A courageous man will

think of his family first; it's necessary to earn because he has a family to feed).

His words illustrate the deep-rooted expectation for men to be primary providers – a role that becomes even more critical in times of crisis, where economic and physical security are threatened. However, what sets the pandemic context apart is the intensification of this role, where men's identities as providers and protectors became more prominent due to the uncertainties surrounding work and health. For instance, Isaac, a 22-year-old fresh graduate, echoed similar concerns despite not being a father.

He explained, "*Kailangan mong protektahan 'yung family, mag-ingat na lumabas, Mag-ingat sa paglabas so kailangan dapat nagre-remind na, 'uy, mag-mask ka.*" (You need to protect the family, be careful when you go out. Be careful when you go out, so you need to remind them, 'Hey, wear a mask.') This reveals an intergenerational sharing of masculine responsibilities. Young men like Isaac were taking on roles traditionally associated with older family members, such as protector and disciplinarian, by reminding family members to observe health protocols. This shift highlights how the pandemic reshaped the enactment of masculinity, expanding traditional roles across age brackets. The urgency of maintaining the family's health and security meant that even younger men who might not typically be seen as heads of households stepped into these roles, adapting to the crisis.

Madiskarte (Resourceful and Adaptable)

During the pandemic, the respondents demonstrated a strong reliance on *diskarte* – a culturally valued trait of resourcefulness and adaptability in times of difficulties.

Among the respondents, *diskarte* emerged as a survival mechanism, as men navigated unstable economic conditions and shifting family responsibilities. Ramon, a 36-year-old art director, highlighted how his work transitioned to a virtual setup. Despite these changes, when asked about his ideal traits of a man during the pandemic, he noted: "*Gagawa at gagawa ng paraan para matapos ang trabaho niya, para makaprovide para sa pamilya niya at hindi masama ang ginagawa*" (He will always find a way to finish his work, provide for his family, and do nothing bad in the process). This statement reflects not only Ramon's adaptability but also his relentless commitment to supporting his family amidst the challenges of the pandemic.

Ramon's experience underscores how adaptability became closely tied to his responsibilities as a family man, reflecting the broader cultural expectation that men must prioritize economic stability for their families. Similarly, Jun, a Barangay Councilor and part-time tricycle driver, demonstrated *diskarte* in more challenging circumstances. When asked about the ideal traits of men during the pandemic, he remarked, "*Abilidad sa panahon. Walang hiya-hiya.*" (Then you need resourcefulness for the times. No room for shame.) This highlights how men from lower-income backgrounds had to push past pride and embrace whatever means were necessary to support their families, even if it meant taking jobs they considered to be beneath them. As Jun reflected on delivering goods during the pandemic, he noted:

> *Dati akong umoorder, tapos ako ngayon ang magdedeliver. Parang apak sa ego mo yun. Pag pamilyado ka na, iba na kasi. Wala na sa barkada, wala na sa mga sasabihin ng tao. Doon na sa sasabihin ng mag-ina mo*" (I used to order, now I'm the one delivering. It's like a blow to your ego. But when

you have a family, things change. It's not about your friends anymore or what others say—it's about what your wife and child think).

For men like Jun, *diskarte* required not only adaptability but also the willingness to sacrifice personal pride in the face of economic hardship. This ability to "make things work" reinforced traditional gender roles of being the provider, even when faced with diminished job opportunities. Despite the changing economic landscape, many respondents upheld the expectation of being resourceful and resilient, highlighting the intersection of economic provision and masculinity. This aligns with previous work on Filipino masculinity by Church, Katigbak, and Castañeda (1984-1985), which underscores the cultural expectation for men to embody hard work and moral conviction in providing for their families.

Class and economic status further shaped how men expressed *diskarte*. Ramon's relatively smoother transition to virtual work as an art director contrasts with Jun's reliance on manual labor, which was more significantly disrupted. Yet, both men displayed a willingness to adjust to new realities, with Ramon leveraging online platforms and Jun accepting jobs that challenged his previous sense of pride. This flexibility reflects the broader resilience required during the pandemic, as Filipino men navigated their roles as protectors and providers despite the socioeconomic challenges they faced.

Matibay ang Loob (Strong-Willed)

During the pandemic, the respondents expressed a strong reliance on *tibay ng loob* – the strength of will to endure hardships. Many participants viewed the

pandemic as both a crisis and a challenge to overcome, where acceptance of their circumstances was the first step. Mark, an Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW), was forced to return home after losing his job abroad. To help his family, he worked alongside his wife, delivering home-cooked meals. Reflecting on his experience and advising his former shipmates struggling with financial difficulties, Mark said: "*Sabi ko kailangan ng pasensya, tsaka prayers lang yan number one. Yun yung advice ko sa kanila kasi wala ka nang magagawa eh*" (I told them you need patience, and prayers are number one. That's my advice because there's nothing more you can do).

Mark's narrative highlights a combination of acceptance and action — a dual approach where men first reconcile themselves with their lack of control over the pandemic and then take action through faith or practical efforts to support their families. This blend of spiritual and practical resilience embodies the hegemonic masculine ideal of facing challenges head-on while maintaining a sense of duty. Even in the face of adversity, Mark's adaptability in delivering food to support his family underscores the Filipino man's responsibility to provide and protect, reflecting the values of family-orientedness, *diskarte*, and *tibay ng loob*.

Similarly, *tibay ng loob* was expressed in emotional and psychological terms. Mike, an online English tutor and caretaker for his younger siblings after their parents passed away, shared the importance of maintaining emotional control: "*You have to also persevere and maintain 'yung calmness kasi 'pag ikaw mismo pinakita mo na may problema, baka mag-worry din sila para sa'yo*" (You have to persevere and maintain calmness because if you show that you're struggling, they might worry about you). This reflects how men are expected to conceal emotional vulnerability "to protect" their loved ones from stress. Mike's experience underscores

the societal pressure on men to display emotional and psychological strength, even in the face of personal hardships.

Respondents also associated *tibay ng loob* with resilience and perseverance, often using cultural symbols like the Barangay Ginebra basketball team's catchphrase "Never Say Die" to describe their refusal to give up despite the challenges of the pandemic. This cultural reference demonstrates how Filipino men draw on communal narratives of toughness to inspire themselves and their families to endure adversity. Men like Mark and Mike exemplify the expectation that they must stand firm in the face of difficulties, supported by faith and inner strength - although this pressure also comes at the cost of suppressing vulnerability, which is often viewed as incompatible with the hegemonic ideal of masculinity.

Narratives from the respondents illustrate how family-orientedness remained central to Filipino masculinity even during the COVID-19 pandemic, reinforcing the deeply ingrained expectation for men to serve as protectors and providers. As emphasized in the literature (Guthrie & Azores 1968; Licuanan 1979; Medina 2001), the focus on the family has long been a hallmark of Filipino masculinity, and the pandemic context amplified this expectation. The men interviewed also highlighted *diskarte* and *tibay ng loob* as key masculine traits that became crucial in the face of economic instability and health concerns.

Moreover, *diskarte* became a key mechanism for survival during the pandemic, with men from different economic backgrounds employing various strategies to meet their families' needs. For some, like Ramon, the transition to virtual work was manageable, while others, like Jun, faced more drastic disruptions but still displayed the

capacity to adapt. Similarly, *tibay ng loob* surfaced as both a personal and communal form of resilience, reflecting how Filipino men drew on their inner strength and social expectations to persevere. Hence, these narratives show how the pandemic reshaped but did not displace the core elements of hegemonic masculinity, with the family at the center and *diskarte* and *tibay ng loob* defining ideal traits in response to the crisis.

SUBORDINATED MASCULINITIES

Throughout the interviews, I explored how participants characterized men who were perceived as falling short of the idealized or hegemonic standards of masculinity during the pandemic. This section focuses on the development of subordinated masculinities, drawing from Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) concept of marginalized or subordinated forms of masculinity. Viewing hegemonic and subordinated masculinities relationally, I define subordinated masculinities as those that deviate from hegemonic norms and are often perceived as "weak" or "lacking."

This analysis is further guided by Valledor-Lukey's (2012) multidimensional characterization of Filipino masculinity, which outlines not only the positive but also the negative traits often attributed to Filipino men. While the negative aspects of Rubio and Green's framework were not directly mirrored in this study, they provide an important context for understanding the cultural treatment of certain behaviors as less masculine. During the interviews, I focused on the respondents' reflections on men who were not looked up to during the pandemic — those who struggled to meet expectations in terms of responsibilities, roles, and work. These individuals, whether facing unemployment or personal struggles, were perceived as falling short of the masculine ideal.

Subordinated masculinities, as discussed by participants, were seen to lack key qualities of hegemonic masculinity, including traits such as emotional vulnerability, economic instability, or failure to fulfill familial duties. Men who failed to meet the hegemonic expectations were criticized and viewed as less masculine. As Yang (2020) emphasizes, these marginalized masculinities exist within a broader hierarchy, where dominant forms of masculinity are upheld through social consent. In this context, the rejection of subordinated masculinities during the pandemic reinforced the hegemonic ideals of being family-oriented, *madiskarte*, and *matibay ang loob*. The narratives further revealed how men viewed those who failed to meet these expectations as embodying the "negative" or weaker traits of masculinity, which also intersect with class and psychosocial struggles.

Mahina ang Loob (Weak-Willed)

In the interviews, emotional vulnerability was frequently discussed as a trait associated with *mahina ang loob* (weak-willed), often perceived as a form of weakness among men. When asked about how he thinks some men faced the pandemic, Sydney remarked that most men managed to endure the crisis through a strong "mindset." However, he also acknowledged that around "10%" of men might have been what he described as weak and overwhelmed, as he explained: "*Tulad nang kung tinamaan ka nga, nagiging malungkutin at depressed [ka] dahil malayo sa pamilya*" (Like when you get hit by it, you become sad and depressed because you're far from your family). Sydney's comments reflect how emotional struggles, such as sadness or depression, are stigmatized and viewed as signs of a weakened masculine identity during crises like the pandemic. These emotions, which are often treated as vulnerabilities, clash with the societal expectations of

Filipino masculinity that emphasize *tibay ng loob*.

This theme of vulnerability as weakness was echoed by Raf, a Psychotherapy Officer, who observed among men: "*I think that's something na hindi masculine—to seek help*" (I think that's something that's not masculine—to seek help). This internalized perception of masculinity discourages men from openly acknowledging their emotional struggles, reinforcing the belief that emotional expression is incompatible with the masculine ideal. As a result, vulnerability is seen not only as a failure to meet societal expectations but also perceived by men as a devaluation of their own masculinity. Raf's insight reveals how the pressure to conform to hegemonic ideals discourages men from seeking emotional support, further entrenching the stigma around mental health and emotional expression among Filipino men during the pandemic.

Moreover, these feelings of inadequacy were shared by Ramon, an art director who developed a panic disorder during the pandemic. Although he didn't explicitly link his mental health struggles to a crisis of his masculinity, his narrative revealed a deep disappointment in his inability to fulfill his family responsibilities. He reflected on how his disorder left him unable to perform daily tasks, saying, "*Minsan para bang nadedepress na 'ano ba 'yan, bakit ganun, bakit nangyari ito sa akin. 'Di ako makalabas, kailangan kong bumili ng ganito, kailangan ng anak ko ng ganito*" (Sometimes I feel depressed, thinking, 'What is this? Why did this happen to me? I can't go out; I need to buy things for my family, for my child, and I can't'). Ramon's frustration stems not only from his illness but from the disruption it caused in his ability to provide and take care of his family, reflecting how hegemonic masculinity places immense pressure on men to fulfill specific roles, even when confronted with mental health challenges.

In analyzing these accounts, it becomes evident that emotional vulnerability – though a distinct experience – ultimately ties back to the broader expectations of hegemonic masculinity, especially regarding familial duties. Men like Ramon, who struggled with mental health issues, were burdened not only by their conditions but also by the perception that they had failed to live up to their roles as providers and protectors. The narratives suggest that the pandemic, while exacerbating emotional challenges, also highlighted the limitations of hegemonic masculinity, where emotional vulnerability is equated with failure. Yet, instead of challenging these ideals, as the respondents shared, they internalized these shortcomings, reinforcing the relational dynamics between hegemonic and subordinated masculinities.

