Understanding Motherhood During COVID-19: Experiences of Mother-Teachers in Distance Education

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Abstract

The implementation of distance learning in the Philippines during the COVID-19 pandemic gave mothers a crucial responsibility in the continuing learning process of students in their homes. In this study, we look into the lived experiences of Filipino mother-teachers in how they were able to adapt their roles as a parent and a teacher while keeping up with the duties in maintaining a work-home balance. Despite extensive research on the teaching profession, more attention has to be paid to gender, work, and family dynamics within this field. Grounded in attachment theory, nine Filipino mother-teachers were interviewed to describe their experiences and realities when they performed the roles of being a teacher and a mother at home during the shift to distance learning. In the analysis, it was revealed how these mother-teachers were able to strategically create opportunities and a conducive environment at home for their

children to learn. Moreover, the way that these mother-teachers handled their children's learning reflects their understanding of what is effective teaching based on their own experiences as students while growing up. This understanding enabled these mother-teachers to become an active participant in their children's education.

Keywords: mother-teachers, motherhood, distance education, distance learning, COVID-19 pandemic

Introduction

As a construct, motherhood has been influenced socially, culturally, politically, and economically (Segura, 2007). Reflective of the long history of colonization and interaction with foreign countries, Filipino motherhood is greatly influenced and constrained by the hegemonic Western-normative notions (Madianou, 2012), and the feudal patriarchal logic of Catholicism (Tadiar, 1997). Filipino mothers are socially situated in very collectivistic and tightly knit systems of bilateral kinship where reciprocal exchanges between parents and children form bonds of respect and obligation (Madianou, 2012; Medina 2001). In the cultural sense, Filipino mothers are bound by the values of *kapwa*, which pertains to the shared identity of Filipino members of the family (Enriquez, 2007; Salazar-Clemena, 1993), and *bayanihan*, which emphasizes an individual's contribution to the family (Blair, 2014). As Philippine society and family life are marked by traditional gendered norms, Filipino mothers are usually referred to as *ilaw ng tahanan* which is a direct translation of "the light of the home" (Arellano-Carandang, 2007). This assumes that care-giving in the family falls as a responsibility of these women. Regardless of these societal expectations and delimiting views on motherhood, Filipino mothers have been exemplary evidence of human malleability and resilience. This assumption has prompted this current study to look into how Filipino mothers—specifically mothers who work as teachers professionally or mother-teachers (Cole, 2004)—adapted in terms of their existing relationship with their children and their children's

development to cope with the global issue of the COVID-19 pandemic. The project aimed to describe and analyze the lived experiences of Filipino mother-teachers enacting their roles as teachers at home during the changing educational landscape that mandated online and modular learning as the primary mode of instruction.

As education persisted through the global pandemic, the Philippines and its Department of Education (DepEd) immediately proposed alternative solutions to ensure learning continuity, and distance learning became one of the most dominantly practiced delivery methods. Formal schooling had to relocate from schools to homes as the government imposed an Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) in March 2020. In order for learning to be facilitated, a form of guidance or assistance was extended to the learners, especially young children, in the physical absence of their teachers at home. DepEd developed the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BELCP) as a framework to guide the delivery of education during the pandemic while ensuring the safety of both the students and the teachers (DepEd, 2020a). This framework adopted the following multiple learning delivery modalities for schools to choose from: (a) Modular Distance Learning (MDL), which uses self-learning modules, either in print or digital format; (b) Online Distance Learning (ODL), which permits synchronous instructions through video conferencing platforms like Zoom and GMeet; (c) TV/Radio-Based Instruction (TV/R), which converts lessons to TV or radio-based instructions; and (d) Blended Learning, which combines different distance learning modalities (DepEd, 2020b). In effect, the Philippine educational system looked into how parents and guardians could provide this crucial task of continuing the learning of children in the safety of their homes.

What proved challenging for these mother-teachers was how to be both a parent and a teacher while keeping up with the demanding duties to maintain a work-home balance. This responsibility was not without its challenges, especially for Filipino women. Several research studies over the course of the pandemic showed discrepancies in lived experiences by gender, in both the workplace and in domestic settings. A growing collection of global evidence indicates that the increase

in care work during the pandemic fell disproportionately on the shoulders of women (e.g., Lavado et al., 2022; Zamarro & Prados, 2021). Because of the pandemic, parents needed to manage their family responsibilities and roles in order to attend to and assist their children with their daily needs, while simultaneously continuing to meet the demands of their income-generating jobs. However, the lockdown further exacerbated gender disparity as women, especially those with children, spent more time in care activities than they did before (Minello et al., 2021). Even prior to the global pandemic, a clear gendered cut was already apparent among these gendered family activities where mothers still performed more household labor than their counterparts did (Ali & Ullah, 2021).

