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Feminist Pleasures: Building Intersectional, Inclusive, and Transformative Societies

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Foreword

The 16th volume of the Philippine Journal of Social Development features seven articles that raise still invisibilized gendered realities that deserve to be critically appreciated. They capture enriched understandings of the diversity of women, provide evidence of the intersections of gender with other social identities, show paths to creating more inclusive spaces, and expand our imagination of what transformative social change can and should be.

In the first article, "Older Filipino Women's Experiences of Aging Womanhood and Sexuality," Angeli Fleur G. Nuque takes up the neglected question of how older women themselves experience and consider womanhood and sexuality. She finds that these are heavily influenced by dominant beliefs and norms around what is deemed appropriate or acceptable. While this is true for women at any stage in the life course, what was distinct for women in the later life stages is how the very conversations about their bodies, desires, reproductive health, and femininity are denied. Against this backdrop, Nuque was also able to capture nuances in how the older women navigated and negotiated social prescriptions as these manifested in their particular situations.

Women with disabilities take center stage in the second article by Gaizel Arguelles Adan, Alyanna Yzabelle A. Tamayo, and Michelle Chua, entitled "Women with Disabilities' Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights during the COVID-19 Pandemic." The authors analyze how different social institutions create disadvantages for women with disabilities which therefore determine how they barely access SRHR goods and services. Conducted during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, this was also taken as an event that intensified already existing barriers to women with disabilities' full enjoyment of their rights. The article highlights the role of organized women with disabilities not only in understanding but in responding to the situation.

For the next two articles, Justin Francis Leon V. Nicolas and Kristine Analiza P. De Vera's "Dalaw: Ang Pagiging Taga-Labas ng mga Magulang sa Kanilang mga Anak na nasa Bahay Pag-asa noong Panahon ng COVID-19," and Rafaella R. Potestades' "Juggling or Sailing through Everyday Life?: Understanding the Lived Experiences of Filipino Mothers as Online Freelancers and Outsourced Workers," the authors zoom in on mothers, appreciating it at once as a gender role that entails needs in its own right just as it warrants to be unpacked and transformed. Each highlights a different situation that mothers find themselves in but in the same context of the COVID-19 pandemic at its height. Nicolas and De Vera sought to uncover the experiences of mothers of Children in Conflict with the Law as they visit - or attempt to visit - them during the restrictive lockdowns due to COVID-19, and theorize on the meanings of *dalaw* (which can refer to the act of visiting (their children), the visitor, and the very process of visits) for the mothers. Meanwhile, Potestades starts off with an acknowledgment of the increasing number of mothers that opt to do outsourced online and digital gig work, which intensified during the pandemic lockdowns. She pushes the conversation by acknowledging how the gig economy offers precarious work to and takes advantage of Filipino women as cheap labor, as well as how it reinforces the imposition of unpaid care work on mothers.

Jorelyn Martina R. Viray, Cailla Marie R. Castro, Gianna Clara U. Cabochan, Jannina Francesca A. Capco, and Queen Mary G. Baladad analyzes the experiences of drag queens also during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how they navigated their lived identities and their drag

personas at this especially difficult time. Their article "Intersectionality in the Experience of Select Filipino Drag Queens during the COVID-19 Pandemic," which comes fifth in this volume, primarily presents a vivid picture of the significance of performance spaces for drag queens in subverting their lived identities, surfacing nuances in how the drag queens experience the very process of transfiguration. Their article furthermore shows the challenges and rewards of drag performance as a profession with its own material dynamics.

"'Bah GAD, it's...!': A Gender and Development Analysis of the Philippine Professional Wrestling Industry, 2016-2021" follows as the sixth article. Here, Danielle Erika A. Hill uses a gender lens to analyze how wrestling can become more inclusive - as a profession and as a performance. She surfaces key gender issues in the Manila Wrestling Federation (MWF), as well as appreciates organic practices and deliberate efforts that promise to address the situation, by interviewing the members of the MWF themselves. Hill highlights the potentials of professional wrestling as a safe space for femininity and queerness.

The seventh and last article is "The Case of #HijaAko and What Digital Feminist Activism Means for the Filipina Identity," where Francie Kaye B. Sabalza joins the conversation on digital activism by taking it as a site for young Filipino women as they reclaim their identity. She particularly focuses on how the #HijaAko movement developed from being a direct response to a local personality's sexist use of the term "hija" to being the signal to a shared meaning-making across young Filipino women. Sabalza argues the #HijaAko movement to be part of the larger feminist movement, as it served as a rallying point to surfacing gender issues, enabled consciousness-raising, and constituted a collective action in its own right.

These articles furthermore employed methodologies that, consistent with feminist principles, ensured that the voices of the participants themselves were front and center when it came to telling their own stories. The authors in these articles, again exemplifying feminist values, wrote as advocates for the well-being of their participants and the communities they are part of, both during the research process and through the very research articles they produced.

At a time when "intersectional," "inclusive," and "transformative" have become some of the newer buzzwords in development, this volume of the PJSD hopes to offer the clarity, concreteness and sincerity that these political concepts are meant to entail. Ultimately, it intends to contribute to focusing not only on exposing unequal power across various social relations but on validating and building on what marginalized individuals and groups themselves value, desire, and work hard for.

Rowena A. Laguilles-Timog, DSD

Older Filipino Women's Experiences of Aging Womanhood and Sexuality

Angeli Fleur G. Nuque

ABSTRACT

There is a dearth of research on aging and older women's sexuality and womanhood in the Philippines. While feminist research, gerontology, and development studies have begun looking at women and aging, much of the earlier discussions surrounding older women focused heavily on biomedical and economic concerns. Using data from interviews with 10 older Filipino women aged 61 to 90 years old, this paper describes older women's experiences and definitions of aging sexuality and womanhood and how they negotiate cultural and societal expectations of being an aging woman. Research findings show that gendered sexual norms critically influence older women's perceptions and decisions regarding the sex act, sexuality concerns, and relationships in old age. Moreover, the devaluation of women's sexual needs across the life course has led to its perceived irrelevance and unimportance in old age.

Keywords: *aging sexuality, aging womanhood, ageism/sexism nexus, critical feminist gerontology*

Introduction[2]

The dearth of research on older women's sexuality and womanhood in the Philippines has resulted in insufficient data on age-specific and later life sexuality-related concerns.

Older women continue to face the "double jeopardy" of the intersection of ageism and sexism, which manifests in their invisibility in development and health agendas and renders them more vulnerable and neglected (Heidari, 2016). Moreover, negative attitudes and misconceptions regarding aging sexuality continue to persist, which have "misunderstood, condemned, ridiculed, repressed, and ignored" the sexuality concerns and sexual needs of older persons (Della, 2006, p. 17).

The lack of a theoretical framework in mainstream social gerontology to examine the connections between gender, culture, and aging called on feminists to address gender issues and other intersectional identities in the field of gerontology or aging studies (Wray, 2003). This study inquires into the factors that have shaped women's perceptions of sexuality and womanhood throughout their lives; how age, gender, and societal norms and expectations across their life course impact women's enjoyment of their sexuality and femininity in later life; and what pressures women face to conform to youth-oriented standards and norms of sexuality, femininity, and womanhood.

[1]The reported findings in this article are lifted from the author's master's thesis entitled, "Exploring Older Women's Perceptions of Womanhood and Sexuality." This article mostly focuses on older women's later life, whereas the master's thesis offers a more comprehensive discussion on the research participants' earlier life stages, including childhood and middle adulthood.

This qualitative research explores how older women (or women aged 60 years old and older) define and perceive sexuality and womanhood in later life and how they construct and negotiate meanings from their experiences. In particular, it aims to:

1. Describe how older women define and perceive womanhood and sexuality in later life;
2. Examine how older Filipino women have constructed their definitions and perceptions of womanhood and sexuality across the life course;
3. Examine how older women negotiate cultural and societal expectations and pressures regarding their womanhood and sexuality against their current, lived experiences; and
4. Situate aging sexuality and older women's roles in gender and development discourse.

On Older Women and Sexuality

To avoid reinforcing norms or prescribing a specific model of sexuality, the study referred to different definitions of sexuality. The medicalization of sexuality, which Gannon (1999) saw as ideologically congruent with patriarchy, tended to prescribe only "one healthy way to be sexual" (p. 113). This has had consequences on how older women's sexualities are regarded in society and, by extension, how they are treated and handled in the medical field. Gannon (1999) noted one instance of androcentric bias in the medical field, which resulted in the mislabeling of menopause as a sickness, essentially labeling all women over 50 years old or menopausal as "sick."

This research takes note of the World Health Organization's (WHO) (2006) definition of sexuality as a central aspect of being human throughout life that encompasses "sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction" (p. 5). Sexuality is influenced by the "interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious, and spiritual factors," and is manifested in "thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, practices, roles, and relationships" (WHO, 2006, p. 5).

Also considered here are Jackson and Scott's (2001) definition of sexuality as being created, organized, mediated, and reconstructed through social structures, relationships, interactions, and societal expectations (as cited in Trice-Black, 2010, p. 154); Gray et al.'s (1989) definition of sexual identity as being formed through "psychosocial interactions between society and self [that affects] many areas of life, including self-esteem, self-acceptance, intimacy, and relationships with others" (as cited in Trice-Black, 2010, p. 154); and Estrada-Claudio's (2002) elaboration on how sexuality is used as an instrument of repression and control.

Ageism and Sexism Nexus

Feminist gerontologists examine the differences in how men and women experience the aging process, including the power dynamics between men and women, to understand how age and gender are socially constructed (Thomeer, 2013). Feminist gerontologists do not only see aging as a biological process; they posit that the aging process is shaped by socioeconomic and cultural forces and influenced by one's gender, culture, geographic location, ethnicity, marital status, social class, and biological aging, among other factors (Feinson, 1985; Fox, 2005).

Old age may also be seen as an accumulation of either advantages or disadvantages. Cumulative (dis)advantages are defined by Carpenter (2010) as sequences or patterns of favorable

or negative life transitions. Positive life transitions result in the accumulation of advantages, whereas negative transitions may lead to or exacerbate further disadvantages.

Cultures construct the aging process differently, illustrating how age "is [as] much a social construction as a biological fact" (Kendig, 1986, p. 170 as cited in Justinia-Perez, 2003, p. 9). "Old" as a social identity and marker differs because gender, biological processes, and relationship and marital statuses (see Lahad, 2017) were found to accelerate the aging process of women. In particular, the literature on aging women surveyed by Fileborn (2017) marked the beginning of women's old age differently—some marked it at 50, others at 65, and some at the onset of menopause.

Viewing age as a cultural construct and not a "given biological category" (Lahad, 2017, p. 53) is to see how "societal norms determined by culturally framed expectations" (p. 53) subject women to accelerated aging and how the aging process varies across genders.

Older Women in the Philippines

The Philippine population has a median age of 24.3 (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2017) and this youthful demographic significantly influences priorities in research, programs, and policies. The Philippines is expected to follow the global trend of population aging (Cruz et al., 2019; HelpAge International, 2017; Pareño, 2018), which actually places the country in a unique and strategic position to plan and identify the needs and concerns of older persons requiring attention (Domingo, 1994, p. 1048) in anticipation of an aging society.