Tamad (Lazy)

During the interviews, respondents commonly expressed disdain for men perceived as *tamad* (lazy) during the pandemic, particularly those who were seen as failing to fulfill their expected roles within the household. This failure to contribute, combined with an attitude of dependency and carelessness, was viewed as disappointing, especially in relation to the idealized image of a man who works hard and supports his family. In addition to the general stigma surrounding laziness, there was a notable intersection with class, with men from middle to upper socioeconomic backgrounds showing greater resentment toward able-bodied men who appeared dependent on government aid or charity.

For instance, Enrico, a bank employee, expressed frustration when asked about the kind of men he disapproved of during the pandemic:

> "*Siyempre, yung mga hindi nagtatrabaho, na natanggal sa trabaho tapos nag-stop na yung buhay nila dun, na malimos nalang, nasa kalye nalang, umaasa nalang sa hingi, pero ang lalaki ng katawan*" (Of course, those who don't work, who were laid off and their lives just stopped after that, those who beg for alms, live on the streets, and rely on handouts, even though they have big, strong bodies).

Enrico's sentiment reflects the idea that men, regardless of their circumstances, are expected to demonstrate *diskarte* even in the face of adversity. The pressure to embody this ideal of *diskarte* reinforces the notion that men should be able to find solutions to their problems, regardless of external conditions. This view tends to hegemonize resourcefulness, positioning it as a masculine trait that separates "successful" men from those deemed inferior or lazy. However, this perspective often disregards the structural inequalities that affect men's ability to find work or income sources during a crisis.

This contrast becomes stark when compared to the experience of Robin, a tricycle driver who lost his source of income during the pandemic. He shared: "*Mahirap. Namomroblema kami kung paano kami kakain. Umaasa na lang kami sa binibigay na ayuda. Pinagkakasya lang po yun*" (It's difficult. We worry about how we'll eat. We just depend on aid from the government. We just try to make it fit). Robin's account illustrates how men from lower socioeconomic backgrounds experienced the pandemic differently, relying on government assistance for survival yet still struggling to meet basic needs. The pressure for men to find work and be financially responsible clashed with the economic realities they faced, amplifying feelings of inadequacy for those who couldn't meet these societal expectations.

The difference in their narratives reveals how economic disparities shape men's experiences and responses to the pandemic, creating a tension between idealized masculine roles and the realities faced by different socioeconomic groups. The inability to meet these expectations led to internalized feelings of failure, as societal norms prioritized the ideal of men as proactive breadwinners, even in situations where opportunities for work were scarce.

Matigas ang ulo (Stubborness)

The theme of being *matigas ang ulo* (stubbornness) emerged prominently in the respondents' descriptions of men who disregarded health protocols during the pandemic. This trait was heavily criticized, particularly in the context of protecting one's family. Kyle, a security guard in a condominium, expressed frustration with men who refused to comply with safety measures: "*Yung matigas ang ulo. Siyempre, pagka-sinabi mag-face mask at face shield ka, yung iba, wala lang. Parang dekorasyon lang kung tawagin. Hindi sumusunod sa protocol*" (When they're told to wear a face mask and face shield, some people treat it like it's just a decoration. They don't follow the protocol.) Here, stubbornness reflects an unwillingness to take responsibility, which is considered a failure to fulfill masculine duties of protection, particularly in the context of the pandemic.

Stubbornness, in another case, is framed not just as a personal flaw but as a direct threat to family welfare. Jake, a work-from-home lawyer during the pandemic, highlighted the risks of attending large gatherings during the pandemic:

> "*Yung pabaya... lumalabas pa rin... pupunta sa malalaking gathering… posibleng mag-cause ng*

problems or trouble dun sa family, siyempre pag nainfect dadalhin pa sa hospital, maexpose yung mga family members" (Those who are careless and still go out, attending large gatherings... it could cause trouble for the family, because if they get infected, they'll bring it home and expose family members).

In this sense, *matigas ang ulo* is not only about individual risk-taking but is viewed through a familial lens, where the failure to comply with safety protocols could endanger loved ones. The criticism of stubbornness was further reinforced by the militarized enforcement of health protocols during the pandemic. As Tomacruz and Magsambol (2022) note, the Philippine government's COVID-19 protocols were often enforced with strict and punitive measures, framing non-compliance as a civic and moral failing. While it's difficult to definitively state how much this militaristic approach directly influenced men's perceptions, it's reasonable to speculate that the strict enforcement of health protocols likely shaped how non-compliance was viewed. Men may have associated carelessness and irresponsibility - often called *pasaway* - with a failure in masculine responsibility, particularly when family health and safety were at risk. Thus, stubbornness potentially became a marker of deviant masculinity - perceived as a violation of hegemonic ideals of responsibility and protectiveness.

In a broader context, this reflects the persistent centrality of family in Filipino masculinity. Men who were described as stubborn during the pandemic not only defied societal rules but also failed to protect their families—an essential component of Filipino masculine identity. The focus on adherence to health protocols in this context highlights how men's roles as protectors were scrutinized, and their failure to protect the family from the virus was equated with a failure to perform their masculine duties. As such, *matigas ang ulo* serves as a subordinated masculinity,

further deviating from the hegemonic ideals of family-oriented responsibility and *tibay ng loob*.

The findings of this study reaffirm the relational dynamic between hegemonic masculinity and subordinated masculinities, highlighting the ongoing tension between the two. Subordinated masculinities often experience marginalization because they deviate from the hegemonic standards of family-orientedness, *diskarte*, and *matibay ang loob*. However, this also reveals the limitations of hegemonic masculinity in acknowledging broader social realities and conditions. For example, among lower-income men, *diskarte* cannot always overcome systemic challenges such as unemployment, making it difficult to meet the hegemonic expectation of being the family provider. Similarly, men struggling with psychological challenges like depression find it equally challenging to embody the trait of *matibay ang loob*, showing that emotional resilience is not simply a matter of choice but is impacted by deeper mental health struggles. These obstacles hinder men from fulfilling the societal expectation of prioritizing their families as they face their own internal and external battles.

Moreover, these marginalized masculinities can be better understood through the lens of Filipino masculinity as multidimensional, featuring both positive and negative characteristics, as highlighted by Valledor-Lukey (2012). Within the context of the pandemic, traits such as emotional vulnerability (*mahina ang loob*), arrogance (*mayabang*), carelessness (*padalus-dalos*), and stubbornness (*matigas ang ulo*) were considered negative, subordinated qualities. In contrast, the positive traits – family-orientedness, *madiskarte*, and *matibay ang loob* – aligned with hegemonic masculinity. This duality underscores the complexity of Filipino masculinities, especially in times of crisis, as men are compelled to navigate competing expectations while confronting social and psychological barriers.

(RE)CLAIMING MASCULINITIES

In this section on (re)claiming masculinities, I aim to highlight the particular justifications and motivations that drive men's adherence to certain masculine ideals during the pandemic. These ideals are shaped by the tension between hegemonic and marginalized masculinities, such as *madiskarte* versus *tamad* and *matibay ang loob* versus *mahina ang loob*. As shown in earlier discussions, this tension is rooted in economic and psychological differences, with family-oriented traits often occupying a central role. Here, I emphasize how these masculine ideals not only serve as points of contrast between men but also create hierarchical relationships between men and other genders, reflecting broader systems of gender subordination.

One illustration of this gendered dynamic is the role of the "frontliner," a self-sacrificial figure whose actions are shaped not solely by personal ideals of heroism but also by the belief that men are responsible for protecting women. Jeff, for example, articulated this notion, stating:

> "*Lumalabas yung mga men para kasi sila yung ano eh, yung para hindi na maabala yung mga babae o hindi maput-at-risk yung mga women sa family… kasi 'di ba normally 'pag sa household yung babae yung nag-aayos doon*" (Men go out so they won't inconvenience women or to avoid putting the women in the family at risk... because normally, it's the woman who handles household tasks).

This statement reveals how men justified their roles in terms of shielding women from external dangers, reinforcing the traditional belief that women should remain in the domestic sphere while men bear the burden of external risks.

Similarly, the ideal of *matibay ang loob* was also framed in gendered terms, with the respondents drawing strength from the notion that they must surpass the resilience of women. Jun's perspective encapsulates this, as he explained:

> "*Kaya siguro isa na rin yun [kaisipan na lalaki ay mas malakas sa babae] sa nagpapalakas sa kanila. 'Si ate nga kinaya, ako pa kayang lalaki. Edi mas lalo.'*" (I think that's one of the reasons [belief that men are stronger than women] that strengthens them. 'If my older sister was able to do it, even more so should I as a man').

Here, resilience becomes a competitive trait between genders, where men feel compelled to outdo women's emotional and psychological fortitude. This dynamic highlights how gender comparisons serve to justify the men's perceived need to suppress vulnerability and push through hardships.

Finally, the expectation of being *madiskarte* is also tied to gendered roles. Robin, a tricycle driver, pointed out that men bear the responsibility of providing for the family, noting:

> "*Sa babae, siguro lalo yung asawa 'di naman gaano siguro silang masyadong ano, kasi yung lalaki talaga yung namomroblema eh kung saan kukuha ng makakain, saan kukuha ng pambili-bili ng kape, sabon…*" (For women, especially wives, they might not worry as much, because it's the man who really worries about where to get food, where to get money to buy coffee, soap).

This emphasizes the persistent gendered division of labor, with men feeling the primary pressure to secure financial resources. The trait of *madiskarte*, therefore, is not merely

about being adaptable but also about embodying the traditional masculine burden of providing for the family, reinforcing the societal expectation that men shoulder the economic responsibility and fortifying the belief that economic survival is primarily a male domain.

Thus, the process of (re)claiming masculinities during the pandemic reflects the negotiation between traditional gender expectations and the socio-economic challenges faced by men. The ideals of being *madiskarte* and *matibay ang loob* were not just personal goals but were deeply intertwined with maintaining patriarchal structures, reinforcing male dominance both within their households and society. Through these justifications, men reaffirmed their roles as providers and protectors, drawing strength from their perceived superiority over women while reinforcing the belief that economic and emotional resilience are primarily male responsibilities.

Conclusion

Narratives from the respondents illustrate how family-orientedness remained central to Filipino masculinity even during the COVID-19 pandemic, reinforcing the deeply ingrained expectation for men to serve as protectors and providers. Despite economic or personal challenges, Filipino men were expected to prioritize their families, maintaining their roles as the primary earners and decision-makers in times of crisis. This affirms the lasting influence of family-centered masculinity, even as the pandemic reshaped the contexts in which men performed their traditional roles.

The findings of this study reaffirm the relational dynamic between hegemonic masculinity and subordinated masculinities, highlighting the ongoing tension between the two. Subordinated masculinities often experience

marginalization because they deviate from the hegemonic standards of family-orientedness, *diskarte*, and *matibay ang loob*. However, this also reveals the limitations of hegemonic masculinity in acknowledging broader social realities and conditions. For lower-income men, *diskarte* could not always overcome systemic challenges like unemployment, while psychological struggles hindered others from embodying *matibay ang loob*. These obstacles prevented men from fully fulfilling societal expectations, showing that masculinity is constrained by economic and mental health realities.

These findings echo those of previous studies on Filipino masculinity, underscoring its multidimensional nature and adaptability Valledor-Lukey (2012). However, they also expose the power dynamics inherent in the gender order, as Hearn et al. (2023) emphasize. The process of (re)claiming masculinities during the pandemic not only reinforced traditional masculine ideals but also perpetuated the "hegemony of men," where masculinity remains dominant over subordinated masculinities and other genders, reinforcing societal hierarchies.

While Filipino masculinity during the pandemic was contested and reworked, it remained resilient and dynamic. This study contributes to broader conversations on Filipino masculinity by demonstrating that while men adapted to the challenges of the pandemic, they continued to navigate within a framework of gendered power relations, maintaining both individual and collective dominance.

This study offers valuable insights on engaging men in gender conversations, recognizing their key role in reshaping hegemonic masculinities and acting as allies in challenging gendered power relations, particularly within social institutions like the family. As we surface and unpack men's narratives and expressions of

masculinities, it becomes crucial to adopt critical and reflective research approaches and programs cognizant of the subtle forms of masculinities that oppress other genders, as emphasized in the last section. These forms of oppression also underscore the intersectionality of the problem, spanning class, culture, and various other contexts.