This issue among families, particularly mothers, in maintaining a work-home balance as a consequence of the pandemic calls for an examination of Filipino mothers' experiences, struggles, and needs during that global health crisis. This study provided a grounded description and explicit analysis of the heavy roles of mother-teachers during the pandemic, yielding useful data that identify trends that can inform the development of programs and policies targeting parental needs in an online learning environment. Along with emerging studies about Filipino mothers during the pandemic (e.g., Andrada-Poa et al., 2021; Cahapay, 2020), the current project contributed additional discussions on the impact of the pandemic on Filipino mother-teachers, focusing on their roles and experiences as teachers of their children. Utilizing a life historical perspective and methodologies, this allowed a more humanistic and narrative-driven approach in describing the existing realities of the learning environment in the country. The findings of this study provide a critical focus on a key stakeholder of the educational system, the parents, specifically the mothers, and how they were able to cope with the shift in learning modalities. Through these results and outputs, the researchers can provide significant implications on how pedagogy can migrate outside of the classroom and into the homes of Filipinos.

Research Objectives

The study aimed to analyze mother-teachers' experiences and performances as teachers to their children during the COVID-19 pandemic through a qualitative analysis of narratives on learning and teaching. Specifically, the project sought:

1. To elicit, through narratives, the experiences and performances of mothers as teachers during the shift in their children's learning modality.
2. To analyze how mothers' narratives are reflective of their constructed meaning of learning and teaching as shaped by their life histories.

Review of Related Literature

Parents are widely acknowledged to play a crucial role in maximizing their children's potential for successful educational attainment (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Jackson & Remillard, 2005), with many research studies positing how their involvement, their parenting practices, and their interactions at home have implications for academic outcomes (Banerjee et al., 2011; Small, 2009; Williams et al., 2017). This comes as no surprise as parents are considered the children's first teachers, providing a variety of supportive activities in the development of their children's literacy. Parental involvement is a critical factor that involves commitment and active participation of parents with both the school and their children (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003), thereby benefiting not just the students but also the school as this involvement requires parents to serve as "partners in school problem solving" (Lawson, 2003, p. 79). For instance, parental involvement has been shown to have a marked positive effect on children's literacy development (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003), students' emotional well-being (Epstein, 2005), language competency (Gest et al., 2004), and cognitive competency and problem-solving skills (Epstein et al., 2018). Moreover, research shows that parents' involvement in their children's schooling fosters better classroom behavior and is more likely to prevent behavioral problems (Santor et al., 2002).

In the work of Epstein (2001), she created the spheres of influence model that outlined the family's and school's responsibility for students' education, involving three possible patterns: (a) separated (i.e., parents and teachers have independent responsibilities in achieving their goals), (b) sequential (i.e., the responsibility for the students' development initially falls on the parents which then transfers to teachers upon entry to formal schooling), and (c) shared (i.e., parents and teachers collaborate to achieve students' growth and learning). With the closure of schools and the shift to distance learning, schooling was essentially transferred into the homes and learning was left up to the parents and students. This shift altered the spheres of influence, blurred the distinction between school and family, and required parents to take on the responsibility for their children's education (Garbe et al., 2020). Before the pandemic, previous research pointed out how distance learning expected parents to play a more peripheral function (Ortiz et al., 2017)—advising and helping their children with course content and assignment (Addi-Raccah & Seeberger Tamir, 2022), developing positive interactions and social skills (Smith et al., 2019), and monitoring their children's difficulties (Borup et al., 2015). However, this was not without its challenges, such as children's lack of motivation, resistance to parents' assistance, and parents' unpreparedness to provide effective instructional support (Borup et al., 2015).

As the world continued into the postpandemic era, many educational researchers have tried to examine parental involvement in students' distance learning. The study of Gupta and colleagues (2022) identified the impact of online education during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through an online survey of Indian parents ($n = 104$), it was revealed that most parents felt overburdened by the online classes, which resulted in inability to develop parent-child relationships and an increase of mental stress for their children. Moreover, findings of the study done by Erlina, Santoso, and Apriyanto (2020) found how Malaysian parents had difficulty assisting their children in doing their subject assignments given by the teachers. This finding echoes the results of Ilmanto and colleagues (2021) when they interviewed Indonesian parents. The results presented how parents faced different challenges during distance learning such as having unconducive learning conditions at home, providing

attention to their children while studying, having limited internet connectivity, and difficulty understanding the course material taught online. Because of these difficulties, parents had generally negative beliefs about the significance and benefits of online learning which resulted in them resisting and rejecting online learning for their children, as shown in the study of Dong, Cao, and Li (2020) among Chinese parents ($n = 3275$).