The aging process in the Philippines is not gender neutral. Older women struggle with financial security because of the lack of employment-related benefits in old age (i.e., pension) and existing youth-centric labor market policies.

Employment-related benefits such as future pensions necessitate participation in the formal labor market, which is difficult for women because of the unpaid reproductive care work they need to fulfill (Arza, 2015) or their participation in the informal economy/sector (see Cecilia, 2018; Batangan & Batangan, 2007). Calasanti et al. (2006) also observes how ageism in the workplace is "subtly incorporated into staffing and recruitment policies, career structures, and retirement jobs" (p. 18). The lack of available employment has forced older women to be relegated to low-paying "dirty, degrading, and dangerous jobs."

But in cases where older persons receive a pension, questions on the adequacy of the current stipend to cover the total household costs for living and health expenses have been raised over the current pension scheme of the Philippines (see Knox-Vydmanov et al., 2017; Africa, 2016). When one's pension cannot "keep pace with inflation" and is constantly delayed, the role of the pension as a social protection blanket is undermined (Albert & Velarde, 2018).

Specific to the Philippines, Justinia-Perez (2003) identified "unreciprocated" reproductive care work among different age cohorts and the increasing poverty felt by most people, which subsequently affect younger family members' ability to support older family members financially. Poverty affects not only the financial status of older women, it severely impacts their right to social security, aggravates health problems because of aging (Justinia-Perez, 2003), and exacerbates inequalities and accumulated disadvantages.

Elder abuse in homes and institutional long-term care facilities is another pressing issue, more so because it remains unrecognized and unreported in the Philippines. Gender-based violence against older women also remains unreported. Violence against older women is "widespread yet mostly hidden" and "occurs in multiple, often-intersecting forms by varying perpetrators" (such as intimate partners or spouses, family members, caregivers, or members of the community) (United Nations et al., 2016).

Analytical Framework

This research uses Carpenter's (2010) *Gendered Sexuality over the Life Course (*GSLC) Framework in the design of research questions and analysis of data. The GSLC Framework recognized aging as a gendered process. It identified elements and questions to better understand how age stages, aging processes, and physiological and sociocultural processes influence, change, or enforce perceptions of sexuality and womanhood.

The GSLC model also postulated that gender and sexuality are "jointly constructed within specific social-structural contexts" and considered how sexual identity "develops over and influences experiences across the life course" (Carpenter, 2010, p. 157).

The research was also guided by critical feminist gerontology, which examines the intertwining systems of age and gender (Krekula, 2007). Critical feminist gerontology, informed by feminism's praxis, works towards emancipatory social change (Freixas et al., 2012; Garner, 1999). As an undertaking, critical feminist gerontology challenges traditional gerontology through new points of inquiry (Hooyman et al., 2002).

Methodology

Given the intimate nature of the research topic, the qualitative research was guided by the following feminist research principles: the recognition of women's life stories and lived experiences as valuable knowledge (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 5) and valuing subjectivity and emotion in research (Code, 1991, as cited in Tuana, 2001; Jaggar, 1989). Subjectivity reveals the historical and cultural location, the milieu's inherited worldview, and the knower's social location (such as age, class, race, gender, and religion) in the construction of knowledge. Given this, Code (1991, as cited in Tuana, 2001) reminds the "practice [of] a particularly imaginative, discursively responsible knowing that is wary of replicating the very silencings and other oppressions it aims to counteract" (Tuana, 2001, p. 8).

The qualitative research employed a snowball or chain referral sampling. The researcher sought the endorsements of senior citizen offices in municipalities in Quezon City and caretakers of assisted living facilities of older persons. Some research participants were also recruited through the referrals of research participants, friends, and co-workers.

The method used was in-depth interviews. A total of 10 older Filipino cisgender women were interviewed from 2019 to 2020. Nine participants who lived in Metro Manila were interviewed in person, while one participant, who lived in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, was interviewed via Zoom. Interviews were done in conversational Filipino or a combination of Filipino and English.

All research participants were married once. At the time of the interview, six out of the 10 participants were widows, while four were still married and living with their husbands. The participants' ages ranged from 61 to 90 years. The names of the participants and their partners were changed to maintain confidentiality, and all personal, identifying information was either obscured or removed.

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of research participants, showing their age, current occupation, and monthly income.

Table 1 *Demographic profile of research participants*

Name	Age	Current occupation	Monthly income
Olivia	61 years old	Retired/ Unemployed	No more additional income but receives a combined PHP 8,000.00 per month from her and her husband's pension for a household of two (2)
Beth	65 years old	Midwife	Did not disclose the specific amount but above PHP 50,000.00 per month for a household of four (4)
Anna	69 years old	Ambulant vendor	PHP 200.00 to PHP 400.00 on weekdays or for a total of more or less PHP 6,000.00 per month for a household of eight (8)
Christine	70 years old	Wet market vendor	PHP 2,200 from husband's pension and income of approximately PHP 6,000 per month or PHP 8,200.00 per month for a household of four (4)
Gloria	70 years old	Businesswoman/ Self-employed	PHP 3,000.00 per month from her pension and PHP3,500.00/month from her husband's pension; a total of PHP 6,500.00 per month for a household of two (2); has additional income from her small business, but the income is irregular so she could not give an estimate
Mary	71 years old	Volunteer	PHP 2,000.00 per month from husband's pension and PHP 8,000.00 per month from her volunteer work for a total of PHP10,000.00 per month for a household of one (1)
Joanna	72 years old	Restaurant owner	Did not disclose the specific amount but above PHP 30,000.00 per month for a core household of two (2) and extended family (children and grandchildren)
Aurora	75 years old	Businesswoman/ Self-employed	Approximately PHP 20,000.00 from her GSIS pension and PHP 4,000.00 per month from her husband's pension or PHP 24,000.00 per month for a household of three (3); additional income from their business that was not disclosed
Victoria	89 years old	Unemployed	No income but pension from GSIS pay for her stay at an assisted living facility
Joyce	90 years old	Unemployed	No income but receives around PHP 2,000.00 from husband's pension; relative pays for her stay at an assisted living facility

Thematic analysis was used to identify themes from data collected from the key informant interviews. Interview questions centered on the following: the tensions between cultural and personal constructions of womanhood and sexuality, perceptions of and feelings about aging, sexual history, and major events related to sexual activity; and current sexual activities, if any. After that, data and themes were organized by the age at which it was experienced: early life (girlhood to young adulthood), and later life (middle to late adulthood).

Ethical Considerations

The researcher's position as a chronologically younger woman necessitated the conscious and continuous practice of reflexivity in approaching the topic of aging sexuality and womanhood.

Given the age difference between the researcher and the research participants[2], there were initial concerns on being able to build rapport with the research participants. Stuart-Hamilton (2000, as cited in Della, 2006) identified the "cohort effect" in aging sexuality studies as one of the challenges concerning older populations in this field of study. Because older people were raised in "less permissive times than the present," (p. 18) they are not comfortable and do not have the "vocabulary to talk about sexual issues. They, therefore, tend to provide less information, not because they have sex less often, but because they are less willing to talk about it" (Della, 2006, p. 19). The researcher ensured that prior to the interview, a more exhaustive definition of sexuality was discussed with the research participants, bearing in mind Della's (2006) reminder to clarify operational definitions of what constituted sexual activities.

An informed consent form was also thoroughly discussed prior to the interview; consent forms were available in Filipino or English and included an overview of the research and the following reminders: the prerogative to withdraw from the research at any given time, or refuse to answer questions; that their identity and other identifying personal details would be kept confidential; and that the interview would be recorded and transcribed. My contact details were also provided.

There may be merit in looking at how the dynamics between the interviewer and the participants during the research would have been different and how the research participants would have answered if the interviewer had been older (i.e., chronologically older than the researcher, someone who was the same age as the research participants), married, or with children.[3]

Findings and Discussion

Courtship and the Beginning of Romantic Relationships

The majority of participants began their stories with how they were courted and gave different reasons why they valued courtship. Aurora describes courtship as the process that allows both parties to get to know each other. For Gloria, courtship signifies good intentions and respect

[2]The age gap between the researcher and research participants is 37 years at the least and 66 years at most (at the time of the interviews).

[3] During the interviews, especially during questions on major sexual events (i.e., virginity loss, their "honeymoon" or martial sexual intercourse), research participants often asked if I was already married, had a boyfriend, or had children of my own. Some research participants also asked me about my sexual history, or if I had experiences similar to theirs. In response to their questions, I also shared some of my personal experiences but was careful with how I phrased my answers since they might influence the participants' perspectives.

toward women and their families. She added that, when men do not court women, it is a sign of disrespect; moreover, the absence of courtship leads to women being fooled into engaging in premarital sexual activities because the men's intentions remain unclear or ill-intended.

Beth said that her parents reminded her that courtship should happen inside the house, not on the streets or at school. She was also told that, while she could accept suitors, holding hands and "kissing-kissing" were absolutely not allowed until she finished her studies. Mary shared that, even if they had eloped, her husband did, in fact, court her and her parents.

Christine's anecdote shows how parents are involved during the courtship and the concept of a chaperon. She recalled how her father had acted when her suitor (*"manliligaw"*) would visit:

> [Whenever Jun was in our home] when he was courting me, my father would go out [of his room and go into the living room] saying, "O, Christine, I'll sleep here. I have my sleeping mat with me." "Tay [Father], your room is there." "No. It's hot inside my room. I'll stay here outside in the living room." When Jun, my would-be husband, would hear that, he would leave and say, "Okay, I'll go ahead and go home."

Courtship has been described as an exhibit of distinctly gendered conventions for men and women "based on the model of an active, breadwinning male and a passive, dependent female" (Bailey, 1988; Cate and Lloyd, 1992, as cited in Lamont, 2013, p. 189). The "active, breadwinning male" model assumes that men initiate the start of the relationship and are financially responsible for the "passive" woman. This model likewise reduced women to recipients of affection and assumed that they are non-wage earners who just wait for men to propose marriage to them to stay afloat economically (Lamont, 2013). Traditionally, women were expected to be *pakipot* or play hard to get because they could not openly express their affection (Love, Courtship in Filipino Culture, n.d.).

However, participants showed agency in choosing their partners and participated in the courtship. Joyce and Olivia, for example, entered into relationships with different men. Olivia even shared that she was quick to reject a suitor if she was not interested. Joyce was very excited when she talked about her younger days. She shared that she was confident in her body when she was younger and had many suitors and boyfriends. She and Anna both enjoyed the flirting stage during courtship because they got to know their suitors better.

Marriage of the "Virgin" Bride and Partnered Sexuality

The median age of marriage of the nine research participants is 24.44 years old, with 17 years old as the youngest and 32 years old as the oldest. Research data suggest that there were two expectations from women before they got married: knowing how to do housework and "saving their virginity" for the would-be husband and marriage.

Most participants agreed that women should be virgins when they get married; only two somewhat disagreed, with the sentiment that, while it was unnecessary, they preferred women to be. The two who somewhat disagreed shared that they engaged in premarital sex with their would-be husbands. Participants used the word "virgin" to refer to someone who has not had sexual intercourse.