By actively involving men in these discussions, we can better challenge the dominance of hegemonic masculinities and promote more inclusive and equitable gender relations, even among men. Moreover, programs that encourage men to develop a broader understanding of their masculinities and reimagine these identities beyond traditional notions should be strongly advocated. These initiatives can foster traits that men often struggle with, such as vulnerability, emotional expression, and shared responsibility in both familial and societal roles, while being sensitive to the pressure to conform or aspire to dominant ideals of masculinity, such as "*tunay na lalaki*."

This shift empowers men to redefine their masculine identities in healthier and more open ways, particularly in their relationships with other genders. Ultimately, this reimagination can liberate men from the pressures of hegemonic masculinities and the harmful expectations imposed by the patriarchal society on both themselves and the other genders it oppresses.

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KALAMPAGAN SUNDAYS: NARRATIVES FROM ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELD WORK AMID POLITICAL AND PANDEMIC DURESS

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ABSTRACT

This article reflects on the author's experiences of conducting ethnographic fieldwork among Filipino migrant domestic worker (MDW) activists in Hong Kong during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–21). It details the challenges confronted by MDWs as the pandemic intensified long-standing issues relating to migrant labor, including workers' rights and welfare, state exactions, and social discrimination, which have been at the center of campaigns by migrant advocacy groups in Hong Kong since the 1980s.

However, the exigencies brought about by the pandemic galvanized migrant worker organizations to innovate ways of sustaining movement-building in times of social distancing and to strongly articulate their demands on both the Hong Kong and Philippine governments during *kalampagan*. Literally meaning noise-making, kalampagan expresses the spirit of mass demonstration and public protest. Beyond discussing the rhetoric of political demonstrations, this essay details the practices of care work by

members of Filipino MDW activist groups. Such care work includes resource sharing, mutual aid, affective labor, public awareness campaigns, solidarity-building, and political mobilization in support of movements aiming to secure better conditions for work and for personal and collective well-being and empowerment. Through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, volunteering, and *pakikisama* or "with-ing," the researcher came to explore and engage in a mode of political action that is often dismissed, if not demonized, in the mainstream. The first part of this essay analyzes MDW activism in the context of "long-distance nationalism" (Anderson 1998) and "the politics of the governed" (Chatterjee 2004) in a time of intensified political and pandemic duress. The second part of the essay reflects on field work as a practice of feminist ethnography.

Keywords: labor activism, migrant workers, feminist ethnography, Hong Kong, COVID-19

ABSTRAK

Sinasalamin ng artikulong ito ang mga karanasan ng may-akda sa pagsasagawa ng etnograpikong pananaliksik at pagkilos ng mga Pilipinong aktibista na nagtatrabaho bilang mga migranteng domestic worker (MDW) sa Hong Kong sa kasagsagan ng pandemyang COVID-19 (2020–21). Idinedetalye nito ang mga hamong kinaharap ng mga MDW kaugnay ng mga isyu ng migranteng paggawa na may kinalaman sa mga karapatan at kapakanan ng mga manggagawa, mga singilin ng estado at diskriminasyon laban sa mga MDW mga matagal nang nasa sentro ng mga adbokasiya at pagkilos ng mga grupong nagsusulong ng interes ng mga Pilipinong migranteng manggagawa

sa Hong Kong, mula pa noong 1980s. Subalit ang mga kagyat na pangangailangan dulot ng pandemya ay nag-udyok sa mga organisasyon ng mga migranteng manggagawa na maging maparaan upang mapanatili ang kanilang kilusan sa panahon ng pagkahiwa-hiwalay. Pinaigting nila ang pagpapahayag ng kanilang mga hinaing at pangangailangan sa gobyerno ng Hong Kong pati ng Pilipinas sa pamamagitan ng pagsasagawa ng mga *kalampagan*. Ang "kalampagan" ay literal na nangangahulugang paggawa ng ingay sa kabila ng kawalang-pansin; ipinapahayag ng kalampagan ang diwa ng malawakang demonstrasyon at pampublikong protesta. Bukod sa pagsusuri ng retorika ng pulitikal na demonstrasyon, tinatalakay ng sanaysay na ito ang mga kasanayan ng pag-aaruga ng mga aktibistang MDW sa kanilang mga organisasyon, sa isa't-isa, at sa iba pang mga migranteng manggagawa at kababaihan. Ilan lamang sa mga gawaing pag-aaruga ay ang bahaginan ng mga rekurso, pakikipagtulungan, pakikiramdam, kampanyang pagpapataas ng kaalaman, pakikipagkaisa, at pulitikal na mobilisasyon bilang suporta sa mga pagkilos para sa mas maayos na kalagayan sa trabaho, pati na rin sa mga personal at kolektibong kagalingan at pagsasakapangyarihan. Sa pamamagitan ng *participant observation*, impormal na interbyu, bolunterismo at pakikisama o *"with-ing"*, natuklasan at nakiisa ang mananaliksik sa porma ng pulitikal na pagkilos na kadalasang isinasantabi (kung hindi man pinagmumukhang masama) sa mainstream. Sinusuri ng unang bahagi ng sanaysay na ito ang aktibismo ng mga MDW sa konteksto ng *"long-distance nationalism"* (Anderson 1998) at "politics of the governed" (Chatterjee 2004) sa panahon ng krisis pampulitika at mapaminsalang pandemya. Ang ikalawang bahagi naman ng sanaysay

ay nagsisiyasat sa *field work* bilang praktis ng feministang etnograpiya.

Mga susing salita: aktibismo sa paggawa, migranteng manggagawa, feministang etnograpiya, Hong Kong, COVID-19

This article reflects on the author's experiences of conducting ethnographic fieldwork among Filipino migrant domestic worker (MDW) activists in Hong Kong during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–21). It details the challenges confronted by MDWs as the pandemic intensified long-standing issues relating to migrant labor, including workers' rights and welfare, state exactions, and social discrimination, which have long been at the center of campaigns by migrant advocacy groups in Hong Kong. However, given the restrictions on embodied, face-to-face encounters, group gathering, and collective action that COVID-19 prevention and control measures necessitated, the pandemic not only exacerbated conditions of vulnerability and exploitation faced by an already precarious population, but also presented difficulties for mass organizing and mobilization. Organizations oriented toward the improvement of MDWs' welfare struggled to provide adequate support for migrant workers in the face of continuous contingencies and strained resources. Individual members of migrant organizations faced greater barriers to participation in organizational activities, thus challenging organizations to innovate ways of sustaining movement-building in times of social distancing. The exigencies brought about by the pandemic galvanized migrant workers to strongly articulate their demands on both the Hong Kong and Philippine governments during *kalampagan*. Literally meaning noise-making, kalampagan

expresses the spirit of mass demonstration and public protest. Beyond discussing the rhetoric of political demonstrations and their contexts, this essay details the practices of care work by members and affiliates of Filipino MDW activist groups. Such care work includes resource sharing, mutual aid, affective labor, public awareness campaigns, solidarity-building, and political mobilization in support of movements aiming to secure better conditions for work and for personal and collective wellbeing and empowerment. Through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, volunteering, and *pakikisama* or "with-ing," the researcher came to explore and engage in a mode of political action that is often dismissed, if not demonized, in the mainstream. In the process, field work opened a space for exploring questions of subjectivity, positionality, relationality, intersectionality, and contextually embedded and embodied political activity. Thus, while the first part of the essay analyzes MDW activism in the context of "long-distance nationalism" (Anderson 1998) and "the politics of the governed" (Chatterjee 2004) in a time of intensified political and pandemic duress, the second part of the essay attends to the affective and relational dimensions of migrant activism, and reflects on the very process of field work as a practice of feminist ethnography.

Migrant Labor Conditions and Political Society in Hong Kong

My initiation into the lives of Filipino migrant domestic worker (MDW) activists in Hong Kong began in June 2020, when I began attending their weekly *kalampagan* (noise barrage) in Chater Road, Central. Literally meaning noise-making, kalampagan expresses the spirit of mass demonstration and public protest, with its connotation of waking one who is asleep with a clanging. Such noise-making stood in stark contrast

to the past three months, which saw vastly reduced numbers of people congregating in Central on Sunday, the one day in the week that most MDWs in Hong Kong are able to enjoy as their legally protected day of rest. In March 2020, the Hong Kong government implemented strict social distancing measures and banned the gathering of more than four people, whether indoors or outdoors, emphasizing the need to "avoid the health risk of participating in social activities" (The Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region 2020). But as Hong Kong showed signs of recovering from the first wave of COVID-19 infections and relaxed restrictions on group gathering in June 2020, Filipino MDWs were able to spend their Sundays in Central again. Months of staying cooped up in their employers' houses, forbidden from going out on their days off for fear of viral transmission, had left them hungering for not only the warmth of the company of their friends and comrades, but also the heat of political agitation and collective action.

As I walked to the protest site in Chater Road, I was struck by its raucous soundscape, so different from the quiet engendered by pandemic isolation, to which I had become accustomed. As I emerged from Exit K of Central MTR Station, I could hear people chattering, buying and selling, singing, dancing, calling one another. Lining the pavements between Prince's Building (housing luxury brands like Cartier, Chanel, and Hermès) and Statue Square (fronting the majestic Court of Final Appeal) were cheap merchandise like plastic toys, soft drinks and street food, clothing, accessories, and various bric-à-brac heaped on sheets laid on the street. People, almost all of them women, were similarly huddled on cardboard and cloth sheets on the ground, selling or sharing home-cooked food, eating, drinking, napping, dancing, chatting, gambling, belting tunes with portable karaoke machines, talking with their loved

ones on video call, painting their fingernails, or buying underwear, earphones, or linen from Tagalog-speaking hawkers of mostly South Asian descent. These sounds of living and loitering merged and clashed with speeches of political agitation and singing, which made up the protest program.

Such polyphony and discordant imagery reminded me of my very first encounter with Filipino MDWs in Central on a Sunday, back in 2016, during a brief visit to Hong Kong. What I recall until now was the shock I felt at the workers' mass and their *liveness*, the bright colors, loud sounds, pungent smells, and flurry of activity that marked their presence, in stark contrast with not only the posh shoppers and cold glass-and-steel skyscrapers of Hong Kong's central business district, but also the images of dead, victimized, hidden, or otherwise silenced women domestic workers that I had grown up with. I was five years old when Flor Contemplacion was hanged in Singapore. In school, we were shown movies about her and other women like her. At home, my siblings and I had grown up being cared for by a series of helpers, and they always deferred to my mother, who preferred it when they did as they were instructed and then kept themselves out of the way.
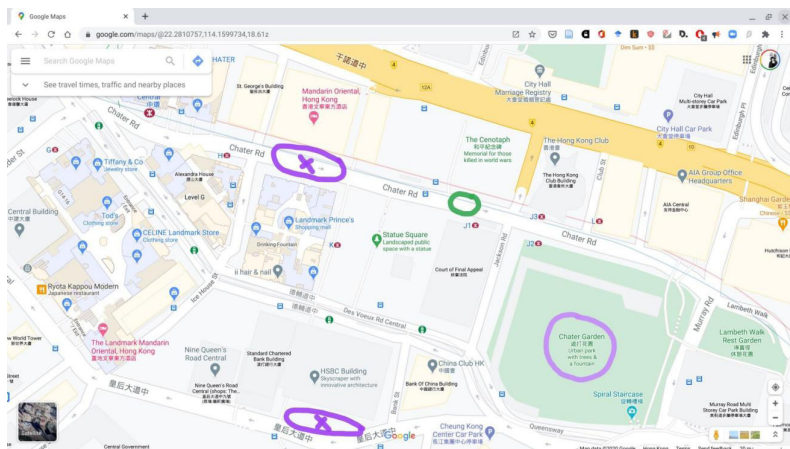
Fig. 1. The field site. The areas marked in purple are where the activists I joined regularly gathered. Chater Road is the primary site of the rallies I joined, but there were times when we held demonstrations at the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) in Admiralty.