However, many studies also revealed how there are parents who had a positive perception of online distance learning. In the study of Sari and Maningtyas (2020), findings categorically showed good involvement among parents as they were able to spend more time with their children since the implementation of work from home (WFH) and distance learning setups. This allowed parents to take time in assisting their children in learning and playing. Further, the study of Zhao and colleagues (2020) revealed how parents became interested in the homeschooling style of education as they felt that their children were more focused during online classes. In the Philippines, the study of Agaton and Cueto (2021) showed how parents perceived that certain educational policies implemented during the pandemic (e.g., use of various instructional modalities) were effective. However, the study also showed how these parents faced challenges from distance learning like unsatisfactory learning outcomes, unavailability of technology, physical and mental distress, and even financial difficulties.

Distance learning also revealed another issue that impeded effective parental involvement with students. As the COVID-19 pandemic altered the ways people lived and worked, it extensively affected women in unique gender-specific ways particularly in their homes and work. The United Nations (UN, 2020) reported that women were burdened by an increase of unpaid care work with children having their education at home. This was confirmed by the study of Adisa, Aiyenitaju, and Adekoya (2021) which showed how the COVID-19 lockdowns increased the home workload for women based on the interviews of working women ($n = 26$) in the United Kingdom. This in turn led to various role conflicts and congestion which were exacerbated by women's remote employment which blurred the differentiation of their home and work roles. In the academe, women were

faced with unprecedented day care, school, and workplace closures that negatively affected their own academic outputs (Gabster et al., 2020). Recent data also suggest that women were spending more time than their male counterparts on pandemic-era childcare and homeschooling (Adams-Prassl et al., 2020).

Aside from female teachers and academicians having additional domestic responsibilities, scholars also noted physical and mental effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on them. Numerous studies revealed that women appeared to demonstrate more severe symptoms of depression and anxiety compared to males (Huang & Zhao, 2020; Liu et al., 2020). For example, the study of Santamaria and colleagues (2021) of professional teachers (n = 1633) indicated a significant number of individuals experiencing signs of mental difficulties, with women exhibiting substantially more stress and anxiety than males. With teaching inextricably linked to care, such stress and anxiety may generate consequences on the emotional well-being of these female teachers (Wharton, 2005).

These studies demonstrate that the shift to distance learning during the pandemic led to a change in how educational institutions view the significance of parental involvement in student learning. This shift also exacerbated many gender-specific issues that negatively affect working women, particularly female teachers. In the current study, we adopted a qualitative research approach aimed to specifically examine Filipino mother-teachers' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities regarding their children's learning during the COVID-19 crisis, while reflecting on their own notions of how they self-define their roles as mothers and their understanding of their own education.

Theoretical Framework

In studying the increased role of mothers as teachers to their children, the current study drew from constructs of the attachment theory (Bowlby, 1982; Zhang, 2007). This attachment theory, as developed by John Bowlby (1982), posits that children are evolutionarily susceptible in developing attachments through ongoing relationships with their caregivers,

specifically their mothers. He referred to attachment as an intimate and lasting relationship or link between a child and a mother or other primary caregiver that enables both parties to feel content and happy. With the shift to remote learning, the study proposed that there were changes in the dynamics between mothers and their children as they performed two roles inside of their homes. Through eliciting narratives from mothers, the study sought explanations on how this change of dynamics may have influenced how they view and define learning and teaching on their own. Moreover, the use of life historical research approach in this study is aligned in supporting and strengthening the notion that motherhood and its experiences can be a uniting element among women (Neyer & Bernardi, 2011).

Methodology

Research Design

Rooted in sociology and used in a variety of feminist and cultural studies, the life history method was employed in the current project to collect and analyze data as it relates to understanding patterns in individuals' lived experiences (Zavella, 2001), and stories within their lives (Agee, 2009). As this method allows researchers an opportunity to see relationships of patterns and details of people's lives, it is to this complementary purpose that this current research on mothers' experiences as teachers at home is appropriated—to understand past experiences that shaped constructs of learning and teaching. With the emergence of interest in life history research in the social sciences (Roberts, 2002), this reflects how researchers have privileged subjectivity and positionality over objectivity (Riessman, 2001), and have created a growing interest in life course and how lived experiences manifest it (Roberts, 2002). Through the analyses of life history narratives, academics, particularly feminist scholars, have been provided a more holistic and focused perspective towards informants, tackling a variety of issues like gender, poverty, and migration (Dhunpath, 2000). With the life history method revealing diversity of women's experiences and projecting their

voices (Ojermark, 2007), this is utilized in this explorative inquiry of mother's experiences as teachers of their children during the pandemic. The selection of the method for this specific topic is also supported by the studies that looked into mothers' (Taber, 2013), and teachers' (Kirk & Wall, 2010) lived experiences.