Aurora personally feels that women prefer to get married without prior sexual experience, sharing that:

> I think it's like… women nowadays, they still stick to what they want before getting married, [and what they want is to still] be virgins [before marriage]. But there are some people [who are no longer virgins], and that's okay. But personally… for me… for example, if you ask me to choose, I would still want to get married without having had any [sexual] experience.

Aurora had contradictory opinions regarding premarital sexual activities, which stems from her belief that preserving one's virginity is synonymous with engaging only in "partnered sexuality" or monogamous sexual activities across the life course. DeLamater (2012) defines partnered sexuality as "[requiring] access to a partner, and for older persons, this often occurs within a long-term committed relationship" (as cited in DeLamater et al., 2019, p. 2).

This conflation was also apparent when Mary said it was "maybe" okay for women to be "sexually experienced" before marriage, but for her, she had no other sexual partner in mind except for her husband. She elaborated that when she had eloped, they engaged in non-penetrative sexual activities. The only reason they could not have sexual intercourse was because of her menstrual period and the "bad timing" frustrated the both of them.

Joanna shared that she also engaged in sexual activities before marriage. She said having moments alone with her boyfriend made them "naturally" curious. Joanna justified engaging in premarital sexual activities because she would eventually get married to the same person, which echoes Aurora and Mary's sentiments on partnered sexuality and only having one sexual partner across the life course.

One research participant, a midwife by profession, prompted a question on whether she would be open to her children engaging in premarital sex as long as it was safe. Beth answered in the negative, saying that virginity is something women should take care of, and added that she hopes that younger women nowadays would not devalue their virginity. Her sentiment comes from handling cases of teenage pregnancy and having adolescent patients with sexually transmitted diseases. Beth, however, clarified that women could engage in premarital sex if they want to, and she would give her professional opinion to her clients who decide to be sexually active. However, she would still discourage her children from having premarital sex, even if they were to use contraceptives.

The research participants also rationalized the importance of women preserving their virginity and having only one sexual partner by citing morality based on religious tenets or tradition based on social norms they were taught when they were children. It also became apparent that the value given to virginity varies from woman to woman (e.g., other women may lose their virginity before marriage, but my daughter cannot), making the value given to virginity even more arbitrary.

Research participants placed careful emphasis on having lost their virginity to their eventual husband. Figure 1 presents the participants' virginity loss trajectories, showing that their first sexual partners were either a boyfriend who would be their husband (premarital) or their husband (after marriage). Within the scope of the research, the research participants' rejection of women

engaging in premarital sex was not necessarily because of the sex act, but whether or not women were sexually monogamous to their would-be-husband, and if it would eventually lead to marriage.

When patriarchy's ideal feminine scripts intersect with sexual scripts, it expects women to follow sexual trajectories that adhere to such ideals. Women who are more open with their sexuality are villainized and women's value is unfairly equated to their bodies, virginity, and sexual behavior and activity. This line of thinking likewise implies that, even if a woman has other attributes associated with the feminine ideal of being nurturing, caring, maternal, respectful, these are invalidated if she is seen as "lewd," "provocative," or "flirty."

When Beth was asked what the expectations were for women when she was younger, she answered with different words all related to social and sexual behaviors: "Not vulgar or lewd, not provocative, and not flirty." Beth's response shows how the construction of ideal femininity and sexuality is "jointly constructed within specific social-structural contexts" (Carpenter, 2010, p. 157), and that these contexts greatly influence how gender and sexual scripts are perceived and performed across the life course.

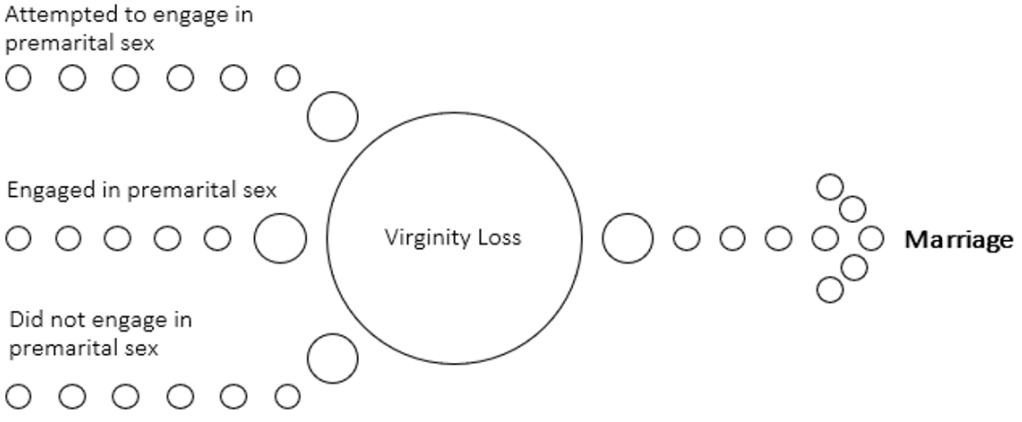

Figure 1 *Participant's Virginity and Loss Trajectories*

Coping with Changes in Relationships and Sexual Activities in Later Life

Isn't This Wrong for My Age? Older women who have been socialized to perform sexual norms across the life course may find themselves questioning if there is something "wrong" with them for being "off" script.

Joyce shared her difficulties in trying to reconcile her attraction to younger men at her age. She talked about the men who visit their care facility and how she still gets crushes on them, at one point saying, "Only men can make me feel happy." She said that one thing that did not change about her even if she is old is liking the feeling of having a crush (*"kilig"*) and being attracted to men. She would often feel weak, but she feels reinvigorated when she sees her crushes.

Joyce's attraction to younger men "makes her feel younger" and "delays her aging process" because her crushes are her sources of inspiration. She prefers younger men because they are "not sick" and "handsome," which for her are the characteristics older men do not have. However, Joyce

also struggles with this attraction, stating that, "My heart is very much invigorated by the call of love. Is this wrong for my age? Even if it is what my heart beats for?"

The very act of Joyce questioning whether it is "wrong for her age" is symptomatic of how myths surrounding sexuality affect women's lives and self-perceptions. Anderson (2016) contemplated on the fundamentally gendered cultural attitudes towards aging and prompts questions on whether or not the aging female body "can continue to be a site of femininity and desirability, or [if] there is a notion of femininity which can accommodate the aging body" (p. 233).

When we look closer at Joyce's sexual trajectories, she exhibited liberal values and freely expressed her femininity and sexuality when she was younger—only to forcibly temper such expressions when she got older. The physical manifestations of aging, which Carpenter (2010) refers to as physiological processes, experienced by Joyce affect her perceptions and eventual performance of her sexual identity, femininity, and womanhood in later life.

Fears and Uncertainties in Dating as an Older Woman. Mary thinks that dating in later life is okay but having sex is a different issue altogether. She said that she has friends who continue to date, but they keep it "wholesome." But more than that, Mary feels like she is too busy now to even think about dating. After a long day at work, she goes home and sometimes even sleeps while still wearing her work uniform. She can't think about dating on top of being busy at work.

Echoing Mary's comments on being tired because of work, Christine rhetorically asked, "Can you still think of sex when you are tired from work?" Moreover, if older couples focused on just "sexuality" and having new relationships, Christine thought that it would be too worldly.

Joyce's reason for not entering a new relationship or marriage was not because of a lack of choice of a partner or the lack of proposals, but very much tied to her financial security and safety. Joyce explained that she decided not to get married again because she would lose her husband's pension. Joyce was a housewife and financially dependent on her husband; re-partnering in later life would be economically disadvantageous for her.

When I asked more about her relationships after being widowed, she said she did have boyfriends but those relationships were never serious. She also added that she did not want to live with them. She found the idea of "living in" scary, mainly from the fear of being physically abused by the new lover. Joyce shared that her previous lovers and her husband were quick to get jealous. At one point, her husband had even told her jokingly that he wanted her to wear blinkers—the blinders put on horses that force them to look forward—so that Joyce would not look at other men.

Anna had turned serious when she answered:

> I don't want [to date]. […] He might punch me or beat me up. I also have to think of my children and grandchildren too [because they] might be raped. Especially since they are women. That's why I did not get married again since I was widowed in 1993… it's 2019 now. [It's still] no.

Anna also added that she was "done" with relationships and sex: "Sex? Nope. I'm out. I'm done with that."

Both Joyce and Anna's fears of having a violent male lover in later life are not unique to old age. Other participants have alluded to the same fears across the life course and how they have gone out of their way to ensure their relationships remain harmonious. Christine is also wary of entering new relationships because she knows people her age who have been tricked by their new lovers. For Christine, new and younger lovers seemed to look at older persons as potential victims to swindle money from.

Self-Imposed Rules in Dating. Beth, who was widowed at 49 years old, also dated upon the encouragement of her children. However, she had a self-imposed rule to stop dating once she had grandchildren. She said it would be embarrassing if her grandchildren heard gossip saying, "Look, grandmother has a boyfriend."

She mentioned differences in dating as a younger woman (*"dalaga"*) because there were steps to move towards (like marriage, childbirth, child rearing), while dating as an older woman did not have the same prescriptions. While she sometimes feels lonely because she no longer has a partner, she does not think about it as much nowadays since she is busy spending time with her family. But Beth does admire women her age who date, saying that it takes a certain level of fulfillment and confidence (*"kumpyansa"*) in themselves to do so.

Gloria thinks that older women can date but feels that they should not sleep with younger men because it would reflect negatively on their children. The way Gloria sees it, engaging in sexual relationships in later life with someone who is not their husband is disrespectful both to the self and to one's children. It may also be a source of familial conflict and may strain relationships.

Mary also emphasized sexual activity as the main difference between relationships at a younger age and older age. She also had self-imposed restrictions on dating; she said it would be all about companionship and preferably "someone like her" who was widowed.

Sickness of a potential, older partner was also given as a consideration when dating. Mary says that when she thinks about sex and relationships in old age, she can't help but think about whether her partner would be sick, and what kind of sickness he might have. If they do decide to be a couple, she would need to take care of a new partner with possible sicknesses.

Generally, the participants were uninterested in or apprehensive about entering new relationships due to the recognition that new relationships in later life can cause problems and compromise their safety, health, and economic security. Interviews also yielded different attitudes towards sex and new relationships in later life, reflecting the criticism of the heteronormative framework of sex that assumes the ultimate experience of romantic and sexual relationships is sexual intercourse and ejaculation (Fileborn et al., 2015; Moore, 2015) across the life course.

Objections against dating or looking for a new partner were self-imposed, stirred by external pressures of not wanting to bring shame to their family, ruin their family's reputation, or embarrass family members. These pressures may be self-imposed because some of the research participant's children did not object to them dating again after being widowed and appeared to have even encouraged them to do so.

Findings also suggest a strong cultural pressure to continue to be "wives" even after being widowed, which meant suppressing desires to date, flirt, or get married again. This may be seen as (a) an inclination to sexual monogamy and partnered sexuality and (b) succumbing to external, societal pressures to be "publicly" acknowledged as someone who only had ever had one sexual partner. Some research participants have questioned their continuing attraction towards men despite their age and stopped dating altogether for fear of gossip spreading about them.