On July 4, 2016, in Statue Square, booths and a stage were set up. That day, I learned, was the 31st anniversary celebration of the United Filipinos in Hong Kong (UNIFIL-HK). UNIFIL-HK was founded in 1985, predating Migrante International, the first global alliance of Filipino migrant organizations, established in 1996 following worldwide campaigns by overseas Filipinos for justice for Flor Contemplacion (Migrante International 2021). Since then, numerous migrant organizations have allied under the banner of UNIFIL-MIGRANTE HK to raise local awareness about social issues faced by migrant Filipinos in Hong Kong and their families back in the Philippines. The 2016 anniversary celebration foregrounded the "People's Agenda for Change," outlining the need to develop the Philippines' domestic economy through agrarian reform, national industrialization, and the protection of workers' economic rights, so that Filipinos would no longer be pushed out of the country to make a living. This document was collectively drafted by the representatives of over 150 organizations allied with UNIFIL-MIGRANTE HK, and was

addressed to the newly installed administration under President Rodrigo Duterte as much as to other MDWs. The celebration emphasized that the gains of the social movements of migrants in Hong Kong, especially the expansion of workers' rights, did not come "like manna from heaven" (said Dolores Balladares, chairperson of UNIFIL-MIGRANTE HK) but were the products of more than three decades of political organizing and lobbying with both the Philippine and Hong Kong governments. Like any struggle, Balladares said, it needed the energy of the workers' solidarity to exert pressure on the Philippine government to make good on its mandate not only to protect the rights and welfare of OFWs, but also to build conditions that would end the trend of "forced" labor migration that was institutionalized by the (older) Marcos regime.

The program featured folk and contemporary dances, singing, even a taekwondo exhibition— demonstrations that showcased the skills and artistry of the performers beyond their designated identity of "domestic worker." Yet the cheerful performances were undercut by a darker current. A contemporary dance performance by members of the feminist organization GABRIELA-HK dramatized the pains of forced migration and labor exploitation, including physical and sexual violence against domestic helpers. There was an a cappella performance of songs about how migrant workers were forced to serve the very institutions that oppressed them, but that their duty was not to simply bear the suffering (like what they were often told in church) but to change the societal conditions that perpetuated it. In media representations, it is often abusive bosses who are singularly demonized, but the problems that UNIFIL-MIGRANTE-HK emphasized were more systemic, from the labor placement agencies that the Hong Kong and Philippine governments continue to allow to operate despite unscrupulous and predatory

practices, to the lack of regulated working hours and clear standards for suitable living quarters for domestic workers (Yeung 2020).

Now, in 2020, the struggles and concerns faced by MDWs remained much the same, though aggravated by political and pandemic duress. A 2021 survey conducted by the Mission for Migrant Workers (MFMW Limited) detailed the financial and social impacts of the pandemic on MDWs. Foremost were increased monthly expenses, particularly on food, personal protective equipment (PPE), and toiletries. Such pandemic-related expenses, ranging from 100–1,000 Hong Kong Dollars (640–6,400 Philippine Pesos) per month, were not addressed by commensurate increases to monthly wages (MFMW 2022).[1] In addition to increased spending on personal necessities, the majority of MDWs surveyed by MFMW also reported increased monthly remittances to support family members who fell ill or lost their jobs, and to pay for additional costs for their children's education in the context of digitally-mediated distance learning during the pandemic.

Compounding their financial difficulties were the harms caused by the pandemic to MDWs' mental and physical wellbeing. MDWs reported increased anxiety and depression due to the isolation caused by pandemic restrictions on travel and group gatherings, including not only outings on rest days with friends, but also church attendance and visits to their families in the Philippines (MFMW 2022). Even when restrictions

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[1] Between September 2019 and September 2022, the Minimum Allowable Wage (MAW) for MDWs increased by only around 2 percent, from HK$4,630 to HK$4,730 per month. MDWs are already the lowest wage earners in Hong Kong, especially considering that they have no fixed working hours. The MAW is much lower than the Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW) for all other types of workers, who were entitled to a minimum wage of HK$37.5 per hour or around HK$6,600 per month (computing 44 hours of work per week) in 2019.

on group gatherings were relaxed, sometimes their employers disallowed MDWs from leaving the house on Sundays, fearing that MDWs would become transmitters of disease. This is a practice that MDWs criticized as a form of stigmatization, for while it is true that crowding is inevitable when MDWs congregate in Central on Sundays, the same thing can be said of any public space in urban centers in high-density Hong Kong. Additionally, many public facilities and food and entertainment establishments remained closed or reduced their capacity to conform to social distancing guidelines, while workplaces and educational institutions shifted to work-from-home arrangements and remote learning. This added to the workloads of MDWs. Such additional work included tutoring or accomplishing homework for their children's employers, and entertaining, cooking for, and cleaning up after an endless stream of invited houseguests. One of my interlocutors[2] reported that her employers often made her stay up until 2 a.m. to wash the dishes after their guests had left, even when she had to wake up at 6 a.m. to accomplish chores before preparing her employer's children for their online classes. Another interlocutor complained about being required by her employer to shower and immediately hand-wash the clothes she wore outdoors every time she left the house to buy groceries, even on cold winter days. Such increased work loads, working hours, viral exposure, and social discrimination added to their stress. It was evident that the migrant care workers of Hong Kong society were themselves in sore need of care. But who was to provide them succor?

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[2] I use the word "interlocutor" to reflect the dialogic nature of ethnographic field work, as well as the conversational mode of most of my interactions with MDWs. While I did conduct a few semi-structured interviews with key members of MDW organizations, in which I was the one asking the questions (specifically in relation to my research on Dutertismo) while they gave responses, for the most part I learned about the everyday life and organizing practices of MDWs through informal conversations at the members' *tambayan* (gathering and hang-out spot), in the course of carrying out organizational tasks alongside them, and at social gatherings like birthday and *despedida* (farewell) parties.

Along the road between The Cenotaph and the Mandarin Oriental, tarpaulins in bold colors were unfurled on the ground or strung along sidewalk railings. On these tarpaulins were written myriad social demands addressed to the Philippine government: scrap mandatory PhilHealth insurance membership and other state exactions! Junk the "Terror Bill"! Stop the killings! Oust Duterte! In front of these tarpaulins were activists holding microphones, rehearsing call-and-response chants and protest songs, distributing placards and leaflets with lyrics, preparing the sound system, and holding up the flags of the various activist organizations affiliated with UNIFIL-MIGRANTE HK. Many of the women present were wearing "campaign shirts" in red and violet and green, with slogans like "Serve The People," "*Trabaho sa Pinas, Hindi sa Labas*" (Work in the Philippines, Not Outside), "*Makibaka! Wag Matakot!*" (Join the Fight! Fear Not!"), and "A Migrant Woman's Place Is In The Struggle!"

Fig. 2. Migrants' political campaigns spanning a range of issues, from state exactions to Indigenous People's rights, to livelihood, to pandemic aid. Chater Road, Central, July 26, 2020. Photo by author.

Fig. 3. Protest with social distancing in Chater Road, Central, July 26, 2020. Photo by author.

I scanned the crowd for familiar faces—those whom I'd watched speaking in *Talakayang Migrante* or "Migrant Talks," which is a regular webinar series streamed on Facebook Live, usually on Thursdays at 10 p.m., as many MDWs begin to wind down from their daily labors. These webinars, produced by MDWs for fellow MDWs, discuss issues relevant to migrant workers, including current sectoral campaigns, workers' rights and labor legislation, tips for cultivating financial, mental, and physical wellbeing, navigating employment relations and work conditions, community news, national issues such as jeepney modernization, and ideological issues such as gender equality and indigenous peoples' struggle. The first Talakayang Migrante discusses just wages, and was livestream-recorded on August 30, 2018 (Migrante - Hong Kong). The webinar series only became a regular weekly feature of the Migrante - Hong Kong Facebook page since local conditions - namely the

2019–2020 Hong Kong Protests, otherwise known as the Anti-Extradition-Law-Amendment-Bill (ELAB) movement - and then the onset of the pandemic restricted opportunities for in-person educational discussions. Aside from webinars, UNIFIL-MIGRANTE HK also organized online film screenings, cultural performances, orientations, and other organizational events including weekly kalampagan through Zoom or Facebook whenever shifting pandemic regulations made it difficult for members to meet in person or gather en masse.

Fig. 4. Hybrid demonstration in Chater Road, Central, July 26, 2020. Part of the in-person protest program is a program on Zoom, convening representatives of progressive migrant Filipino organizations based in different countries. Photo by author.

I asked around for my contact, Leah,[3] a labor leader, the friend of a friend of a friend, and somebody pointed me to her. After introductions, she told me to stick around after the protest program for an interview with her and another labor leader, the chairperson of the Filipino Migrant Workers' Union (FMWU). Meanwhile, she said, I could observe the demonstration and take photos. It seemed that many of the activists already knew that I was going to be there to conduct participant observation and interviews. The day before, Leah had already asked me to send her a brief of my research, as well as my interview questions, which she circulated among other activists across various organizations affiliated with UNIFIL-MIGRANTE HK. I would come to learn the importance of my presence there being known to and sanctioned by the activist network: in Hong Kong, as in the Philippines, political dissidents and critics of various ideological stripes left of center are "red-tagged" by Philippine government agents or Duterte supporters as "communists," "criminals," and "terrorists," labeled enemies of the state, and their organizations, names, photos, and videos circulated in offline and online spaces, rendering them vulnerable to surveillance, doxxing, or trolling. In the Philippines, prominent environmental, labor, and human rights activists are often threatened, arrested, or killed. In Hong Kong, they were subject to insults and petty harassment from pro-Duterte factions, online and offline.

Adding to these tensions caused by homeland politics, MDW activists in Hong Kong also faced greater restrictions to public assembly and protest actions since the passage of the National Security Law (NSL) in June 2020 in response to the 2019–2020 Hong Kong Protests (Hogan 2024). Criminalizing activities that may

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[3] Not her real name. All names without an accompanying surname (e.g. Leah, Jonah, Thelma, Alex, etc.) in this text are pseudonyms, given to protect my interlocutors' anonymity and privacy.

be considered secession, subversion, terrorism, and collusion with foreign or external elements to threaten national security, the NSL has been criticized for the threats it poses to freedom of speech, and its potential weaponization against dissenting and critical voices (BBC 2024). The NSL, in addition to the onset of the pandemic, contributed to stifling the 2019–2020 Hong Kong Protests. While the law focuses on offenses that may undermine the authority of China's central government and security in Hong Kong, it has also caused migrant activists to be more careful in demonstrations, especially when it came to local political issues. The 2019–2020 Hong Kong Protests also had damaging effects on their own organizing activities, because they could not flock to Central and other places while locals also protested there. Even before the pandemic, many of their members had fallen away from the organizations because of the widespread disruptions to business-as-usual caused by the locals' protests.

Indeed, the NSL has become an important constraint on cross-sectoral alliance-building for migrant worker activists. The precarious position of MDWs in Hong Kong society means that they have to be more careful about their activities and involvement in local issues and movements, lest they be arrested or dismissed from work. They could not, for example, openly support Hong Kongers' calls for universal suffrage and sovereignty, or participate in the local protests that rocked the city for the most part of 2019 and early 2020 for fear of getting into trouble. While MDW organizations frequently draw on the framework of universal human rights to advance migrant workers' rights (Sim 2003), they hesitate to publicly express solidarity with the pro-democracy movements by local Hong Kongers, instead preferring to focus on sectoral interests whenever they addressed protests and

demands to the local Hong Kong government. Because most of their demands and criticisms are addressed to the Philippine state, the Hong Kong government is lenient with their political expression. However, if they had started openly criticizing the NSL, for example, that would be a different story.[4]

In the periphery of the protest circle in Chater Road, dancing, karaoke singing, drinking, gambling, and chattering proceeded apace. Every now and then, police carrying banners and loudspeakers blasting government COVID-19 advisories (in Cantonese, English, and Tagalog) would walk by to ensure that the people in the crowd were maintaining social distance or else face a fixed fine of HK$2,000 or about ₱13,000. Members of the activist groups, megaphones in hand, did the same, walking around and conveying the advisories in Tagalog for their fellow MDWs, many of whom disregarded social distancing rules when there were no police officers around. Although the protest circle had no more than thirty people that day, in conformity with current restrictions on mass gathering, they used no less than four speakers and numerous microphones: their messages and speeches and songs had to be heard over the din of the motley crowd, and clearly recorded by multiple mobile phones live-streaming the demonstration on Facebook for organizational members and social media followers who could not physically participate in the protest. *The people around us may not look like they're listening, but maybe they are*, the activists would later tell me in Tagalog. *We try to be as loud and visible as possible, so that they might hear*. The protest program concluded with a two-minute

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[4] That said, the transnational civic space created by migrant activism presents an opportunity for local Hong Kongers to articulate similar democratic demands while rhetorically tying such demands to the discourse of solidarity with migrant workers. While discussing the implications of the NSL for transnational solidarity-building and protest tactics is beyond the scope of this paper, this is an area that could be explored by further research.

kalampagan. The speakers enjoined the crowd to make noise to register their dissent against state repression and exploitation, and we started shouting slogans and *panawagan* (demands) at the top of our lungs, banging metal pots and pans, vigorously shaking plastic bottles filled with pebbles and coins, striking drums and gongs and metal sheets, drowning out all other ambient noise.