Data Collection

For the data collection procedure, in-depth semistructured interviews situated in a participant-approved safe and secure environment were employed following the feminist sociology norm (White, 2009). Interviews elicited narratives of mothers' experiences of learning and teaching, and their demographic details, such as socioeconomic status and educational background. Interview questions asked the women to describe significant events in their lives that shaped their understanding of learning and teaching; thereby, influencing their ways of teaching content subjects to their children. Questions also included how their occupations, educational backgrounds, family backgrounds, and the immediate environment where their children live have influenced their construct of how their children have learned and should learn. Also, prompts included their attitudes and motivation in teaching their children during the pandemic. Because of the limited face-to-face interaction at that time, interviews were conducted online. The use of online platforms was beneficial in recording and transcribing the resulting interviews. All interviews lasted for approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. The interviews were recorded after receiving the consent of each participant. They were likewise informed that they had the right to request not to record parts of the interview or to stop the process at any time. Pseudonyms were used to refer to the interviewees in the final transcripts.

Participants

The study involved nine Filipino mother-teachers—meaning women employed in the teaching profession at the time of the pandemic, who each had at least one child at the basic education (ages 7–18 years old). This was the main criteria for selecting the participants for the purpose

of this study. Parallel to other studies (Page, 2014), purposive sampling was used to recruit participants to ensure that the selected individuals would be able to critically express stories that directly address the study's objectives. Moreover, the participant sample was small, as suggested by Goodson and Sikes (2001), with 10 or less participants. The participants' profiles are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Mothers' Characteristics

	Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Institution	Employment	Spouse's/ partner's occupation	Number of children	Ages of children
1	Gelai	30	Teacher	Public	WFH	Seafarer	2	1, 8
2	Leigh	37	Teacher	Private	WFH	Deceased	1	12
3	Mary	30	Teacher	Private	WFH	Corporate job	2	10, 4
4	Leni	45	Teacher	Private	WFH	Teacher	2	18, 22
5	Trish	40	Teacher	Private	WFH	Teacher	2	5, 10
6	Fely	44	Teacher	Private	WFH	Unemployed	2	5, 15
7	Esther	34	Teacher	Private	WFH	Engineer	2	7, 9
8	Cherry	31	Teacher	Private	WFH	Government employee	2	1, 7
9	Kathy	39	Teacher	Private	WFH	Engineer	2	7, 9

Note. WFH = working from home.

Data Analysis

For the data analysis, the study made use of Page's (2014) 4-staged process to meaning-making: (a) Original Transcript, (b) Refashioned Transcripts, (c) Interpreted Narrative, and (d) Thematic Meaning-Making. Transcripts of the interviews were analyzed to interpret the narratives

of the participants where categories and themes began to emerge. These transcripts were then refined to extend to particular themes. The data was primarily analyzed inductively by the authors where each researcher separately worked with a descriptive open coding that captured the essence of the data, searching for themes and categories that emerged from the interviews. To ensure the reliability of the categories, the coded categories done by each researcher were compared to achieve coding agreement among all of them (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The final manuscript only documents the themes that were agreed upon and accepted by all the researchers.

Findings

The data analysis of the interviews with the participants yielded three core categories that exemplify their experiences and performances as mother-teachers during distance learning: (a) facilitating their children's distance learning at home, (b) performing both professional and mothering responsibilities in their household, and (c) evaluating one's experiences to shape their own parental approach.

Facilitating Their Children's Distance Learning at Home

At the beginning of the school closures and the COVID-19 pandemic, the participants encountered challenges as their children's mode of education shifted to online, distance learning. They described having to teach their children how to use their personal computers for their online classes and guiding them in creating personal emails and passwords for official communication with the school and the teachers.