Summary and Conclusions: Highlighting the (Older) Woman Question

Understanding how older women came to define their sexuality and femininity was central to the research. The study demonstrates how societal norms and expectations regarding sexual monogamy affect the sexual and romantic relationships of women across the life course. The research participants' virginity loss trajectories also show an inclination to adhere to sexual monogamy and traditional marriage scripts.

Participants in the study had a variety of coping mechanisms and responses to the changes in their sexual relationships with their husbands, such as discovering and pursuing personal interests, abstaining from sexual intercourse, or negotiating and communicating boundaries with their partner.

Older women who were part of the research also appeared to police how they act on their desires, and frequently cited their age as the reason for their inhibitions. They, however, also believe that forming romantic or sexual relationships in later life is not always necessary, advantageous, or safe for them.

Society often regards sexuality as the monopoly of the younger generation (Della, 2006) and, in most instances, rejects the open or public expression of aging sexuality. The construction of women in discourse and the socialization process has taught women conflicting notions about their bodies and sexuality. While women in discourse was constructed based on their sexual activity (or inactivity) (Estrada-Claudio, 2002), the socialization process has denied conversations about her body and sexuality altogether. The devaluation of women's sexual needs across the life course has led older women to internalize its perceived "irrelevance" and "unimportance" in old age. Aging sexuality and femininity do not only have a marginal position in development discourse or health agendas; these are also on the fringes of older women's concerns and priorities.

More importantly, older women's definitions of aging sexuality assert that sexual health should not only be anchored on sexual involvement, romantic love, and partnered sexuality. The devaluation of older women's intimate experiences posits a series of questions on how to decenter sex and romance in sexuality discourse, allowing women to value the non-romantic and non-sexual facets of sexuality.

Women's sexual and reproductive health concerns do not end at a specific age. States' Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) strategies must adopt a life course approach by looking into interventions across age stages and identifying structural barriers in accessing sexual and reproductive health services. There must be explicit recognition of sexuality as an integral part of people's health and dignity, regardless of age, and the challenging of negative attitudes and stigma towards older women's bodies. Critical to this is empowering older women and ensuring

their participation in their communities and decision-making on sexual and reproductive health policies.

Critical feminist gerontology researchers encourage researchers to look at older women's intersectional identities to understand the power dynamics present in the aging experience. Future research should also focus on the experiences of older lesbian, bisexual, and trans women, older women with disabilities, older indigenous women, or non-Catholic or Christian older women to better understand what shapes and constructs notions of womanhood and sexuality.

Researchers may also look at how economic insecurity across the life course affects sexual and reproductive health in old age and health-seeking behavior. Older women's productivity is also an area future research may explore, considering a number of the research participants interviewed continued to be economically productive in later life. An inquiry on the economic activities older women engage in would challenge the idea of the "disengaged elderly" and "retirement age."

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Women with Disabilities' Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Gaizel Arguelles Adan
Alyanna Yzabelle A. Tamayo
Michelle Chua

ABSTRACT

The challenges of women with disabilities in accessing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) information and services were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Increased barriers were due to the convergence of multiple factors including mobility restrictions, economic strains, and amplified health complications related with the virus. This research aims to highlight the experiences of women with disabilities in accessing SRHR programs during the pandemic. The research relies on key informant interviews (KII) with key women leaders representing organizations dedicated to the interests of women with disabilities. Additionally, the research incorporates a thorough review of secondary materials to enrich the contextual understanding of the challenges and experiences of women with disabilities. The analytical framework of the study draws from Naila Kabeer's Social Relations Framework, Kimberle Crenshaw's concept of Intersectionality, and Sara Hlupekile Longwe's Equality and Empowerment Framework. The findings of the study underscore the existence of systemic problems within the dynamics and exchanges of social institutions, where multiple inequalities intersect, reproducing more barriers that hinder women with disabilities from accessing SRHR information and services. The research then advocates for targeted interventions and program initiatives that are multi-sectoral, participatory, and intersectional in approach to dismantle the barriers and ensure equitable SRHR access for women with disabilities.

Introduction

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) are fundamental human rights. They are set down in national and international laws and agreements. The Beijing Platform for Action, for instance, states that "women's human rights include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence" (BPfA, 1995). They are not only a crucial element of the right to health but are also indispensable for the realization of other human rights, encompassing the rights to life, freedom from discrimination, equal recognition before the law, privacy, and respect for family life, education, and work (UN Human Rights Council, 2008). As such, sexual and reproductive health rights are universal, i.e., they apply to all, without exception. But while women and their communities are starting to receive recognition and are gaining ground in this issue and in the larger domain of development, the perspectives and experiences of women with disabilities still remain on the sidelines.

According to UN Women (2015), an estimated one in five women live with disabilities, and the prevalence of disability is actually higher among women than men (19.2% vs. 12%). This "intersection" of gender and disability creates unique disadvantages for women with disabilities that are not suffered by other sectors of society. As the UN Economic and Social Council (2003) observes, "Women with disabilities may be particularly at risk due to stigmas associated with both disability and gender, and are more likely to suffer from discrimination than able-bodied women or men with disabilities" (para. 67). But such multiple experiences of marginalization are not recognized even within the mainstream disability community (United Nations, 2016) and are most likely subsumed under the generalized situation of women or people with disabilities. Thus, women with disabilities remain at the margins on both issues of gender equality and disability rights. They are particularly frequently left out in public discourses, policy-making, programming, and services regarding sexuality and SRHR. Across the globe, women with disabilities have been deprived of the right to establish intimate relationships and to decide whether, when, and with whom to have a family. Forced sterilization, abortions, and marriages are all manifestations of the abuse that women with disabilities throughout the course of history have experienced, disguised as "for their protection."

In the Philippines, of the 92.1 million household population recorded by the Philippine 2010 Census, over 1.4 million are persons with disabilities; and of this, females with disabilities comprised 49.1%, or over 707,000. Sexual and reproductive health has been a controversial issue, and is even more contested for women with disabilities if it is at all discussed. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic greatly affected their access to their basic needs, including access to SRHR. This is within a national context where, in a little over a year into the various levels of community quarantine brought about by the pandemic and the government's misplaced priorities, the 1 million total number of COVID-19 cases was reached (Bueza, 2021).[2]

Given the restricted mobilizations in response to the pandemic, there was an abrupt discontinuation of public and private-led SRHR service providers or their transition from face-to-face to online modes. As a result, some SRHR clients discontinued their access to community-based services, while others missed their regular appointments for the following reasons: (1) some ervice providers had to close their clinics because of the pandemic; (2) reduced human resources, especially in local government health offices which focused more on the COVID-19 initiatives; and (3) delayed delivery of SRHR commodities and supplies. Online mechanisms may have provided options for women with disabilities; however, a digital divide or unequal access to stable internet and therefore these online platforms remained an issue as well (Fontamillas & Tamayo, 2021). Additionally, there were cases of women with disabilities who were forced to stay home with their abusers because of the pandemic.

This exploratory study aimed to describe the perspectives and experiences of women with disabilities, particularly those with active community engagement, in accessing SRHR especially at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the study intended to:

1. Provide a platform for women with disabilities, particularly those with active roles in their community or organization, to share and describe their experiences in accessing their SRHR especially during the COVID-19 pandemic;

[1]On April 27, 2021, the Philippines reached one (1) million COVID-19 cases. (Article source: https://www.rappler.com/news-break/data-documents/charts-how-philippines-got-one-million-covid-19-cases)

2. highlight the intersectionality of being women and having disabilities in these experiences;
3. analyze how social institutions shape these experiences; and
4. recommend points of action that could improve the situation of women with disabilities and their access to SRHR.

Literature Review

Defining (the situation of) Persons with Disabilities

Disability is defined differently across countries and cultures (UNICEF, 2012). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) defines persons with disabilities as persons "who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (United Nations, 2006). The UNCRPD recognizes that "disability is an evolving concept and that it results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on equal basis with others" (United Nations, 2006). Thus, in talking about persons with disabilities, we not only look at the health condition, i.e., being blind, deaf, mentally/physically challenged, and so on, but also how external and environmental factors—such as attitudes of others and accessibility of the community—contribute to the disability as well.

Persons with disabilities have limited access to services, such as health, work, education, government social welfare, rehabilitation, and disaster management, compared to persons without disabilities. Based on government estimates, 70% of persons with disabilities reside in rural areas, where access to services is limited (ADB, 2005). Limitations are also encountered in participating in social and religious activities and community meetings (Marella et al., 2016). Based on the report of the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme (4Ps), 5% of the total household beneficiaries have persons with disabilities (Taparan, 2018). Results of the 2016 National Disability Prevalence Survey (NDPS) show that persons with severe disabilities have less access to information (12%) than those with moderate (17%), mild (26%), and no disability (28%) (Philippine Statistics Authority; Department of Health, 2019).

Women with Disabilities in the Philippines

The Philippine Statistics Authority estimates that 3.1% of Filipinos over the age of five have a disability, and 49.1% of them are women (PSA, 2014 in Lee et al., 2015). Aside from ratifying the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Philippines also has national legal frameworks that uphold the SRHR of women with disabilities. These include Republic Act (RA) 1970 or The *Magna Carta of Women,* RA 7277 or *The Magna Carta of Disabled Persons*, and RA 10354 or *The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012* (RH Law). The RH Law holds the state accountable to take measures to ensure access to family planning, procurement and distribution of family planning supplies, quality healthcare facilities, and age- and development-appropriate reproductive health education. Specifically, Section 18 of the RH Law targets "Sexual and Reproductive Health Programs for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)" and mandates cities and municipalities to remove barriers to SRHR services for PWDs by providing physical access, adapting health procedures to the needs and

conditions of PWDs, making use of accessible communication materials (braille, large print, simple language, sign language, etc.) to disseminate information, providing continuing education on the rights of PWDs among healthcare providers, and raising awareness and addressing stigma on the SRHR of PWDs (RA 10354, 2012, section 18). It can be said that, through this special mention, the State and policymakers in the Philippines recognize that persons with disabilities have sexual and reproductive health needs.

According to the study by Women with Disability taking action on Reproductive and Sexual Health (W-DARE) in 2015, however, Filipino women with disabilities continue to experience high rates of human rights violations, particularly violence and abuse. This was particularly true in the case of women with psychosocial disabilities, women with intellectual disabilities, and women who were deaf or hard of hearing. This reported violence is from perpetrators who are not just intimate partners but also family members, neighbors, strangers, teachers, transport providers, and health workers (Vaughan et al., 2016). These cases are examples of reproductive rights violations which are not the sole recognition of couples and/or individuals to decide freely and responsibly but also the right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion, and violence (UNFPA, 2014).