The issues that the labor leaders spoke about on that day were issues we would continue to speak about in the following months of my engagement with them. These included the plight of Filipino migrant workers and their families in the time of COVID-19, extortionate forms of state exaction including Overseas Employment Certificates (OECs) and mandatory contributions to the Philippine government's National Health Insurance Program, the dangers of the Anti-Terrorism Bill, the War on Drugs, human rights violations including and the extrajudicial killing of the poor, indigenous people, and activists, the ouster of President Duterte. MDW activists consistently fight for rights and better working conditions that would benefit MDWs as a class of workers in Hong Kong. However, these sectoral interests in their political discourse are not divorced from other concerns: local Hong Kong-based issues such as racism and class-based discrimination, national Philippine-related issues such as government policies, corruption, and state violence, and regional and global issues, such as human rights and international workers' solidarity amidst neocolonial and neoliberal labor regimes that feminize and devalue reproductive work (Constable 2007; Parreñas 2000).

The overlapping of sectoral, local, national, regional, and global issues in MDW activism in Hong Kong demonstrates that while many of the members and affiliates of UNIFIL-MIGRANTE HK, particularly expressly militant feminist organizations like GABRIELA-HK, embrace a feminist identity, their feminist activism

never centers the singular issue of gender. Rather, they understand their gendered experiences as migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong through an intersectional lens, connecting these experiences to other facets of their identity, primarily their class, nationality, and migrant status, but also their ethnolinguistic identity and the risks they face as activists and live-in domestic workers. Their understanding of class and gender oppression is also distinctly transnational, as they recognize forms of exclusion and discrimination that they experience as migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong and as OFWs whose identity is not only racialized but gendered, as seen in the global branding of Filipinas as "supermaids" (Guevarra 2014, 130–131), if not nurses, sex workers, or mail-order brides (Constable 2006).

Fig. 5. Activist groups reiterate their right to social aid and rest, as increased time spent by family members within the home during the pandemic also increased the work loads and working hours of domestic workers. November 1, 2020. Photo by author.

Fig. 6. Migrants Pride demonstration in Central, where the issue of gender discrimination is tied to other issues that MDWs face in Hong Kong: classist and racist discrimination, inequality, vulnerability, and overwork, exacerbated by pandemic conditions. November 22, 2020. Photo by author.

Although some of their demands, particularly relating to labor conditions and social discrimination, are addressed to the Hong Kong government, most of their demands are addressed to the Philippine state, as well as to fellow migrant Filipinos and sympathetic locals, who might be provoked into joining the struggle to initiate reforms in their home and host countries. Hong Kong in this regard functions as a relatively safe space for the articulation of political demands and dissent by migrant populations critiquing the politics of their home country—a function that Hong Kong has served since the nineteenth century for long-distance nationalists and political dissidents from various places in the region who have come to the formerly British-ruled territory

for safe haven. Indeed, many of the activists I spoke with said that it was in Hong Kong—not in Singapore or the United Kingdom or the Middle East, where some of them had worked before—that they became politicized. One reason is the established network of labor unions, activist organizations, NGOs, academics, and media practitioners in Hong Kong, which grew along with the rise of short-term labor migration to Hong Kong, particularly in the MDW sector (Sim 2003). For this reason as well, social movements by migrant worker groups in Hong Kong frequently get coverage in Hong Kong, Philippine, and international news outlets, thus exerting pressure on both Hong Kong and Philippine governments, raising public awareness, and supporting similar movements around the world.

Another reason for the politicization of MDWs in Hong Kong could be the density of the spaces migrant workers had to share, the commonality of their experiences and "everyday" and "life-times" (Highmore 2010) as domestic workers,[5] and their simultaneous distance from and proximity to the home country. Such factors kept sectoral and political issues at the forefront of their consciousness. As one of my interlocutors remarked, in Europe or North America, the lives of Filipino migrant workers can be relatively comfortable, but in Hong Kong, "*Ramdam mo ang hirap*" (You feel the hardship).

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[5] Most MDWs have the same day off work (Sunday), and congregate in a designated vehicular traffic-free area in Central, Hong Kong Island on that day. This makes it easier for MDWs to organize and mobilize for political demands, unlike in other destination countries like Singapore or Gulf states, which have greater restrictions on public assembly, especially for domestic workers. Even when the right to assembly and political expression in Hong Kong was restricted by the passage of the National Security Law (NSL), migrant workers are able to hold public demonstrations and rallies, since they are not seen as a threat to China's sovereignty. It is the activism of local Hong Kongers that is more constrained under the NSL.

"Lahat tayo nagkukuskos ng kubeta dito!" (We all have to scrub toilets here!) one of the activists shouted to the surrounding crowd that, at first glance, seemed indifferent to the protest event that afternoon. This expression was something I would hear often from the activists in relation to the recognition that though migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong may be differentiated by their ethnolinguistic, religious, and political identifications, age, educational level, and professional qualifications, and length and variety of overseas employment, as domestic workers in Hong Kong they shared the same sectoral challenges and cultural experiences. Many of them, for example, have had to deal with predatory employment agencies, apathy or disdain from the Philippine Consulate and Overseas Labor offices in Hong Kong, discrimination at home and in the host country, and gendered expectations with regard to family roles, contributing to the difficulties of long-distance relationships and parenting. Many of them have had to come to terms with becoming maids despite holding college degrees in return for thrice the wages they might earn as professionals in the Philippines.

"When my employers found out that I was a teacher in the Philippines, they asked me, why did I come to work as a helper in Hong Kong?"[6] said Leah, who proceeded to explain how she barely made the minimum wage as a primary school teacher in a provincial municipality, how she had wanted to ensure a bright future for her daughter ("my princess") but could not because she and her husband, a tricycle driver, always struggled to make ends meet. It was difficult for her to get promoted at work because as a full-time public teacher and mother, she could not afford the time and money needed to pursue graduate education. "*Sino ba'ng may gustong maging utusan?*" (Who would want

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[6] We spoke mostly in Filipino, or a mix of Filipino and English. Sentences fully in English are already translated.

to be a servant?) she said, acknowledging the devalued nature of reproductive work, be it waged or unwaged. "I decided to work here for the higher salary."[7]

Rina, another of my interlocutors, chimed in with an account of how other MDWs chide her and her comrades for their activism: their fellow MDWs tell the activists, "*Bakit kayo nagrarally? Problema yan sa Pilipinas. Bakit niyo dinadala rito? Bakit niyo dinadala rito ang mga basura? Mga basura! Nagkakalat na naman kayo dito. Yung mga problema sa Pilipinas dinadala niyo rito sa Hong Kong*!" (Why do you hold rallies here? Those are problems in the Philippines. Why are you taking them here? Why are you bringing the trash here? You trash bags! You're littering here again. The problems in the Philippines, you're taking to Hong Kong!) Rina added, They call us *"mga baliw, mga salot"* (crazies, pests) and "pangit" (ugly); They say, "*Para kayong tanga*" (You're like fools). Rina retorts,

> *Ano lang yan eh, hindi ba kayo Pilipino? Saan ba nakatira ang pamilya mo, hindi ba sa Pilipinas? Saan mo pinapadala ang sahod mo? … Saan ka uuwi? Di ba sa Pilipinas? … So bakit mo ilalayo ang isyu sa Pilipinas sa isyu ng migrante? Eh sa puno't dulo, kaya naman tayo lumalabas dahil sa problema sa Pilipinas. Dahil wala tayong mapasukan na trabaho. Ang daming college graduate dito. Madaming nurses, teachers. Ako, Fine Arts!*

> (But the thing is, aren't you also Filipinos? Where do your families live, don't they live in the Philippines? Where do you send your wages? … Where will you come home? Isn't it the Philippines? … So

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[7] Interview with the author, June 21, 2020.

> why would you separate the social issues in the Philippines from the issues faced by migrant workers? When you come down to it, the reason we go abroad is because of problems in the Philippines. Because we can't get jobs there. There are so many college graduates here. So many nurses, teachers. Me, I'm a Fine Arts graduate!)[8]

Rina's remark speaks volumes about issues usually tackled in the rich literature on the Philippine state's labor export program, which began in the 1970s, during the Marcos dictatorship. In May 1974, Marcos signed Presidential Decree 442 (Labor Code), creating state agencies (e.g. the Overseas Employment Development Board, the National Seamen Board, and the Office of Emigrant Affairs) specifically to facilitate the employment of Filipino workers abroad. The OEDB, for example, was mandated "to undertake … a systematic program for overseas employment of Filipino workers … through a comprehensive market promotion and development program," securing "the best possible terms and conditions of employment of Filipino contract workers on a government-to-government basis" and recruiting and placing "workers for overseas employment on a government arrangement" (Republic of the Philippines 1974). The law also includes a ban on direct hiring, mandating that all overseas contracts be brokered and authorized by the Department of Labor and Employment, and requires overseas Filipino contract workers to remit a portion of their foreign exchange earnings to their families and other dependents in the Philippines. The law thus formalizes the role of the state in brokering overseas employment for its citizens, and then ensuring that these overseas workers, emphatically constructed as *Filipino* citizens wherever in the world they may go, continue to fulfill the state-imposed obligation to

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[8] Interview with the author, June 21, 2020.

send dollars home, to support not only the needs and wants of migrant workers' families, but also the state's vision of export-oriented, debt-driven, foreign-capital-dependent "development." This notion of "migration for development" has been characterized by IBON International and Migrante (2009) as a "myth," for while migration "is doubtless effective in temporarily reducing poverty of particular households while remittances are received … there is little reason to believe that it is able to make a dent on structural and systemic poverty" (2).

The state's program of providing global capitalist engines with cheap, mobile, flexible, contingent, and skilled labor able to deliver "world-class" service at Third World prices was initially conceived as a temporary solution to political-economic crises. At the time of the Marcos dictatorship, the state required dollar remittances to help offset trade deficits, finance ballooning public debt, and maintain social stability in the face of worsening poverty, unemployment, depressed wages, and crony capitalism and corruption siphoning funds from state coffers (de Dios et al 2021). However, through successive administrations that continued to promote this policy as a means of alleviating or foreclosing domestic crises (including communist insurgency), labor export has become a seemingly permanent feature of Philippine political economy and culture. With it have come legitimating official discourses that herald overseas workers as "*bagong bayani*" or the new heroes of the nation, and construct their departure as heroic sacrifice in the name of family and country (Rodriguez 2002). Such rhetoric of the heroism of workers whose lives are structurally rendered disposable was eerily echoed during the height of the pandemic (Sales 2021). While the government touted the significance of "essential workers" in healthcare, food, transportation, sales, and sanitation services, it failed to give them sufficient support in terms of material aid like PPE,

and health and safety measures. It is worth noting that healthcare, like domestic work, is a highly feminized sector, with women accounting for 75% of the workers in the industry (Gender in Humanitarian Action 2020).