To ensure their children's learning, the participants also reported taking the initiative to find ways to better teach their children. As Gelai described, "I read her topics in advance, then teach it to her. When she's having difficulties understanding her lessons, we revisit it and make activities for her." Being mothers and teachers by profession, they were able to perform effective pedagogical choices in assisting their children in answering modules and reviewing their course materials. They were able to help their children to focus on significant information that would

be beneficial going forward with distance learning. They also kept a learning routine for their children, and were highly involved with their learning tasks. Another participant, Leigh, shared her experiences as a teacher that enabled her to use various teaching strategies to help her children better understand their lessons. She explained,

> I am also like the teacher in that I am in the classroom as I teach my daughter. I try to explain it as easily as possible, giving examples and mnemonics . . . . For example, she has a collection of small animal stuffed toys. I taught her the Classification of Living Things, so she can classify her toys and even newly acquired ones. We even named the octopus toy "Molly" because I told her that Molly the octopus is a mollusk.

For Trish, it was also upon mother-teachers like herself to guide their children by setting an example. She said,

> I encourage active participation. Encourage children to participate in the learning process by asking questions, giving them hands-on activities, and allowing them to work on projects that interest them . . . . Be a role model. Children learn by example. As a teacher, you should model the behaviors and attitudes you want your children to adopt. Show them how to stay organized, manage time, and balance responsibilities.

The participants also shared instances of parental involvement from their partners or spouses in meeting the learning needs of their children. This might be through helping with the teaching of the children's course material or the creation of their children's performance tasks for each subject. This finding differs from other literature (e.g., Ali & Ullah, 2021) that suggests that the fathers were not as supportive in the children's learning compared to the mothers. This was shared by Esther when she narrated,

> For our child's TLE [Technological Livelihood Education] lesson like food processing, my husband usually helps her and gives her hands-on assistance in cooking activities. Also,

whenever she would have a trade drawing assignment, my husband usually assists in this type of activity as he is skilled in sketching.

With the majority of the participants working from home during the pandemic, they had to balance their work while making sure that they could still have time to guide their children's schoolwork, which is consistent with previous literature (e.g., Sari & Maningtyas, 2020; Zhao et al., 2020). They described scheduling and organizing their children's learning based on their availability given their own WFH setup. In the case of Mary, she stated how she assisted her children in doing their scheduled schoolwork by allowing them to have independent studies while she provided feedback and reviews afterwards. She narrated,

Since they are both still young, I always make sure that they are able to do their school work and activities on time. No matter how busy, I find time to assist them in their school tasks, especially my youngest who just started school last year. But over time, my eldest and I have developed a system at home to make it easier for both of us. If there is an upcoming test or activity to be done, I let her do it on her own and just check it or review her afterwards. She now can do most of her tasks independently and with minimal help which I would also like to teach my younger daughter as she grows older.

As teachers themselves, the participants noted how establishing a conducive learning routine was a difficulty at the onset of remote learning. Because of the shift to online learning, teachers were challenged to have better classroom management that would respond to their students' changing behaviors. They shared the call for a more extensive involvement from their students' parents in terms of managing students' emotional and academic well-being. This reflected a more "parentcentric" (Jackson & Remillard, 2005, p. 67) type of parental involvement in the education of students where parents work to manage, foster, and support their children's learning in a variety of contexts, which includes their immediate home environment. This was expressed by Trish when she

said,

> The challenge in teaching kids at school is that teachers have limited control on how to manage behavior problems. This is when they would need the help of parents to control how their kids express stress, impatience, or factors that cause distractions. Establish house rules the same way that teachers have classroom rules. The kids need to understand and know that both teachers and parents are monitoring their progress in school.

All these experiences show how the participants were active in handling the responsibility of the pedagogical domain in Epstein's (2001) spheres of influence which had previously been the school's function, therefore intensifying the functions and roles of parental involvement in children's learning.

Performing Both Professional and Mothering Responsibilities in Their Household

As distance learning progressed throughout the months of the pandemic, the participants had already altered their home environment to accommodate not just the academic needs of their children but also their mental and physical well-being. While assisting their children, the participants also reported creating a caring and supportive home environment (Nunn & Tepe-Belfrage, 2019) that mitigated the negative physical and social conditions brought about by the uncertainty of the COVID-19 outbreak which was greatly affecting the children's well-being (Brown et al., 2020). This affirms the substantial effect of parents' contribution in creating a learning climate that strengthens students' motivational and emotional characteristics (Malais et al., 2017), and aligns with how attachment highly influences children's life experiences (Rees, 2007). As Bowlby (1982) further posited, the children's experiences of attachment will determine their future interactions with their environment throughout their life span. As these mother-teachers created a loving and supportive environment during the pandemic, this may have led to the children feeling safe, thus resulting in positive mental/emotional development (Farantika et al., 2020). One of the strategies that emerged

from the interviews among the mother-teachers was how establishing an effective routine for children to spend their time and energy helps to manage their academic stress and expectations—consistent with the literature (e.g., Addi-Raccah & Seeberger Tamir, 2022). Trish demonstrated this when she mentioned that:

> Parents can integrate themselves as a mother while teaching their children by incorporating daily routines such as reading, singing, and storytelling into their teaching. These routines provide a structure for learning and a nurturing and bonding experience for both parent and child . . . . As a mother, parents can empathize and understand their children's emotions, which is essential when teaching children. Parents can integrate this by being aware of their children's feelings and addressing them positively and constructively.

Through this, the participants were able to learn more about their children's current knowledge, strengths, and difficulties. This also led them to understand the learning styles of their children as they developed greater teacher-like awareness of their children's learning. This allowed them to provide more personalized and proactive strategies to better suit their children's learning capacities while utilizing the affordances of the online platforms of distance learning. This was best expressed in Trish's statement when she said,

> As the months went by, I noticed changes in how I approached distance learning. I have developed a routine and a system for managing my child's education and become more comfortable with technology and online learning platforms. I also have gained a better understanding of my child's learning style and been able to adjust their teaching methods. In general, distance learning has been a challenging experience for many parents, but with time and effort, they developed strategies and solutions that work for their families. It's important to note that flexibility and patience are essential and to reach out for support when needed.

In effect, this resulted in more intimate support and involvement of parents which were positively perceived by their children. This is a good example of how the participants were able to perform both their professional and personal responsibilities to their children while helping them transition to distance learning. This finding aligns with previous research that demonstrated how parental involvement significantly influences students' academic motivation (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005), and academic performance (Nia et al., 2015). Trish continued,

> I feel that my children enjoyed having their parents as teachers, as they feel more comfortable and appreciate the extra one-on-one attention. I think they also appreciate the flexibility and customization that comes with being taught by a parent.

In creating a supporting environment, the participants also claimed to establish better communication and relationships with their children. As Cherry explained, it was important for her as a mother to be able to create a stronger connection to her children as this led to a better parent-child relationship, allowing her to better understand her children's needs and interests. She stated,

> You need to connect to them. The connection you have with them can be in their interests. Your generation is different from theirs. You also have to be able to appreciate their generation. Communication is really important. It really is the key to success. I feel that the best way to create a connection is through sharing, creating better communication.

As the participants altered their home environment to a more conducive learning space, they also mentioned how these changes could then lead them to be more compassionate of their own students, once back in the classroom. Leigh stated that:

> In my experience, there's nothing wrong with being a mother and a teacher. That actually helped me become rooted when I started teaching. I felt that being a mother and a teacher would help me have more patience and understanding toward students, as I consider them my own.

Evaluating One's Experiences to Shape One's Own Parental Approach

In the interviews of the mother-teachers, it was evident how they actively took charge of their children's learning by making sure that they were supported and guided as they transitioned to online distance learning. In helping their children every step of the way, the mother-teachers admitted how their strategies with their children were divergent from the experiences they had with their own parents. Some of them described their parents as having been somewhat unattached with their academic learning and development. They reported not having had guidance in their schoolwork while growing up. As Cherry shared,

> When I was in elementary school, I did not really excel, perhaps I just found a way to do some things. Perhaps, it is one of the things that motivates me. When I was young, I was not monitored as much. If I studied, then it is what it is; if I didn't, then it also is what it is. So, I decided not to do that for my child. Sometimes, when my father is around, he tells me to let my daughter sleep as it is past midnight already. I answered by saying that she needed to review because it would be harder to come unprepared in class and not know anything. I do not want my daughter to experience what I've gone through—I wished I was guided when I was younger. There really are generations who closely monitor their children.

This lack of guidance from their parents resulted in some of the participants experiencing delayed literacy development. Moreover, the participants mentioned that the reason for this lack of guidance was that their parents were always busy with work. As a result, some of them were provided with tutors to help them in their studies. With these experiences, they learned how to work hard without relying on their parents' support or guidance. In the case of Trish, the absence of her father became a challenge that she worked hard to overcome as she became independent at an early age. She narrated how she worked while studying just to continue with her studies. She recalled,

> Growing up as a student after my biological father abandoned us was challenging. I needed to work to attend school. I was a "working student." I am happy to say that, despite my circumstances, I excelled academically. I am a young entrepreneur then—selling candies, fruits, and other goodies in the classroom. Participating in various contests at school also serves as a side job for me—from dance contests to singing, cooking, poster making, essay writing, quiz bees, extemporaneous speech, copy reading, and other competitions.