Relevant Legal Frameworks

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was adopted in the country in 2006. The UNCRPD reaffirmed the rights of persons with disabilities that are human rights to be promoted, protected, and ensured by State parties. The Preamble of the UNCRPD recognizes disability as an evolving concept resulting from the interaction between persons with impairment and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. The Philippines was one of the earliest signatories of the UNCRPD, having ratified the Convention on April 15, 2008. Article 5 of the UNCRPD focuses on the right to equality and nondiscrimination. It guarantees equal protection and benefit of the law and prohibition against discrimination. Article 25 of the UNCRPD highlights the importance of persons with disabilities' right to quality, affordable, if not free, healthcare programs and services. The article indicates that State signatories of the Convention ensure access for persons with disabilities to health services, including sexual and reproductive health programs.

Republic Act (RA) 7277, also known as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, was approved on March 24, 1992. The Act provides the rights and privileges of persons with disabilities and their rights to participation in society. It emphasizes that every citizen should be involved in giving equal rights to persons with disabilities; like any other Filipino citizen, persons with disabilities should live as free and independent as possible without discrimination from the community. Chapter 3 of the Act focuses on Health that mandates State-funded service providers to adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to persons with disabilities' health development. In April 2007, R.A. 9442 was enacted to amend R.A. 7277, adding the provisions of other privileges and incentives with the 20% entitlement of discount from all establishments for services, medicines, cinema, medical bills, fares, and such.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) provides measures and mechanisms for governments to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. Article 1 defines "discrimination against women" as any distinction,

exclusion, or restriction made based on sex that has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, based on equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

The Magna Carta of Women (MCW) aims to eliminate discrimination through the recognition, protection, fulfillment, and promotion of the rights of Filipino women, especially the marginalized; it provides mechanisms for the Philippine Government in translating the CEDAW in the context of the country—defining gender, discrimination, obligations of the State, and special measures (Republic of the Philippines, 2009). Chapter V, Section 27 on Social Protection includes the provision that "the State shall support women with disabilities on a community-based social protection scheme" (Republic of the Philippines, 2009).

Medical versus Social Models of Disability

The medical model of disability focuses on the person with disability and defines the person as having a problem that must be treated or fixed. With this model, the focus is on treating the impairment through specialized provisions to make persons with disabilities adapt to what society defines as average or within the norm (Rieser, 2012). It limits the discussion around disability to the treatment and provisions that the person with disability can receive to be able to participate in society and lacks an emphasis on the societal barriers that contribute to the non-participation of the person in society (UNICEF, 2018).

Meanwhile, the social model is aligned with the rights-based approach outlined in the UNCRPD, which views disability as an evolving concept due to the interaction between an individual's impairment and the barriers that hinder their full and equitable participation in society (United Nations, 2006). The social model of disability states that disability is socially constructed (Inclusion London, 2015) and is, therefore, a societal problem—with eliminating the barriers to ensure the well-being of persons with disabilities being society's responsibility (Farkas, 2014). The social model of disability was developed by persons with disabilities about 40 years ago as a roadmap to identify barriers and solutions toward more inclusive ways of living in society (Inclusion London, 2015).

Analytical Framework

According to Kabeer (1994), social relations create and reproduce systemic differences in the social positioning of groups of people. This research will use Kabeer's institutional analysis as a general conceptual guide as it allows the research team to understand that the causes of unequal social relations are not solely confined to individual or family dynamics. Kabeer identifies four key institutions: the household which involves familial relationships and dynamics; the community which covers local communities, NGOs, and informal networks; the market which would include firms, corporations, and other economic enterprises; and the state which includes legal, military, and administrative organizations. These social institutions have the ability to sustain or (re)produce inequalities based on what rules are implemented, what activities or goals are achieved, how resources are used and distributed, who is included and excluded, and who holds the power and is served by it (March et al., 2005). This concept highlights how existing institutions could be unresponsive to and can reproduce, or even increase, the marginalization of women with disabilities. Looking

at gender inequality from an institutional perspective illustrates the interweaving relationships of organizational rules, cultural norms, and routinized practices. These altogether stem from institutional sites that produce and sustain inequality (Kabeer & Subrahmanian, 1996).

Secondly, intersectionality, according to Crenshaw, is "the idea that we experience life, sometimes discrimination, sometimes benefits, based on a number of identities." In an intersectional approach, the ways in which diverse socially and culturally constructed categories interact at different levels to produce different forms of power relations and inequalities are examined. This is a particularly useful frame of analysis for women with disabilities: girls and women with disabilities experience "intersectional discrimination," where two or more forms of inequalities combine to create a unique, distinct, and particular experience of disadvantage that is not suffered by others including women without disabilities or men with disabilities (ECOTEC, 2009; UN Economic and Social Council, 2003). Gender and disability, when combined in the same person, usually reinforce each other and compound prejudices (Ortoleva & Lewis, 2012). On top of the multiple discrimination that women with disabilities experience, they also suffer from "double invisibility" as women and as persons with disabilities (Ortoleva & Lewis, 2012). Their concerns remain underrepresented, and the intersecting discrimination and multiple rights violations they experience are insufficiently addressed through inclusive programs and policies (Handicap International, 2015).

People with disabilities are often personified without gender, yet "the image of disability may be intensified by gender—for women, a sense of intensified passivity and helplessness; for men, a corrupted masculinity generated by enforced dependence" (Chakravarti in UN Women, 2020). An intersectional approach recognizes the heterogeneity and diversity within groups. It challenges any conception of womanhood that is homogenized. It demands an end to the marginalization of the experiences of women whose oppression is shaped by intersecting structural social inequalities.

Finally, Longwe's Equality and Empowerment Framework identifies five levels of women's empowerment and gender equality. This framework is most helpful in assessing the level of impact that development interventions may have, and argues that all five levels must be achieved. These are: (a) *Welfare*, which refers to ensuring that women have basic needs such as food supply, income, and health; (b) *Access*, which pertains to enabling women's equal access to education, health, and social services and programs; (c) *Conscientisation*, which covers understanding the differences and complexities of sex and gender roles, and the systemic factors that disadvantage and discriminate women linked with the recognition that these barriers should be eliminated; (d) *Participation*, women having equal power and influence in the decision-making processes as men; and (e) *Control*, utilizing the participation of women to ensure equal control between men and women. It is emphasized as well that each of these levels are important and may be the entry point for intervention; it is in this context that "access" in this study is appreciated. Longwe further elucidates that access facilitates equality for women when all forms of discrimination are eliminated. This usually involves the law and administrative mechanisms (March et al., 2005).

Methodology

This study employed several research methods to capture the layers of realities experienced by women with disabilities. To draw primary data on the experience of women with disabilities in accessing SRHR services during the pandemic, the researchers invited key informants to participate in their research. The key informant interviews (KII) were conducted online via Zoom

in May 2021, more than a year after the peak of community quarantine. Secondary materials were also reviewed to expound on the legal underpinnings of the SRHR of women with disabilities and to contextualize the general situation in the country. Moreover, personal observations of the researchers were incorporated into the enrichment of the analysis.

The study interviewed three (3) women with disabilities who have been leaders and organizers working in the disability sector for 25 to 30 years through policymaking, disability-centered program implementations, and coalition-building at both the international and national level. Their sharing and insights represented their own experiences as well as that of other women with disabilities whom they led and worked with in their respective organizations. The approach to KII in this study was quite different from how it is traditionally used, where key informants shared their "expert knowledge" about the topic and the organizations they work with and lead. Lokot (2021) critiques that the KII hardly amplifies the voice of "ordinary women," as key informants are usually from a position of power and are usually males. It is contended that the women leaders who were invited for the interview have experienced the same marginalization that women with disabilities are confronted with, including within the disability, where women with disabilities' experiences are hardly given focus or priority. The interview questions were structured to surface the intersecting markers that affected the accessibility of SRHR services for women with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The participants of this study were not categorized according to the specific type of disabilities they have but were identified as being part of the larger community of women with disabilities. Moreover, as an initial analysis, the study did not attempt to assess or evaluate specific SRHR services or programs. The emphasis was on understanding the perspectives and experiences of the participants regarding their access to SRHR services provided by the government.

Prior to the participants' involvement in the study, the researchers obtained informed consent by providing detailed information about the research objectives and procedures. The research team used accessible and clear communication methods, considering the diverse needs of the participants with disabilities. Given that the participants were asked to share their personal stories, the research team and participants decided to anonymize their names in the discussion of findings. After the data analysis, the research team presented the final output of the study to the participants, which they validated and approved. The steps that were taken by the research team aimed to practice inclusion and enhance the overall quality and ethical integrity of the research—promoting a respectful and inclusive environment for the women with disabilities who generously shared their insights and experiences as key informants.

Findings and Discussion

Background on the participants' organizations

Nationwide Organization of Visually Impaired Empowered Ladies, Inc. (NOVEL) Philippines is an organization of women with varying degrees of visual impairment. The organization aims to help women with sight disabilities to be empowered economically and intellectually. Similar to other organizations, the legal anchor of the organization is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The organization focuses on advocating on the issues of gender and disability, particularly women with disabilities' right to health, education,

economic independence, and participation in policy development.

Women with Disabilities Leap to Social and Economic Progress, Inc. (WOW-LEAP) is a national organization of women with disabilities dedicated to promoting the rights and working with women with disabilities to become active participants in social and economic activities in their communities. WOW-LEAP has been working with the disability sector and other stakeholders for 21 years through livelihood programs supported by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the Department of Social and Welfare Development (DSWD), among other institutions supporting the organization.

National Anti-Poverty Commission - Persons with Disabilities Sector (NAPC) is a government agency under the Office of the President responsible for coordinating poverty reduction programs and ensuring that marginalized sectors[3] including persons with disabilities are included in the decision-making processes of the government. NAPC works as an advisory and coordinating body that exercises oversight functions in implementing the social reform agenda of the sectors included in the institution.

Overview of the Pre-pandemic Access of Women with Disabilities to SRHR Services

The participants shed light on the general experiences faced by women with disabilities in accessing SRHR prior to the pandemic. Their responses thematically pointed to the issues of inaccessible physical structures and information and communications, attitudinal barriers, lack of education in SRHR, and economic inadequacy.

Inaccessible Physical Structures and Information and Communications. The Accessibility Law or Batas Pambansa Bilang 344 (BP 344) mandates the accessibility of educational institutions, airports, sports and recreation centers and complexes, shopping centers or establishments, public parking places, workplaces, and public utilities through the provision of architectural facilities or structural features to reasonably enhance the mobility of disabled persons such as sidewalks, ramps, railings and the like (Republic of the Philippines, 1982). Although the Department of Public Works and Highways issued Department Orders[4] to effect the implementation of BP 344, persons with disabilities' access to social and public services continues to be hindered by barriers in the physical environment and inaccessibility of information and communications. The W-DARE Research also reported that people with disabilities have poorer well-being compared to those without disability given the reduced access to health services, employment, social activities, and toilets (Vaughan et al., 2015); and the fact that access to these, in some instances, requires them to pay for services such as getting to the said facilities or paying a fee for personal assistance.

1. Transportation

   Section 18 of the RH Law encourages cities and municipalities to provide physical access to transportation for women with disabilities going to hospitals and service centers providing reproductive health services. Based on the experiences shared by the participants, they

[2] These sectors are (1) farmers and landless rural workers; (2) artisanal fisher folk; (3) urban poor; (4) indigenous peoples; (5) formal labor and migrant workers; (6) workers in the informal sector; (7) women; (8) children; (9) youth and students; (10) senior citizens; (11) victims of disasters and calamities; (12) non-government organizations; and (13) cooperatives.