It is this discourse of legitimation for the exploitation of Filipino workers within the country and abroad that militant leftist organizations like Migrante call attention to and contest. Time and again, I have heard my interlocutors use terms like "*taga-kuskos ng kubeta*" (toilet scrubbers), "*utusan*" (servant, literally "one who takes orders"), and "*gatasang baka*" (milking cow) to describe their relationships with their work, their employers (usually called "*amo*" or "master"), and the Philippine state, respectively. The image of toilet-scrubbing to portray the shared experiences of MDWs as a sector evokes intimate but unwanted dirty and degrading labor. It is also a symbol of the downward social mobility of many migrant workers, many of whom had a professional education, or had worked more esteemed jobs in the Philippines before migrating to Hong Kong for economic reasons. The common usage of "*utusan*" and "*amo*" to denote employee-employer relations in the specific context of domestic work (but also in other forms of contractual labor in service industries) bring to the fore the huge power differential between the two parties, the manifold dependencies of the migrant worker on their employer, and the vulnerabilities and potential for abuse that such a situation creates, especially in a place like Hong Kong, which requires domestic workers to live in their employers' abode and harness their everyday-times to their employers' shifting schedules, living arrangements, moods, and demands. The image of the Philippine government treating migrant workers as "milking cows" is an admonishment of not only the state's commodification of its own citizens, but also its failure (or reluctance) to generate sufficient employment, ensure a living wage for all, and

provide welfare services, effectively forcing Filipinos to leave their families and seek employment abroad to survive—even in the midst of a global pandemic, which saw record numbers of medical professionals leaving the Philippines for greater pay overseas (Reuters 2021).

Such failure to promote the economic rights of its citizens manifests not only domestically, but also transnationally. The Philippine state may extend limited citizenship rights (such as legal assistance and absentee voting) to overseas Filipinos through a vast network of Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLOs) in numerous destination countries all around the world, but as the sociologist Robyn M. Rodriguez argues, these agencies function more to enforce the obligations the state claims over its diasporic populations:

> the state disciplines workers as particular kinds of citizens: citizens who pay their taxes [and] send their remittances to their families in the Philippines…. Ultimately, the state disciplines its citizens, who are … the state's most profitable export … to secure an income for the government's coffers and to discipline flexible laborers for the global economy. … [But] in terms of economic rights, it makes limited interventions on behalf of workers. (Rodriguez 2002, 349)

The states of both sending and destination countries tend to treat migrant workers more as "populations" subject to transnational governmentality in the service of the interests of national elites and globalized capital, than as citizens invested with inherent rights and entitlements. This situation is captured by slogans often chanted by migrant Filipino activists in Central or in front of the Philippine Consulate General in Admiralty: "*Serbisyo, Hindi Negosyo*" (Service, Not Business")

and "Scrap, Not Suspension" (of state exactions, such as mandatory membership in privatized health insurance that may only be claimed in the Philippines). Such protest language that centers the onerous and exploitative nature of "state exactions," the "labor export program," and "forced migration" thus serve as counter-discourses to the efforts of the Philippine state to discipline its transnational populations under the signs of nationalism and development. These counter-discourses consistently foreground how the state's labor export program not only separates families and exposes migrant workers to precarious working and living conditions in other countries; it also allows the consumption-driven Philippine economy to withstand crises, even as unemployment, informality, precarity, and depressed wages persist in domestic labor markets, especially in the context of pandemic-exacerbated economic recession.

In this light, it is not surprising that OFWs, especially migrant domestic workers, are invested in the politics of the homeland, because in many cases, they are unable to gain citizenship in their destination countries, where they are employed on a contractual basis. Unlike the diasporic Filipino *Balikbayan* (the dual citizen who resides and works in another country and returns to the homeland for occasional vacations), the migrant Filipino domestic worker in Hong Kong has no right of abode in the city, has no path to citizenship, and must leave Hong Kong once their contract is terminated; the standard contract is two years. They are also largely unable to integrate with the local population. The insecurity of their belonging to Hong Kong society because of their class, ethnolinguistic, and cultural otherness, as well as their lack of the right of abode in this territory, has meant that even though many of them had lived in Hong Kong for twenty or thirty years, have grown old there, and now feel distant from their relatives and communities in the

Philippines, the only "home" that they have and would have to return to is the Philippines. This is captured by the term "for good," which they use whenever plans for the future come up, or whenever somebody flies back to the home country. "Are you going back there for a visit?" they ask. "Or are you going back there for good?" Many of those who had thought that they would spend just one or two contract terms in Hong Kong, and then go back home "for good" have been in Hong Kong for over a decade. Their precarious and marginal position in Hong Kong society and their negotiations with the Philippine state, combined with their reliance on social media to maintain ties with their families in the Philippines, mark their significance in relation to what Benedict Anderson (1998) called "long-distance nationalism" in the digital age. A huge part of what animates their participation in nationalist projects and the politics of the homeland is the overarching awareness that whether they return sooner or later, their futures are tied up with the Philippine nation-state.

This is the context of the oppositional politics practiced by migrant worker activists in Hong Kong. As Partha Chatterjee (2004) argued, "political society" arose as a consequence of governmental systems in "most of the world," systems that exclude from its ambit "populations" that exist in conditions of informality and have limited access to public goods and services. Unlike "civil society," which negotiates with the state within a legal arena, "political society," which exists in a gray zone outside legality, mobilizes to collectively bargain or contend with the state in order to secure resources for the dispossessed and underprivileged. This "politics of the governed" is founded on shared experiences of marginalization and precarity as a counterpoint to often elitist liberal discourses and their assumptions of equal rights and equal knowledge of and access to those rights.

Learning to be Migrante: Subjectivity, Positionality, and Relationality in Political Activity

My initial aim for conducting ethnographic field work was to augment the gaps in my perspective on contemporary Philippine politics through more grounded and participatory research, especially with regard to "long-distance nationalism" (Anderson 1998) and "the politics of the governed" (Chatterjee 2004). At the time, I was conducting my Ph.D. research on the discourses of liberal democracy and populism in relation to the rise of Dutertismo, whose discourse circulated not only in the Philippines, but also globally (Reynaldo 2021). When I began field research in June 2020, I thought that I would go to Central for a few Sundays to observe political demonstrations and conduct qualitative interviews. I ended up going to Central for over a year until I left Hong Kong in August 2021 to participate in protests, educational discussions, outreach and welfare programs, and other organizational activities. I usually went there for two to four Sundays a month and stayed from mid-morning or noon until dusk, unless prohibited from doing so because of the government's implementation of stricter protocols on social distancing, exposure to COVID-positive individuals, heavy rain, illness, or exhaustion. In that time, I joined two organizations: one, composed mostly of MDWs, focused on migrant women's rights and welfare; the other, composed of advanced students and professionals in Hong Kong, focused on solidarity-building across various sectors and classes to promote human rights in the Philippines. Both organizations are affiliated with UNIFIL-MIGRANTE HK and aligned with broader formations that espouse militant leftist ideology and politics.

For these organizations, I have written, copy edited, or translated statements, letters, press releases, reports, brochures, and programs; designed flyers, certificates, and protest materials; taken photos and videos to document events; procured and printed forms for filing labor complaints at the Philippine Overseas Labor Office in Hong Kong (POLO HK) and gone to POLO to accompany and assist complainants; attended educational discussions and film screenings and webinars on national, regional, and international political situations, migrant labor, and workers' rights; helped plan for and played emcee at events; gave speeches at rallies; conducted informative propaganda; helped provide migrant welfare services, like distributing face masks and sanitizers and doing blood pressure checks; made videos for political campaigns; created social media content; brought food for sharing with the group; gone to farewell and birthday dinner parties in the street (and did not dance); carried protest materials to the organization's rented storage facility; sold charity raffle tickets; and provided impromptu counseling. In carrying out these tasks alongside my interlocutors, I quickly came to see that Sundays are far from being rest days for migrant activists. Rather, Sunday is often the busiest day of their week, especially when there is always a *kababayan* who needs help.

As I came to engage more with the members and activities of UNIFIL-MIGRANTE, I desired my ethnographic engagement with MDWs to be not merely extractive, but to contribute to their campaigns for just conditions of working and living in Hong Kong, keeping in mind that "supporting the struggle of people whose lives are marked and marred by structural inequalities" is a central concern of feminist thinking and research (Davis and Craven 2023, 8). The processes of *pakikisama* or "with-ing" and *pakikiisa* or uniting with MDWs in their struggles and working

to effectively collaborate with them in carrying out various organizational activities pushed me to confront questions of subjectivity, positionality, and relationality in both political participation and research. In particular, I struggled to negotiate my ambiguous position as an "outsider within" (Zavella 1993, 56). Although I shared many political beliefs, cultural practices, and social realities with my interlocutors as I, too, was a woman, a feminist, and a Filipina, I was embedded in different material and professional contexts. My social location as a Ph.D. scholar in Hong Kong and a professor in the Philippines made me sensitive to not only questions of power and hierarchy in the research encounter, but also made me acknowledge the ideological and practical limits to my participation in MDWs' political campaigns. For example, one of my interlocutors, Ate Thelma, guided me through the process of learning about migrant issues and activism within the political and ideological frames espoused by the organization. During our educational discussions (EDs), she would sometimes tell me that she felt intimidated and insecure when she spoke with me. She said that she was unsure if she was equipped to teach me, given that in terms of formal education, I was supposedly more educated than she is. But my formal education is very different from the kind of education her life experiences have afforded her, as an older indigenous woman, a single mother, a migrant domestic worker, and a labor organizer. These differences, while sometimes causing moments of hesitation, awkwardness, shame, and disagreement, could also be generative. In the space of dialogue between us, I was able to better interrogate my own standpoint, assumptions, and knowledge, and reflect on how these influenced my political beliefs and activity.

When my interlocutors among the migrant activists asked me for how long I had been living in Hong Kong, and I replied that I had been there for over

three years, they were surprised and asked, What took you so long to come to us? Didn't you know about our struggles here? I said, I did know. I did not say, But I didn't go for the same reason that I am usually the only non-MDW sitting and chatting and eating with them on the pavement behind the HSBC Building, or in the middle of Chater Road, or in the pedestrian bridges around Tamar Park. I said, I was very busy with research and seminars and conferences and teaching duties these past few years. I did not say, My privileged position as a non-local scholar with guaranteed funding from the Hong Kong government means that as a matter of bare necessity, I did not have to participate in the social movements of migrants here.

A senior member of the organization I was immersed in, a genderqueer lesbian whom I would call Alex, told me that though I was welcome to join their activities as part of my research, it might be more meaningful and beneficial for me and for them if I joined their struggles not just as a curious and sympathetic observer looking in, but as someone who learns to see from the inside by owning and embodying the position of "migrant" and "activist"—that is, a position that is at once vulnerable and agential. Among all my relationships with the members of the organizations, my relationship with Alex was perhaps the most challenging. While the other members just let me participate at my leisure,[9] since they knew that I joined them as a researcher, Alex considered with gravity the implications of my involvement. They consistently reminded me of the difference and the privileges afforded by my subject position, and consequently the effort I must undertake to bridge that difference and attempt to inhabit their point of view, or at least to approximate it, to see things, so to speak, from

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[9] In Tagalog, we call this *saling-kitkit*, or one who joins a game but has no real stakes in the play, and thus is included in a limited and contingent sense, in the spur of the moment and according to immediate needs and circumstances.

their place on cardboard mats on the ground. "You must learn to be a migrant" was their favorite phrase to say to me. "*Masanay ka sa init, sa pagod*," (Get used to the heat, to exhaustion), they would tell me over the phone while they washed the dishes or cooked dinner and I sat on my desk trying to write. "*Huwag ka magtago*" (Don't hide), they would tell me when they noticed me observing their activities more than actively participating in them. Another time: "You know the theory and the history, you have read the books. What does it matter? Now you have to practice. And struggle alongside the masses."

What does it mean to be a "migrant activist," especially in times of heightened precarity? How does such political consciousness emerge, and how is it organized?

When I first expressed interest in joining the mobilizations of Filipino activists in Hong Kong, it was Ate Jona who made sure that I followed through. For a few weeks after I first attended a protest in Central, Ate Jona would text me every day. "*How are you doing, Ading?*[10] *Don't sleep too late. Are you going down to Central this Sunday? We have a* Talakayang Migrante *this Thursday, you should watch it if you have time.*" Or, after a demonstration, "*Have you gotten home safely? Always take care.*" At first I felt discomfited by these regular check-ins, and then I got used to them. Later, when the members of UNIFIL-MIGRANTE HK and GABRIELA-HK started teaching me how to approach and talk to MDWs, they would tell me how important it was to make people feel that I had them in mind, that they were seen, and that they were significant, especially when their everyday lives in Hong Kong were already marked with marginalization. As one of my interlocutors said, "You don't want to make

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[10] Ilocano for "sister," commonly used instead of the Tagalog "Ate," because demographically, Ilocanos comprise the highest percentage of MDWs in Hong Kong.

them feel like you're just talking to them so that they would attend our weekly demonstrations. You want to make them feel that you care about them, even when it's not a Sunday. You always have to consider what they might *feel*."