The choice of the participants to be proactive in being present in their children's learning development was a concrete indicator of how they wanted to veer away from what they had experienced when they were young. They were able to embody their own ideal identity of what a parent should be, someone who is a great model and who is unafraid to grow continuously.

Unsurprisingly, the interviews revealed how the participants' perceptions of the roles and relationships they had formed with their parents had greatly influenced their approach to their involvement in their own children's learning and development. As mentioned, some of the interview responses unveiled the lack of parental involvement of their own parents, thus leading them to resolve to not follow in the footsteps of their parents. For example, the way that these mothers chose to be more hands-on with the learning of their children revealed the kind of approach and attention they would have wanted to receive when they were at school. While growing up, these mother-teachers wanted to be exposed to various hobbies to hone their holistic skills and abilities—which their parents were not able to provide. Now that they are parents themselves, they aim to give their children the things and opportunities they wished to have had when they were growing up. As Cherry explained,

> We have a big difference, because she is well guided. I make sure that her needs are met. For example, in Art. When I was young, I was never introduced to art. I wasn't bought art stuff, or even

exposed to such. For her, I provide as much as I can, so that at least, she can practice creating art. I provide the materials that can help her learn it, because I do not know much about it myself. My daughter draws information from YouTube to know how things are done. That's what she has, now that everything is more accessible, more affordable—this you can provide. For her, everything she needs, she gets, so that she can learn well. Unlike before, you just have to make do with what you have. So, that's why I really couldn't compare. So, yes, I do correct it. It wasn't given much attention before.

However, some of the interviewees had formed a great relationship with their parents that influenced their parenting styles with their own children. Trish recalled how her mother had been involved with her education, from assisting with her projects and assignments to monitoring her grades. Her mother's involvement made her more aware of and agentive to her own learning and growth. She shared,

> My academic success was made possible because of my mother's involvement in my education. My mother regularly monitored my grades and also assisted me with projects or assignments even when she was occupied with work to make ends meet. I remember that she used to accompany me on trips to neighboring barangays or towns to get a copy of the elected officials' organizational flow chart or go to a library for research. Most importantly, my mother let me take ownership of my learning and growth.

It could also be observed from the interviews that the participants had been extensively influenced by their own learning experiences when they were taught in school. They reported how they would try to emulate their favorite teachers whenever they would teach or help their own children with their schoolwork during the pandemic. In effect, the impact left by their past teachers has affected the way the participants now make teaching and pedagogic choices for their own children. The participants also pointed out how their teachers' guidance throughout

their own schooling has helped them realize the importance of their involvement in their children's learning. This has led them to understand how significant adult supervision is in the development of a child. Moreover, a conducive learning environment fosters learning that is enjoyable and engaging.

Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to distance learning subjected Filipino mothers to the new realities in engaging and helping their children's education which entailed additional responsibilities of investing more time in supporting their children's learning while also being attentive to their needs and capabilities—as also found in other current studies in the Philippines (Agaton & Cueto, 2021) and neighboring countries (Erlina et al., 2020; Ilmanto et al., 2021; Sari & Maningtyas, 2020). The findings reveal creative and deliberate ways in which mother-teachers involved themselves in their children's education, primarily informed by their professional knowledge and skills, as well as approaches that may have aligned with or rejected the kind of education they themselves had experienced. The interviews also revealed how the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns provided an environment that encouraged positive gender dynamics in terms of how male spouses became more involved in their children's learning. As mentioned by the participants, their spouses were particularly active in supporting and helping with the management of their household to accommodate both their children's and partner's needs. Unlike findings in other related studies (e.g., Adams-Prassl et al., 2020; Ali & Ullah, 2021), the participants' stories recounted the proactive participation of fathers in their children's schoolwork which demonstrates how Filipino fathers were able to perform care activities at home. This provides a valuable insight on how mother-teachers, together with their spouses, involved themselves in their children's education in a variety of ways, specifically during the school closures and the shift to distance learning—which may be considered, as Jackson and Remillard (2005) coined, parentcentric involvement in education. This pertains to the parents': (a) involvement in children's learning (i.e., supporting and

fostering informal learning activities outside the school context), (b) involvement in children's schooling (i.e., actively participating in the child's progress in school), and (c) involvement in school events (i.e., having active presence in the child's school through school function attendance and volunteer work).