[3] Department Order No. 34, s. 1988 (Requirement to include infrastructure funds for accessibility features and/or facilities); Departmert Order No. 21, s. 2009 (Policy guideline on implementing projects/activities/programmes for persons with disabilities); and Department Order No. 37, s. 2009 (Enforcement of Accessibility Law along National Roads)

cannot access such services because there is no transportation for those using wheelchairs, assistive devices, or personnel who can support them.

Persons with disabilities perceive accessibility as fully implementing accommodations, if not total access to facilities, in the journey cycle—from their point of origin or from their home to their destination. This means that they cannot access ramps, even when these are provided by establishments, without first having accessible public transportation services (such as tricycles, jeepneys, and buses) to get there. Most persons with disabilities cannot afford private vehicles because their cost of everyday living—such as personal assistance and assistive devices (due to the lack of free provision of devices), and their medical and/or maintenance expenses are more expensive than for those without disabilities. Because of this struggle with inaccessibility, women with disabilities, especially pregnant women, do not have a choice but to pay for a higher cost of transportation.

2. Infrastructure and Establishments

According to the participants, Barangay Health Offices, hospitals, and clinics can be inaccessible for persons with disabilities because these usually have no provisions for ramps, tactile flooring, audio and visual formats of information, or appropriate bathroom facilities. These observations are consistent with the finding in Vaughan et al., (2015) that, even when services are available, the facilities or spaces around the service centers or barangay health offices are physically inaccessible to women with disabilities. One of the participants shared her experience with the inaccessibility of the comfort room in the Senate of the Philippines building, as there was a step in the toilet room for persons with disabilities which made it impossible for her to use it because she was in a wheelchair and there was no provision of handrails. Thus, she had to force herself to hold her pee because she could not just go home, given that the transportation she paid for was already expensive and she could not afford additional trips.

3. Information and Communication

According to the W-DARE Research (2015), there exists a gap in the discourse surrounding Disability and SRHR, particularly in relation to the sexuality of women with disabilities. It highlights a prevailing issue where some women with disabilities demonstrate a limited understanding of how to access SRHR services. Furthermore, a concerning observation emerges as these women are often found to be uninformed about their fundamental sexual and reproductive rights. This was affirmed by the participants, who observed that government-initiated medical services are usually not equipped with assistance for deaf community members—there are no sign language interpreters, announcements in hospitals are always through audio, and the information provided on television screens does not have an inset for deaf community members. During the pandemic, the Philippine National Association for Sign Language Interpreters, in collaboration with the Philippine Federation of the Deaf, had to assert themselves to the Department of Health (DOH) to provide access to information by requesting the agency to ensure that informational commercials were accessible for the deaf community. Many deaf community members were not updated on the situation of the pandemic, especially those who were living alone and in rural areas

where information dissemination was done mostly via radio rather than television.

Moreover, the intricate challenges faced by women with disabilities in accessing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) are compounded by a range of factors. The participants mentioned that the miscommunication of crucial concepts, coupled with a pervasive lack of awareness within communities and among educators regarding the specific SRHR needs of women with disabilities, contributes significantly to this predicament. This also includes a prevalent hesitancy among parents, caregivers, teachers, and social workers to engage in open discussions about sex and sexuality with young women, thus further exacerbating the obstacles encountered by women with disabilities in their pursuit of comprehensive SRHR services.

Attitudinal Barriers. Attitudinal barriers are ways of thinking or feeling resulting in behavior that limits the potential of people with disabilities to be independent individuals. These may seem minute but are actually very powerful as they often contribute to other, more physical barriers. A participant shared that people with disabilities, especially women with disabilities, are often seen as asexual and/or as sexually inactive, and therefore there is no need for SRHR services for them. This coincides with data from various sources (UN Special Rapporteur, 2019; Leonard Cheshire Disability, 2014; Ortoleva & Lewis, 2012) which report that women with disabilities may be denied information on reproductive health or access to maternal/child health services, are less likely to receive information about HIV prevention and safer sex, and have limited access to condoms or other pregnancy prevention methods because they are assumed to be sexually inactive. Disability, especially when pertaining to women, is associated with asexuality and an inability and/or lack of desire to bear and parent (Gatrell et al., 2017).

When women with disabilities do decide to get pregnant and have a child, they hear different criticisms such as these mentioned by a participant:

> "Nagpabuntis ka?"
> (You let someone get you pregnant?)
>
> "Bakit ka pa mag-aanak e may kapansanan ka na?"
> (Why would you still get pregnant when you have disabilities?)
>
> "Pabigat lang kapag nagka-anak ka pa kasi di kaya alagaan ang sarili."
> (You will just be a burden if you get pregnant because you cannot take care of yourself.)
>
> "Mahihirapan ka, mahihirapan rin ang anak mo."
> (You will have a hard time, and so will your child.)

These are some subtle signs that people view women with disabilities as a burden to society. According to the National Council on Women and Development or NCWD (2016), the most pervasive negative attitude focuses on a person's disability rather than an individual's abilities. The view is that, since they have a disability and most often need extra care, they cannot care for others (as mothers and wives) and therefore have even less to contribute to society. Setting their SRHR

needs aside or not giving priority to them is thus deemed justified. This attitude further highlights the notion that women are "innate" caregivers, when in fact, it should be the family and community members working together to enable and empower children, and persons with disabilities through raising awareness, providing physical environment accessibility, and equal opportunities. Moreover, there is also the myth mentioned by one participant that, "*Kung ikaw ay may kapansanan at babae ka, automatically magkakaroon na ng kapansanan ang anak*" (If you have a disability and you happen to be a woman, your child will automatically have a disability). Where this myth is believed to be true, women with disabilities are discouraged from getting pregnant to avoid having a child with a disability, as having a disability is again seen as a burden.

Women with disabilities' access to SRHR is also affected by the stigma held by their communities, the health workers, and even their own families. One participant narrated how her family hid her inside the home because of shame, embarrassment, and fear of discrimination. This, in turn, affected her self-image, and she grew up feeling inferior and dependent. The same participant also shared that one of the doctors she went to commented, *"Bakit ka kasi nagpabuntis e nakita mo nang mahirap magpa-anak?"* (Why did you allow yourself to get pregnant when you know that childbirth is hard?). This supports the study conducted by Lee et al. (2015) in two research sites in the Philippines (Quezon City in Metro Manila and Ligao City in the province of Albay), where it was revealed that one of the primary obstacles faced by women with disabilities in accessing their SRHR is the perceptions on disability among (health) service providers. In describing persons with disabilities, there was a use of binary concepts: able-bodied men and women were referred to as "normal," while words like "deficient," "inadequate," and "broken" were used for persons with disabilities. However, these service providers also readily admit that they lack disability sensitization and are thus uncertain about what terms to use, recognizing that they must "study the language" (Lee et al., 2015). Their lack of understanding and knowledge of disability consequently impedes the provision of SRHR services as the providers themselves are unclear about the needs of persons with disabilities for such services.

Lack of Education in SRHR. Based on the participants' responses, they identified the lack of education of women with disabilities about SRHR services and the lack of training of medical and health professionals on how to provide SRHR services to the former. The personal stories and the narratives of other women with disabilities that our participants have worked with attest to this. As shared by the participants, women with disabilities have limited knowledge about the services they can access, which usually ends with contraceptives.

All the participants identified the lack of education in SRHR as an impediment to the access of women with disabilities to SRHR services. The primary question is how can a woman with disability know her rights if none of those were introduced to her. The participants recognize that comprehensive sex education is absent in the basic education curricula. Comprehensive education on SRHR is a vital component in accessing SRHR services. Education in SRHR, as identified by the participants, comes in two levels. The first level is education for women with disabilities and public information about SRHR services. The second level is education for medical and health professionals on providing these services.

1. Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)

For the participants, education in SRHR for women with disabilities goes beyond being familiar with contraceptives. It should also encompass a comprehensive sexuality education interpolated in the basic education curricula. The Department of Education (DepEd) issued Order No. 31, series 2018, otherwise known as the "Policy Guidelines on the Implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)." CSE intends to develop substantial life skills, attitudes, and behaviors in Filipino youth that will promote positive health outcomes, gender equality, and gender empowerment. CSE must cut across all basic education levels, including elementary, junior high school, and senior high school, including special education (SPED) learning centers (DepEd, 2018). Studies show that sex education interventions decrease early sex initiation. Prevention of HIV is also reinforced among youth with the introduction of CSE (Abrigo et al., 2016). Despite the passing of the RH Law in 2012, where provision for comprehensive sexuality education is stipulated, and the issuance of the directive of DepEd, the integrated inclusion of CSE in the K-12 curricula is still seemingly absent.

Drawing on the insights of the participants, it is deemed necessary for schools to offer basic lessons on proper hygiene, for instance, teaching young female teens with disabilities how to use sanitary napkins and teaching the importance of washing hands after touching their private parts. These are opportunities where SRHR can be made more relevant to youth with disabilities to start getting them on board for more mature reproductive responsibilities that await them.

2. Formal Training and Further Education of Medical and Health Professionals in SRHR

Women reported various negative experiences at health care facilities including negative attitudes, prejudice, discrimination, and abuse by health care providers (Vaughan et al., 2015)—which supports the responses of the research participants that it is common among medical and health professionals to not have comprehensive knowledge about the health conditions of women with disabilities. One of the participants shared a story about a woman with a spinal cord injury who was forced to have a normal delivery. As a result, the baby died because of the doctor's lack of knowledge on how to handle the case. Some health care providers are not knowledgeable about certain contraindications of treatments and medicines for women with disabilities. Sometimes, women with disabilities—especially those who are pregnant—would even receive derogatory remarks from these medical and health practitioners.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), persons with disabilities suffer from the inadequate skills of medical and health professionals. It is more than twice more likely for persons with disabilities to report that their needs are unmet by medical and health professionals, four times more likely for them to be treated badly, and almost three times more likely that they are denied medical care (WHO, 2020). The lack of sensitivity and empathy of some medical and health professionals towards women with disabilities greatly affects the latter's willingness to consult them or even go to health facilities. This creates an even greater barrier for women with disabilities to express their needs and raise their queries about SRHR.

Studies show that women with mental disabilities have difficulty making informed decisions. Some medical and health professionals are inattentive to their need to be guided and given enough time to form their decisions regarding their healthcare preferences. In some instances, their preferences are ignored (Matin et al., 2021). Thus, receiving proper training will allow health professionals to communicate effectively regarding the medicines, treatments, and procedures to be performed. It could also establish a rapport between women with disabilities and medical and health professionals that will lead the former to have trust and confidence in the medical providers rather than feeling intimidated. Similarly, women with disabilities' decisions on their SRHR situations will not be clouded by ill-informed insinuations made by some medical practitioners because their own decision-making process is respected and encouraged from the outset. As emphasized in Vaughan et al. (2015), addressing these multifaceted challenges demands a concerted effort to foster awareness, enhance communication, and promote a more inclusive and informed approach to the SRHR needs of women with disabilities.