Within the organizations, ties akin to family also develop, as expressed in the terms of affection and practices of care with which members treat each other. Aside from the word *kasama* (akin to "comrade" or "companion"), familial terms like *nanay* (mother) or *ate/manang/ading* (sister), if not *ganda* ("beautiful") are also often used by members to refer to one another. Aside from discussions about history, politics, and migrant issues, members of organizations also make it a point to check in with each other regularly and share what else is going on in their lives. The practices of *pagbubukas* and *pagpapaabot* (literally, "to open [up]" and "to reach [out]," respectively), through which members talk about concerns that may affect their participation in activities and completion of organizational tasks, are de rigueur. If information or explanations are not readily offered, a member who seems to be struggling is outright asked what the matter is. When an explanation is given, the rest of the group is updated about the matter, and advice or assistance extended to the member concerned if necessary. The point of this practice is collective responsibility for one another, for the benefit of each and the entire group. When a member is ailing or tired or prohibited from leaving the employer's house, other members step up to pick up the slack, so that organizational aims are not derailed. In this way, the labor of *pakikialam*, in its senses of caring, curiosity, knowing, and intervention, becomes a praxis.

Aside from affective forms of organizational labor, migrant activist groups also center *pagtulong* or the provision of concrete help and assistance to

other MDWs in their activities. As discussed in the introduction of this paper, the pandemic increased workloads, working hours, and financial and health-related stresses for MDWs, without commensurate compensation or adequate rest. Many MDWs were also terminated on the grounds of illness, in violation of the Employment Ordinance. As such, labor organizations, in cooperation with NGOs like Mission for Migrant Workers (MFMW) and Bethune House, periodically conducted outreach activities involving the provision of legal advice, health services, and shelter. Walking around Central to distribute face masks, hand sanitizers, and information kits containing leaflets about current COVID regulations and migrant labor rights, members facilitated educational discussions about common employment concerns, such as annual and sick leaves, termination, long service benefits, severance pay, and other entitlements, so that fellow MDWs can be better guided in asserting their rights. Such activities belie the common stereotype of activism as only a politics of protest; the activism of MDWs in Hong Kong show that at its heart, activism is a politics of communal support, of relationality and care, and that the work it involves extends far beyond weekly noise barrages.

Fig. 7. Migrants Caring Center. November 8, 2020. Photo by author.

The practices of *pakikiisa, pakikisama, pagbubukas, pagpapaabot, pakikialam,* and *pagtulong* of course, are not without conflict or tension. As in any organization, members have varying levels of commitment, willingness, and capability to care and take action. When not everyone in the group manages to fulfill their responsibilities, organizational labor is often unevenly distributed. Sometimes, leaders complain about members shirking their tasks and making excuses about being in contact with a COVID patient or not being given permission by their employers to leave the house on their day off, when actually, they used that day for leisurely activities. Despite this, members persist in the work of collective empowerment and service to the community in the belief that commitment to and participation in the work of activism depends on one's *kakayanan* or "capacity." Kakayanan is understood in both pragmatic and ideological terms as material and energetic resources, and political consciousness and sense of justice. As Alex said when I asked them about what motivated them to be an activist, "*Hindi ko matanggap na wala akong magawa para tumulong.*" (I could not accept that I was helpless to help.)

Such attention to feeling and the wellbeing of the whole human person, and the cultivation of interpersonal relationships and a sense of belonging to one another demonstrate the feminist ethics of care and responsibility that characterize the organizing style of my interlocutors (Lindemann 2019). Such a style is made more important by the particular challenges that MDWs face. Tadiar observed that "the political potential domestic helpers bear as a group" derived from the "disruption of older support systems and the creation of new ones" (Tadiar 1997, 171). Uprooted from their social support networks, receiving barely any assistance from overseas Philippine government agencies, largely excluded from local Hong Kong society and affluent

spaces of consumption, and congregating en masse in designated public areas on Sundays, many MDWs are, perforce, driven to seek community and assistance from pre-established groups. Many of the MDWs in the organizations I am immersed in said that they joined the movement because they themselves had received assistance from these organizations, for example in reclaiming illegal fees charged by agencies, seeking shelter upon being summarily terminated, or dealing with employers who withhold wages, confiscate passports, force them to clean other people's shops or homes, or otherwise break the terms of their contract. In turn, they also wished to serve their fellow migrants in the community, as this heightened their awareness of their own agency and gave them a sense of fulfillment and significance. In this way, activism for my interlocutors is not only an imperative for survival under oppressive regimes, but also a process of emancipatory self-transformation and an expression of hope for the future. I wished to approach ethnographic research in a similar spirit. As Sim (2003, 485) writes, "research produces not just a reflection of the world as is. Rather, research is a performative practice that produces knowledge on which the world to come is shaped."

Conclusion

In beginning ethnographic field work, I meant to ask my interlocutors about their political practices, their thoughts and feelings about Duterte, and how the rise of Dutertismo affected their relationships or political views. In doing so, I wished to augment the gaps in my perspective and analysis of contemporary Philippine populist politics through more grounded and participatory research. As time went on, I realized that these questions were of lesser significance to my interlocutors than the everyday work of "*pagpapalawak at pagpapalakas ng ating hanay*" (broadening and

strengthening our collective formation) in order to more effectively fight for their rights.

The first and greater part of this essay discussed the challenges to community organizing, mobilization, and other fundamental activities of migrant activism caused by the pandemic and local political conditions. It detailed some of the strategies adopted by migrant activists, such as shifting to online modes of organizing and protest and focusing on the immediate welfare needs of MDWs to respond to these challenges. It also contextualized the political demands articulated by MDW activists within the frames of the Philippines' labor export policy, the long-distance nationalism of OFWs that rose with it, and the marginalization of MDWs in Hong Kong.

In doing fieldwork, I have tried to learn what it means to live as a migrant—not just "migrant" in the sense of somebody who has crossed transnational borders, but the experience of precarity and dislocation that that movement entails, especially for one whose upward economic mobility is gained at the expense of downward social mobility. Dialectical engagement and active participation in my interlocutors' organizing strategies engendered a process of learning and unlearning and unpacking the contexts of the subject-formation and political activity of my research participants as well as my own. Thus, the second part of this essay delved into the relational and affective dimensions of migrant organizing, and reflected on my own positionality as a researcher engaged in feminist ethnography.

My examination of a marginal population— marginal in both Hong Kong and the Philippines— contributes to understanding spaces for intervening in politics-as-usual, by presenting a site of possibility for negotiating power in the shared struggle to create

structures for more livable lives. Such an accounting becomes particularly significant in the context of crisis, which manifests both destructive and creative potential. What can and should be built, as institutions and accustomed practices fall apart? Answering this question demands a consideration of the conditions and practices that enable the many to sustainably participate in collective political action. In this regard, there is much to be learnt from the activism of migrant domestic workers, who refuse to be constructed as merely victims of structural inequalities, and instead carve for themselves, through sustained organizational care work and collective political action, spaces for exercising agency.

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TALA UKOL SA MGA KONTRIBYUTOR

Flordeliz Agra (faagra1@up.edu.ph) is currently a Senior Science Research Specialist from the Education Division of the University of the Philippines-Resilience Institute. At UPRI, she is involved in various community-based projects and research, in the development of a micro-credential course entitled "Basics of Resilience," and is also part of the task force in charge of developing a graduate course on climate and disaster resilience to be offered in 2025. She is also a licensed Forester and a Geographer. She has worked in various organizations in different capacities: the national government, the academe, and NGOs. She is also currently pursuing her second graduate studies in Disaster Risk Resilience. She hopes to help in developing capacities that will empower organizations, institutions, and communities towards disaster resilience. Her research interests include environmental and forest management and disaster risk reduction and management.

Hazel C. Lamberte (hclamberte@up.edu.ph) is a graduate of Bachelor of Science in Social Work and Master of Social Work, with Clinical Concentration. Presently, she is a Ph.D. candidate in the Philippine Studies program of the University of the Philippines, specializing in the socio-cultural field. Dissertation title (for final defense this semester): "Bahay Ampunan: The Filipino Values in Residential Care Facilities for Children."

She is a child welfare practitioner with broad knowledge and experience in using child welfare and protection framework, working with abused children in residential care facilities, and being a child helpline social worker for 3 years. For six years, she served as a member of the Inter-country Adoption Board Placement Committee of ICAB, the Philippine central authority on inter-country adoption, representing the social work profession.

She has more than ten years of teaching social work practice to undergrad and graduate level and training social work practitioners in the field of child welfare. Presently, she is a Child Placement Committee member for Inter-Country adoption of the National Authority for Child Care.

Also, she co-produces/anchors a multi-awarded community radio program called "Sikhay Kilos Radio" at DZUP 1602 that features issues and challenges in social development, including child welfare and protection. She is involved in several social development researches focusing on different types of Children in Need of Special Protection (CNSP), including impact assessment and process evaluation. She has authored and co-wrote local and international publications and presented papers on children at both international and local conferences.

Charlene Alexia N. Cumal (cncumal@up.edu.ph) graduated Magna Cum Laude at the University of the Philippines Manila with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Behavioral Science. She recently obtained a certification as a Human Resource Associate (CHRA) from the Human Resource Educators' Association of the Philippines (HREAP), Inc. At present, she is earning her second degree in Nursing at the National University Manila. Aside from her academic endeavors, Charlene is also an experienced leader championing her interest in healthcare and social justice. She is passionate about volunteering and joining community-driven activities. In 2023, she was chosen as one of the Philippine youth delegates for the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths - Association of Southeast Asian Nations (JENESYS ASEAN) - Japan Golden Friendship Exchange. Charlene is a membership nominee for Pi Gamma Mu International Honor Society in Social Sciences in 2024 and Phi Kappa Phi International Honor Society University of the Philippines for the years 2023-2024.

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Emmanuel M. Luna (emlunaupri@gmail.com) is a retired Professor of Community Development from the College of Social Work and Development, University of the Philippines, Diliman and a former Director of the Education Division, University of the Philippines. In the last three decades, Dr. Luna has been involved in training development workers and in holistic and transformational development, community organizing, and research in church ministry. He has extensive practice in community organizing, action research, participatory monitoring and evaluation, and social-environmental impact studies. Specializing in community-based disaster risk management, Dr. Luna has published several papers in national and international journals. He is a lifetime member of The Honor Society of Phi Kappa and the Pi Gamma Mu Honor Society.

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Her most recent engagement involves capacity-building for East and Southeast Asian (ESEA) women in the UK through the development and co-production of a migrant women's module and a comprehensive guide for ESEA women, along with facilitating train-the-trainer sessions for the module.

Andrea is a recipient of the U.P. Manila Gawad Chancellor Outstanding Award for Public Service and the One U.P. Faculty Award in Teaching and Public Service. She continues to advocate for mental health and well-being in vulnerable communities through training programs for various organizations, schools, communities, government agencies, and Philippine embassies.

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DGR Editorial Team

Judy M. Taguiwalo (jmtaguiwalo2@gmail.com) is an activist and former University of the Philippines Diliman women's studies professor who consistently worked to advance the rights of women, workers, and marginalized communities. She is the founding National President of the All U.P. Academic Employees Union and one of the pioneers in establishing the All U.P. Workers' Alliance. She served as the Director of the U.P. Center for Women's Studies and as a faculty regent of the U.P. Board of Regents. She is also the First Chair of the Department of Women and Development Studies after its transformation from the Women and Development Program of the College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD) and a former Director of CSWCD's Research and Extension for Development Office (REDO). Her awards include the 2009 U.P. Alumni Association Distinguished Alumni Award in Gender Equality/Women Empowerment. In 2024 , she was honored with the "Gawad Tandang Sora" by the Quezon City government for "advancing women's empowerment, human rights,

and gender equality." Beyond the university, she also served as the Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). She is a member of the Board of Trustees (BOT) of the UPSARDF, a foundation assisting the U.P. College of Social Work and Community Development, and the BOT of IBON Inc., a non-governmental research institution. She is currently a member of the National Executive Committee of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN), a multisectoral formation of people's organizations working for national and social liberation. Among her scholarly contributions is the book *Babae, Obrera, Unyonista: Ang Kababaihan sa Kilusang Paggawa sa Maynila, 1901-1941* published by the University of the Philippines Press.