With the changes that reshaped the spheres of responsibilities between home and school during the pandemic, the participants' engagements became more proactive and comprehensive as they were required to guide their children in the transition to distance learning. They were able to use their professional skills as teachers in instructing their children and adopting their roles as teachers at home. By doing so, they embodied the concept of "professional mothers" where they created opportunities for their children to develop their own skills and abilities (Vincent, 2010). At the onset of the pandemic, it was common for mother-teachers to immediately take charge of their children's learning to compensate for the lack of classroom engagements, as well as to select pedagogic strategies to help with their children's subjects. With previous research (e.g., Jackson & Remillard, 2005) showing the importance of parental involvement and engagement in distance learning, the interviews showed how the parents' responsibilities in this setup were closely associated with their functions as a teacher rather than just a mere learning coach (Ortiz et al., 2017). Moreover, the participants were able to devise a conducive time and learning space for their children at home where they could instruct, advise, monitor, and help in their children's learning, as shown in other literature as well (e.g., Smith et al., 2019). Similar to other findings (e.g., Borup et al., 2015), the mother-teachers also came to better understand their children's difficulties and capabilities, allowing them to provide more personalized pedagogic choices for them to have better instruction at home. This also aligns with the findings on how positive attachments between parent and child enable the development of children's emotional intelligence and social adjustment (Bowlby, 1982; Farantika et al., 2020).

The findings also showed how the participants' conceptualization of education and motherhood had been influenced by their own life

histories. One finding that emerged from the interviews was how their engagement in the learning of their children had been affected by the parental involvement, or the lack thereof, by their own parents when they were growing up. It was evident in how they tried to position themselves as active participants in their children's learning, countering the way their parents had been passive and nonparticipative in their own learning process. As mother-teachers, it was also revealed how their pedagogic choices during the pandemic were highly influenced by their experiences and perceptions of what good instruction is based on many of their teachers during their schooling. Thus, in distance learning, these mother-teachers also tried to emulate the instruction of their previous teachers. As a result, this shaped their application of what effective teaching is not only in their own profession but also in their roles as mothers inside their homes. In a way, how the mother-teachers coped with the changes imposed by the pandemic likewise altered the way in which they viewed their roles as mothers and teachers.

The participants' account of how their support and involvement were positively perceived by their children points to how these may have helped improve their academic abilities and act as a buffer against anxiety and difficulties during the transition to distance learning. This corroborates other studies on how this type of attachment to a figure, primarily mothers (Bowlby, 1982), provides the environment that encourages emotional regulation during extremely stressful times (Duchesne & Ratelle, 2014). Therefore, teaching professionals and policymakers should capitalize on the influence of parental involvement in managing students' emotions and academic motivations (Maltais et al., 2017). Moreover, the results contribute to expanding how attachments can also be seen to influence a better learning climate for students, specifically while learning in their own homes. In contemporary educational contexts, the study reveals how women, specifically mother-teachers, proved to be resourceful in satisfying the academic needs of their children to meet the school standards while, ultimately, coping with the struggles during the pandemic.

Conclusion

This research was carried out to examine the lived experiences of mother-teachers during the pandemic as they adjusted to the distance learning of their children. These lived experiences were analyzed within the context of their life histories of education and parental involvement. The findings revealed that these mother-teachers acted as guides and advocates of their children's learning throughout the pandemic with the way they created opportunities and learning environments for their children to learn and grow. It was also revealed how most of the instructional and pedagogic choices of these mother-teachers in their children's distance learning were influenced not only by their professional knowledge and skills as teachers but by their own learning experiences when they were young. Mother-teachers undeniably make significant contributions to their children's development by ensuring an active involvement as a parent in the learning of their children. Uncovering a variety of forms of parent involvement during the pandemic provides a basis for examining the different roles and functions the home had in making distance learning successful.

Our findings have a number of implications for school practices that relate to parental involvement in distance or online learning. We assert that taking a more parentcentric view of parent involvement in school benefits both teachers' and parents' shared responsibilities for the students' learning. Aside from emphasizing the importance of the work parents do at home, such a stance can generate a more collaborative and healthier relationship between teachers and parents regarding the learning process of the students. This, however, should recognize the reality that mothers tend to carry more of this work. Thus, as a way to address this, the equal participation of fathers—or in effect, changing parental involvement from being a gender-based role to a truly parental role—is stressed as crucial. Such a view can provide better opportunities for schools to offer space for parents to become more active participants in the learning of their children. Generating opportunities to develop better strategies for distance learning aligned with the curriculum will provide a way for parents, regardless of their gender, to participate in the educational conversations and become true partners in their children's education.

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