Economic Inadequacy. Poverty is a perennial social problem in the Philippines, but the poverty of women with disabilities is more pronounced because of their condition. Lack of financial resources for costs related to accessing SRHR services—such as transportation fare, fees for personal assistance, and costs of medication (Vaughan et al, 2015)—is among the common challenges factored in by the participants in fully accessing their SRHR services. Simply going to health facilities in itself already involves expenditures. Thus, the stories shared by the participants reveal a saddening scenario for women with disabilities: even if the women desire to go to hospitals, centers, and clinics to address their SRHR concerns, they forgo doing so because it will entail shelling out a large amount of money for transportation. Women with disabilities must hail a cab or book a vehicle via an online application. For women with disabilities who are employed in the informal economy, these services are already beyond their financial capacities.

The study of Albert et al. (2015) on persons with disabilities in Metro Manila shows a dramatic difference in income between women and men with disabilities. They discovered that women with disabilities receive a lower income than men with disabilities. One of our participants mentioned that many persons with disabilities, including women, are often stereotyped in the workforce, especially visually impaired people. They are usually employed as massage therapists. This social reality makes it difficult for women with disabilities to penetrate other industries to hone their skills. It limits them from utilizing the talents and skills that they already possess to generate income due to the scarcity of opportunities available to them.

The scarcity of employment opportunities for women with disabilities is rooted in their low educational attainment, according to one of the participants. Indeed, this is resonated by a study on the disparity between women and men with disabilities conducted by Tabuga and Mina (2011), which states that there is a wide gap between the educational attainment between women and men with disabilities. According to the study, more women than men did not complete any grade at all. This disparity is more evident for women in rural areas. This, of course, affects the economic opportunities of women with disabilities. The employability of men with disabilities is higher than for women with disabilities.

Access of Women with Disabilities to SRHR Services at the Height of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Inaccessible Physical Structures and Information and Communications. The COVID-19 pandemic worsened the access to services of persons with disabilities because of the lack of sign language interpreters in the municipality/local government unit, leading to the inaccessibility of information or announcements from the local government itself. Persons with disabilities were not able to give their feedback and complaints because it is difficult for them to communicate if there is no access to sign language interpreters in the LGU for feedback and mechanisms. Moreover, they were often unaware of any changes to the rules or ordinances concerning COVID-19 restrictions because of the inaccessible communication channels (Beyond Education, 2021).

The freedom of persons with disabilities has been limited, if not constrained, despite enacted laws due to a lack of program and project monitoring and explicit guidelines for persons with disabilities.Usually, programs and projects "include" persons with disabilities, leaving more room for neglect and the attitude, as observed by one participant: "If there are disability sector representatives available, there will be. If there is none, there is none." Most of the persons with disabilities who cannot afford to pay for private vehicle services such as Grab, and particularly for those who are mobility impaired, tend just to stay home discouraged.

Deaf women faced notable challenges during the pandemic, particularly in navigating essential administrative processes and staying informed about crucial health protocols and community services and assistance. According to the participants, many deaf women reported not knowing where to obtain barangay quarantine passes, encountering difficulties in availing the Social Amelioration Program (SAP), and struggling to stay updated with the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) guidelines (CHR, 2021). The absence of sign language interpreters in their barangays and local health centers compounded these difficulties, creating significant communication barriers and hindering their access to important health and quarantine-related information. The lack of accessible communication resources placed deaf women at a disadvantage, limiting their ability to effectively convey their requests and access essential information. This situation not only affected their capacity to comply with quarantine measures but also impacted their overall well-being and ability to access vital support systems.

Lack of accessibility, such as the examples above, resulted in restricted mobility worsened by the pandemic—putting persons, especially women, with disabilities one step behind in benefitting from basic health services.

Economic Inadequacy. Due to the recession brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic barrier experienced by women with disabilities was exacerbated. Many women with disabilities and even their intimate partners were retrenched from work, which resulted in financial deficits. Alongside unemployment, prices of basic commodities ballooned as the pandemic extended, which drained their finances. Hence, the SRHR needs of women with disabilities become the last priority in their households. In addition, transportation costs of vehicles booked online also increased due to the imposition of quarantine protocols. Given that transportation is a major expense to access SRHR services in health facilities, it became an even bigger hurdle for women with disabilities. The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) Peer Monitoring Project (2021) showed that 55.2% of their women with disabilities participants had health issues during the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) period and only 13.04% of them received medical attention due to

the lack of financial resources.

Moreover, there were also reports of women with disabilities, specifically the blind, losing their jobs during the pandemic. Even women with visual impairment who were working in massage services, lost their source of income because of the nature of their service which risked transmission of COVID-19 from close contact. As a result, their sexual and reproductive health-seeking behaviors also decreased because they had to prioritize other needs, particularly their basic survival needs.

Increased Sexual Abuse and Unplanned Pregnancies of Women with Disabilities during the Pandemic. Besides the mentioned barriers, the pandemic also resulted in the rise of sexual abuse and unplanned pregnancies experienced by women with disabilities. One of the participants shared that, being stuck at home, "wala silang magawa dahil mataas libido ni asawa" (they couldn't do anything because their husband's libido was high). They also observed that there was a higher incidence of violence against women with disabilities and/or gender-based violence (GBV), but these often remained unreported due to the inaccessible justice system. Women with hearing and intellectual impairment are the usual targets of GBV because their perpetrators know that they cannot report this, and the lack of trained personnel/sign language interpreters in police precincts does not help either.

Facilitating Factors to SRHR Access. While our participants identified several barriers that impede their access to their SRHR, they also reported a few facilitating factors that helped improve their access to these rights. First, research, such as was specifically done by W-DARE in 2015, paved the way for a better understanding of the access of women with disabilities to SRHR and the perceptions surrounding it. This was a significant feat as it asserted the right of women with disabilities to make informed decisions concerning their sexual and reproductive health. Second, the partnership established by women with disabilities with the Commission on Human Rights and UNFPA on the Reproductive Justice Project has provided a larger platform for their voices to be heard and has activated their collective power. Having allies in the government and women with disabilities working in government agencies has led to increased representation of women with disabilities, and the participation of women with disabilities in the Reproductive Health National Inquiry has allowed them to influence policy. Finally, the continuous advocacy of civil society groups and organizations for persons with disabilities has contributed to greater visibility for women with disabilities. It has helped them gain access to more spaces to discuss their SRHR needs.

Analysis and Discussion

The participants' experiences show that, prior to the pandemic, their access to SRHR services was already impeded by attitudinal barriers, the lack of access to physical structures and to information and communications, the lack of education in SRHR (of women with disabilities and of medical and health professionals), and economic inadequacies. These barriers were particularly heightened by the pandemic as the social markers of women with disabilities became more compounded, patriarchal forces entrenched further, and the pandemic worsened the delivery of SRHR services by social institutions.

While there have been some efforts and small gains when it comes to addressing and responding to the SRHR needs of women with disabilities, there remain multiple barriers in terms of accessing their SRHR. Access, according to Longwe, refers to "the right or means to obtain services, products or commodities" and is seen as essential for women's development. In this study, the participants narrated the difficulties and criticisms they encountered when accessing their SRHR and the multiple barriers contributing to this during the pandemic. In sum, they cannot fully access SRHR services like others (women without disabilities, men, and men with disabilities) do. Thus, looking at Longwe's levels of equality, there is a bottleneck occurring even at the level of access, which then affects the succeeding levels leading up to control. Access to SRHR for women with disabilities is critical to their empowerment as it gives them proper information that will enable them to make informed decisions and ultimately control their own bodies.

The findings also clearly show how women with disabilities' experiences of inequality are not confined to the household and family but are reproduced across various institutions. Following the Social Relations Framework, these observations are organized according to four key institutional locations: the household/family, community, market, and State.

1. Household

At the household level, the stigma regarding disability still exists even among family members, and the shame they feel is usually disguised as "protection" for women with a disability. Women with disabilities' sexuality is rarely discussed even within the household, as it is often seen as a taboo topic (Vaughan et al., 2015). Class is another intersecting layer at the level of the household that creates economic barriers that hinder access to SRHR. The overemphasis on women's reproductive role is also seen as a greater disadvantage to women with disabilities. According to the UNFPA Pandemic Impact Report (2021), more women with disabilities than those without disability reported increased anxiety, stress, and depression due to the additional care work, insufficient rest, and inability to provide adequate care for their family members. Disability affects the reproductive role of women—their ability to care for themselves and others. From an intersectionality perspective, it thus undermines their life chances considerably more than is the case even for men with disabilities. A woman or girl with a disability is perceived as unable to maintain a household and fulfill the roles of a "proper" woman. Therefore, she is less likely to marry compared to men with disability, which could increase her parent's financial burden.

During the pandemic, the decision-making of women with disabilities was not fully exercised. The participants mentioned that there was an increase in sexual abuse among women with disabilities, although many cases were unreported. They could not refuse their intimate partners' heightened sexual urges which resulted in unplanned pregnancies. Their freedom to make informed choices for their bodies was infringed upon by men's violence.

2. Community

At the community level, attitudinal barriers persist, specifically the view and treatment of women with disabilities as asexual beings. Again, looking at it from an intersectional lens, this "asexuality" attributed to persons with disabilities has greater consequences for women with disabilities than men with disabilities due to the dominant narratives surrounding

gender and sexuality. This also encompasses the bigger issue of control over women's bodies, and again women are seen as without agency and not capable of making autonomous decisions regarding their own bodies and their sexual and reproductive lives. At the height of the pandemic, physical barriers like inaccessible transportation and information were more present in the community, discouraging women with disabilities from seeking SRHR services.

3. Market

At the market level, stereotypes and other negative attitudes associated with women with disabilities clearly limit their employment opportunities. Furthermore, the pandemic caused some of them to lose their jobs, forcing them to set aside their SRHR needs to prioritize more basic survival needs. They also feared that they might get infected with the virus, so some did not continue accessing SRHR services. Their economic and financial difficulties became a more solid barrier as most health services are paid. Some women with disabilities also openly acknowledged a prioritization of basic necessities over contraceptives. Additionally, a number of them turned to the utilization of natural herbs as a substitute for conventional contraceptive pills, primarily driven by the unavailability of the latter at health centers, where, regrettably, women with disabilities are not given the priority attention they require (CHR, 2021). Moreover, to get to hospitals or health centers with public transportation being inaccessible, they would need to book a private vehicle service such as Grab, which was extremely expensive during the earlier part of the pandemic.

4. State

Finally, at the level of the State, there were compounding issues that affected women with disabilities' access to SRHR: the pandemic sidetracking efforts to improve SRHR services, the lack of clear policies specific to women with disabilities' SRHR which in turn also affected the implementation, the lack of comprehensive sexual education that is inclusive of persons with disabilities, limited capacities of health systems in dealing with the SRHR needs of women with disabilities, and gaps within the legal system that is unable to protect women with disabilities.