Anna Myrishia Villanueva (arvillanueva@up.edu.ph) is a transformative leader and a counselor committed to advancing gender equality and psychosocial wellness. As the Coordinator of the U.P. Diliman Gender Office, Anna has driven multiple initiatives to combat and respond to acts of gender-based violence (GBV), including authoring and spearheading the U.P. Diliman Protocol for GBV Prevention and Response and its application software. This comprehensive digital tool is invaluable to first responders and support systems with accessible protocols and resources to address GBV effectively.

Anna's work is centered on delivering a robust and customized support mechanism for victim-survivors, ensuring responsive and survivor-centric care while also facilitating restorative support programs for offenders aimed at accountability and behavioral change. Anna is a licensed guidance counselor and a mental health, feminist, and gender-affirmative counselor working with people of different genders to help them navigate safely and positively within themselves and society.

She is also active in many fields, including education and advocacy. Anna also participates in mental health networks, anti-sexual harassment councils, sexual reproductive health, and many other joint activities. Anna's ongoing Ph.D. in Education (Guidance) reflects her enduring commitment to refining mental health and gender-responsive practices. A prolific speaker and published writer, she continues to champion conversations on women, gender equity, LGBTQIA+ rights, and holistic psychosocial well-being.

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Steph is also a cultural worker and a labor rights activist. Some of her works as a playwright have been staged at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, University of the Philippines Diliman, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde, and at the St. Paul's College Pasig. At present, she is part of several rights and welfare committees of the University of the Philippines, such as the Technical Working Group on Contractualization; Research, Extension and Professional Staff Fellowship Committee; and Office of Anti-Sexual Harassment Hearing Committee (2022).

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Sarah Grace N. Valdez (snvaldez@up.edu.ph) is currently a student at the College of Arts and Letters, University of the Philippines Diliman. She is the Program Associate of the Research, Publication, and Extension Program at the U.P. Diliman Gender Office and the editorial associate of the Diliman Gender Review. Her affiliations include the Alliance of Contractual Employees in U.P., U.P. Repertory Company, and the Phi Delta Alpha Sorority. Apart from academic work, she also works in events and production management.

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illustrator for the *Diliman Gender Review* for the past seven years.

Karl Ivan Dan Orit (karl.orit@gmail.com) is a full-time communications campaigner for an environmental NGO, and also works as a freelance book designer. He is an active member of Linangan sa Imahen, Retorika, at Anyo (LIRA), who has become a fellow of various national writing workshops, published his works in journals, and has won national contests for his poetry.

PANAWAGAN PARA SA MGA PAPEL 2025

Tumatanggap ang *Diliman Gender Review* ng mga artikulo sa wikang Filipino at Ingles. Bukas ito sa anumang artikulong pangkababaihan at pangkasarian mula sa iba't ibang disiplina, at larangan tulad ng pagtuturo, pananaliksik, gawaing ekstensyon at administratibo. Bukas din ito sa mga artikulo tungkol sa iba't ibang sektor, mga napapanahong isyu, mga rebyu ng aklat, tesis, disertasyon, pelikula, mga produktong pangmidya, malikhaing akda kabilang na ang mga tula, dula, sining, biswal, komiks, at iba pa. Sumasailalim ang mga artikulo sa *double-blind review*. Para sa mga susunod na isyu, ipangunguna ang mga artikulong may kaugnayan sa:

MGA TEMA:

1. Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE)
2. Mga usaping pangkalalakihan (*masculinities)*
3. Mga karanasang pang-akademikong nilalapatan ng perspektibang pangkasarian
4. Edukasyon at serbisyong pampubliko
5. Pananaliksik (*food and water security, health sufficiency, biodiversity, sustainable community)*
6. *Social scripts*: paniniwala, kumbersasyon, dayalog sa pagitan ng mga henerasyon, relasyon at kasarian
7. Karanasan sa GAD *mainstreaming*
8. Prostitusyon
9. Institusyong panlipunan: pamilya, barkada, simbahan, paaralan, midya, gubyerno, *sports*
10. *Misogyny*
11. Seksismo at seksistang wika
12. Migrasyon at pandaigdigang sitwasyon
13. Midya, *social media, fake news, fraud*, pabrikasyon
14. Kalusugan at isyung medikal, *reproductive health*, STDs, *mental health*

15. Simbahan, ispiritwalidad at relihiyon
16. Mga pananaliksik sa kababaihang Muslim at mga pangkat etniko
17. Mga isyung pangkabataan (*teenage marriage, teenage pregnancy,* mga isyung pansekswalidad)
18. Mga batas at lehislasyon
19. Karahasang sekswal, VAWC
20. Neoliberalismo, pambansang sitwasyon
21. Peminismo at mga pakikibakang peminista
22. Kalagayan at pakikibakang LGBTQIA++
23. Kapaligiran, kalikasan at kalamidad

PANUNTUNAN SA PAGPAPASA NG AKDA:

1. Orihinal, hindi pa nailalathala sa anumang publikasyon;
2. May habang 25-30 pahina ang artikulo, *double-spacing* kasama ang mga larawan/ilustrasyon at sanggunian o 6,000-8,000 salita;
3. Gamitin ang Chicago Manual of Style (sistemang awtor-petsa) sa buong dokumento;
4. Lagyan ng *caption* at *source* na ginamit sa bawat larawan/biswal ng artikulo;
5. Tungkulin ng awtor na kumuha ng *informed consent* kaugnay ng kanyang akda, sa teksto man o sa mga larawan/ biswal na ginamit;
6. Walang pangalan ang artikulo. Isumite sa nakahiwalay na papel ang *bionote* ng may-akda na may 300-500 salita;
7. May abstrak na 300-500 salita. Kung ang artikulo ay nasa Filipino, magsumite ng titulo at abstrak sa Ingles. Kung ang artikulo ay nasa Ingles, magpasa ng abstrak sa Filipino;
8. Ang mga abtrak ay dapat may limang (5) susing-salita sa Ingles at Filipino;
9. Times New Roman ang *font*; 12 ang sukat;

10. May bilang ng pahina sa kanan, itaas na bahagi ng pahina;
11. May *margin* na 1" sa lahat ng gilid ng papel at *justified* sa kaliwa at kanan ang *format* ng teksto; at
12. Gamitin ang Excel sa mga talahanayan.

IPADALA ANG KONTRIBUSYON AT MGA KATANUNGAN SA:

I-email ang inyong kontribusyon na nasa PDF at Word format sa genderreview.updiliman@up.edu.ph na may *subject line* na: [DGR Volume 6] Apelyido, Pangalan - "Pamagat ng Artikulo". I-address ang inyong email kay Anna Myrishia Villanueva, RGC, Tagapangulo ng DGR Executive Board. Ang huling araw ng pagsusumite ay sa **Mayo 25, 2025**.

Para sa mga katanungan, maaaring ipadala ito sa e-mail address sa itaas o kaya sa updgo@up.edu.ph

DGR CALL FOR PAPERS 2025

The Diliman Gender Review is accepting submissions (in both Filipino and English). We invite researchers, scholars, and academics to submit original papers on women and gender research from various disciplines within the fields of teaching, research, extension, and administration work. Articles on different sectors, current events, and timely issues, as well as reviews of books, theses, dissertations, and media forms and products, creative works such as poems, plays, visual art, comics, among others, are also welcome. All submissions to the DGR are required to undergo a double-blind review.

SELECTION OF THEMES:

1. Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression (SOGIE)
2. Masculinities
3. Academic experiences and reflections on gender perspective
4. Education and public service
5. Research (food and water security, health sufficiency, biodiversity, sustainable community)
6. Social scripts: beliefs, conversations, dialogue between generations, relationships, and gender
7. Experiences in GAD mainstreaming
8. Prostitution
9. Social institutions: family, friends, church, school, media, government, sports
10. Misogyny
11. Sexism and gender-sensitive language
12. Migration and the Global Situation
13. Media, Social Media, Fake News, Fraud, and Fabrication
14. Health and Medical Issues
15. The Church, Religion, and Spirituality

16. Research on Muslim Women and Indigenous Peoples
17. Teenage Issues and Problems (Teenage Marriage, Teenage Pregnancy, Sexuality)
18. Laws and Legislation
19. Sexual Violence, VAWC
20. Neoliberalism and the National Situation
21. Feminism and Feminist Movements and Struggles
22. LGBTQIA++ Issues and Struggles
23. Nature, the Environment, and Calamities

AUTHOR INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Submissions must be original and unpublished;
2. Papers should be double-spaced and up to 25-30 pages long (6,000 to 8,000 words);
3. Papers should be formatted following the Chicago Manual of Style (author-date system);
4. All photos/ graphics must be captioned and properly attributed to their sources;
5. The author is responsible for securing informed consent and permissions required for all texts and/or graphics utilized in the submission;
6. Author names and affiliations shall not appear on papers submitted for review, and their 300-500 word author bio notes should be submitted separately;
7. Authors should provide English titles and 300-500 word abstracts for submissions in Filipino. For submissions written in English, an extended abstract in Filipino (single-spaced, 1-2 pages long) is required;
8. Abstracts should be accompanied by five (5) keywords in both Filipino and English;
9. Submissions must be in Times New Roman font, size 12;

10. Papers must be paginated at the upper-right corner;
11. Papers must have one-inch margins on all sides and text format justified/aligned on both left and right sides, and
12. All tables must be made using Excel.

EMAIL SUBMISSIONS AND INQUIRIES TO:

Please email your contributions in PDF and Word format to *genderreview.updiliman@up.edu.ph* using the email subject line: [DGR Volume 6] LAST NAME, FIRST NAME - "TITLE OF ARTICLE." Your submissions should be addressed to Ms. Anna Myrishia Villanueva, RGC, Chairperson of the DGR Executive Board. The deadline for submission to the Diliman Gender Review (DGR) Volume 6 is on **May 25, 2025**, at midnight.

For inquiries, e-mail us at updgo@up.edu.ph.

PUBLIKASYON NG UP DILIMAN GENDER OFFICE (UPDGO Publication)

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Official website: http://dgo.up.edu.ph/
Linktree website: https://shorturl.at/rdAP8

Situationers/Reports
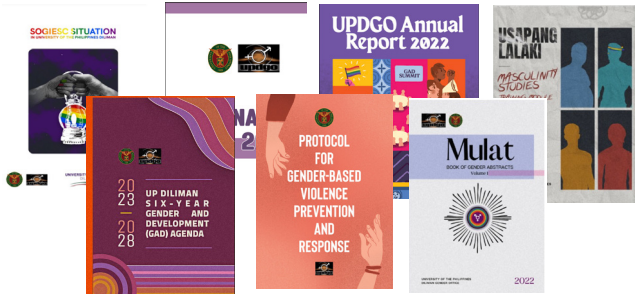
Brochures

Law/Policy Primers
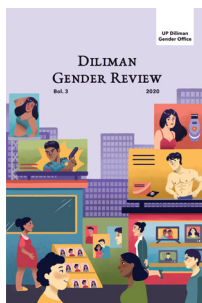

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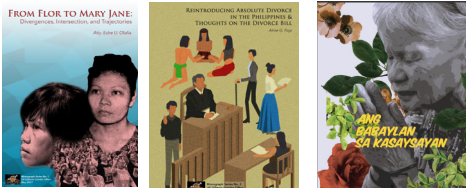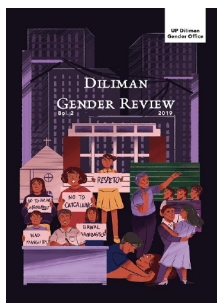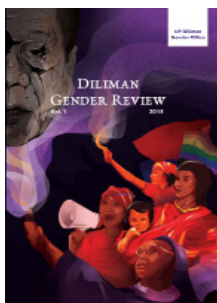
GENDERadyo

GENDERadyo Podcast
Maaaring mapakinggan sa
Spotify, Apple/Google Podcast,
atbp podcast application

Diliman Gender Review

Social Media

U.P. Diliman Gender Office personnel

Diliman Gender Review Executive Board

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