These institutions do not operate in a vacuum, and the interaction and combination of these institutions ultimately create the unique experience narrated by our participants regarding women with disabilities' access to SRHR before and during the pandemic. Moreover, social relations reinforce inequality and unequal access to resources, but people also rely on networks of social relations to survive. Again, this was proven by our participants with their identified facilitating factors. Notice how the facilitating factors are also a product of interactions between and among institutions. For example, the partnership between CSOs and government agencies is an interaction between the community and the State. In short, as demonstrated by the participants, improved social relations within and between institutions can also change their current situation.

Aside from looking at different institutions and existing social relations to understand a situation, multiple identities that interact, intersect, and compound each other to create a unique reality and experience of advantage/disadvantage should be considered. Disability rights cannot be guaranteed in a context that does not affirm the equality of all women and vice versa. Given that

women with disabilities are some of the most marginalized segments of a community, a recognition of the multiple identities of women with disabilities and how that can construct their experiences of multiple forms of discrimination will help shape better development programs and rights-based laws and policies. Women with disabilities often face multiple forms of discrimination based on gender and disability, both in the family and in public places. Laws, practices, programs, and policies rarely take into account this two-fold source of discrimination that women with disabilities are often subjected to, and women with disabilities are often masked behind each of the constituent parts rather than the whole. An intersectionality lens thus needs to be embedded in our analysis and understanding of the situation to ensure that we can account for the distinct experiences arising from intersecting identities of women with disabilities during the pandemic.

Conclusion

As stated in Philippine laws and international conventions and agreements, women with disabilities ought to be provided all forms of protection, provision, and assistance to attend to their holistic development, which includes their SRHR. However, this endeavor is yet to be fully realized as their SRHR needs are not yet completely addressed. The study shows that women with disabilities do not have complete access to SRHR services, and this only became worse during the pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic, women with disabilities already experienced multiple layers of barriers such as their lack of education in SRHR and that of medical practitioners, economic deficiency, lack of access to physical structures and information and communications, and attitudinal barriers. At the height of the pandemic, there was an apparent systemic problem in the dynamics and exchanges of social structures such as the State, household, market, and community that increased the inequalities and vulnerabilities experienced by women with disabilities, which obstructed, even increased the barriers from, their full access to SRHR services. The social relations among these institutions created a unique experience for women with disabilities in accessing their SRHR. Scrutinizing the interplay of these institutions, we recognized the poor flow of delivery of SRHR services to women with disabilities.

The institutional shortcomings aggravated the gender inequality experienced by women with disabilities. Adding the factor of the COVID-19 pandemic made the institutional landscape worse as it impacted women with disabilities' mobility, economic and health situation, reception of reliable information, and experience of increased abuse and violence from their male intimate partners. Moreover, the State showed non-prioritization of SRHR in its focus on resolving the COVID-19 pandemic. The worsened lack of accessibility of SRHR services during the pandemic hindered the fulfillment and enjoyment of women with disabilities of their physiological needs as women.

Understanding how each institution contributed to the situation of women with disabilities during the pandemic is critical. At the policy-making level, one-size-fits-all programs and policies hinder women with disabilities' access to SRHR services and commodities. An intersectional approach should be integrated into formulating policies and programs to cater to the unique SRHR needs of women with disabilities. Doing so will enable women with disabilities to increase their capacity for self-determination and self-actualization which is a real manifestation of empowerment.

Recommendations

This study grounds the accountability of the State, market, community and household, and all stakeholders to women with disabilities in accessing and enjoying their SRHR. These institutions must aim to lessen the gender inequality and forms of marginalization experienced by women with disabilities when it comes to their access to their SRHR needs. A thorough institutional and intersectional analysis must be employed to evaluate how the different barriers affected the access of women with disabilities. Considering the unprecedented effects of the pandemic on the lives and livelihoods of women with disabilities, which resulted in more limited access to SRHR services, immediate attention should be devoted to the matter.

Having gathered and analyzed pertinent, although preliminary, data on the perspectives and experiences of women with disabilities regarding their access to SRHR, we recommend the following to pave the way for an increased level of access for women with disabilities to SRHR services. Most of these were recommendations that the participants raised during our interview.

1. A renewed understanding of disability in connection with SRHR

   The attitudinal barriers posed by the community and family of women with disabilities are rooted in our cultural and societal understanding of disability—often associated with defects. This is internalized by women with disabilities, making them perceive that SRHR is not an essential part of their lives. Thus, it is recommended that families and friends of women with disabilities create a loving and supportive environment that does not see disabilities as defects. To facilitate this, organizations in the disability sector should continue to involve the family and the immediate circle of women with disabilities in their education programs toward a positive perception of disability.

   The vast majority of the population should also receive information about the disability sector in relation to the SRHR of women with disabilities. Organizations in the disability sector could use social media to their advantage. For instance, normalizing the public to see women with disabilities having children or a family of their own. Another would be normalizing in mainstream media to see women having romantic relationships.

2. Capacity building through education for women with disabilities, youth with disabilities, health workers, and government agencies

   There is a need for capacity building through education for women with disabilities regarding their awareness of CSE and SRHR services. Their increased knowledge about these will allow them to have informed SRHR choices that they freely choose and are not just a product of the dictates of their family and friends or medical practitioners. Moreover, there is a prevailing need for CSE to be integrated into the curricula of basic education through which youth with disabilities will benefit. DepEd should start providing foundational knowledge about sex education to youth with disabilities that will teach them how to care for their bodies and equip them with skills in recognizing threats of sexual abuse.

   Health workers and government agencies involved in this sector should be given proper training and education in delivering adequate, compassionate, and sensitive SRHR

services to create a more inviting environment for women with disabilities to go to health facilities.

3. Curation of more women with disabilities-friendly informational materials on SRHR

   As reported by the participants, most of the informational materials used in health facilities do not cater to the disabilities and impairments of women with disabilities. Thus, curating informational materials on SRHR both for physical and virtual spaces could make SRHR information more accessible for them. Information materials made available virtually were much needed during the pandemic since information dissemination heavily relies on social media. Virtual applications for women with disabilities could be further explored to offer them relevant information about SRHR while they are in the comfort of their homes.

4. Provision of more spaces and systems for feedback and mechanism

   The organizations of women with disabilities in this study actively make their voices heard by government agencies. This process would be more effective if the government would provide established systems and spaces for these organizations to express their experiences and sentiments regarding their SRHR needs. Furthermore, such consultation could assist the government in assessing if the current healthcare system addresses the SRHR needs of women with disabilities.

5. Economic alleviation for women with disabilities through a multi-sectoral approach

   The economic barrier of women with disabilities is deep-seated in their social fabric, affecting their access to SRHR services. This problem is connected to their disability, which impedes them from completing formal education, thus incapacitating them from employment in the formal economy. Different government agencies (DSWD, TESDA, etc.) should work together to come up with relevant livelihood training for women with disabilities for them to access more job opportunities and augment their economic situation.

6. Creation of intersectional approaches to the SRHR needs of women with disabilities

   The government-funded or supported programs and NGOs that cater to women with disabilities should understand the intersectional identities of women with disabilities. When organizations understand that they need to provide SRHR needs and transportation and reasonable accommodations such as hiring sign language interpreters and brochures translated into braille, it widens the room for more access of women with disabilities to services. There must be an emphasis on the other identities in pursuing social justice because there can be no social justice without justice for everyone. Every marginalized person needs to be explicitly included in every policy and program so they do not become neglected and forgotten in implementing such. Just like gender and class, disability should not be an additional indicator, but rather, it should be taken as a cross-cutting identity to promote more access and hopefully and eventually, social transformation through policies, programs, and welfare services.

7. Further research on government-provided SRHR services

For future research studies on women with disabilities' access to SRHR services, the voice of government agencies that provide SRHR services could be explored for a more comprehensive assessment. Likewise, knowledge of women with disabilities about SRHR may be assessed to determine particular topics to highlight when giving them SRHR education.

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Dalaw: Ang Pagiging Taga-Labas ng mga Magulang sa Kanilang mga Anak na nasa Bahay Pag-asa noong Panahon ng COVID-19

Justin Francis Leon V. Nicolas, PhD
Kristine Analiza P. De Vera, MSW

ABSTRAK

Ang pangunahing bumagabag sa mga ina ng mga Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) na nakatalaga sa Tanglaw ng Pag-asa sa Bulacan noong panahon ng COVID-19 ay kung paano nila madadalaw ang kanilang anak. Ito ang natuklasan noong bumuo ng modelo ng praktis sa gawaing panlipunan sa pamamagitan ng gradwadong field instruction ng Unibersidad ng Pilipinas sa Diliman. Binalikan ng mga mananaliksik ang datos na nakalap noong field instruction mula sa aktwal na pakikipanayam sa mga magulang ng CICL, social workers, at mga bata, maging ang mga journals at at mga repleksyon noong mga supervision sessions. Nilayon ng pag-aaral na suriin ang pakahulugan ng mga magulang sa salitang "Dalaw" at ilarawan ang mga karanasan ng mga ina ng CICL noong panahon ng pandemya hinggil sa hirap ng pagdalaw sa kanilang mga anak. Gamit ang Malikhain at Kritikal na Penomonolohiya, na halaw sa penomonolohiya at kritikal na realismo, inilapat ng mga mananaliksik ang mga pakahulugan ng mga magulang sa "Dalaw" sa mga teorya ng social support at pagiging iba, sa balangkas ng pagiging malikhain at ang pagbuo ng mga asembliya base sa Lugar, Panahon, at Pangyayari upang muling maisalarawan at makabuo ng balangkas ng pagsasateorya ng konsepto ng Dalaw.

Ang mga pakahulugan ng mga kalahok sa pananaliksik sa salitang "dalaw" ay nahahati sa tatlong kategorya: 1) bilang katangian ng isang indibidwal o grupo ng tao na karaniwang taga-labas; 2) bilang kumakatawan sa kabutihan o benepisyong dulot ng dalaw; at 3) bilang bahagi ng proseso ng kaayusang lipunan (social arrangements) sa tuwing may napapasok na kapamilya sa isang Total Institution at nahihiwalay ang isang kaanak. Ang mga tugon ng mga magulang at mga CICL ay naglalaman ng mga salita na nagpapahiwatig ng restriksyon o pagkakalayo o pagkakaroon ng distansya. Sa pagsusuri ng konteksto, ng lugar at panahon, nakita na ang mga ilang pangyayari ay naging mekanismo upang mabuo ang pagtingin ng mga ina bilang dalaw na taga-labas. Ngunit, ang mga pangyayari rin na nagpakilala ng mga alternatibong pamamaraan ang siyang naging mekanismo para sa social support at mabuo ang pagkakilanlan ng mga dalaw bilang mga ina na nagibibigay suporta sa kanilang mga anak.

Mga susing salita: *Pagiging-iba ng mga ina; dalaw; modelo ng praktis sa gawaing panlipunan; online na pamamaraaan ng dalaw; alternatibong pamamaraan ng case management*

Panimula

Ang pandemya buhat ng COVID-19 ay nagpabago sa pamumuhay ng bawat tao sa napakaraming bansa. Isa ang Pilipinas sa patuloy na nakakaranas ng mga epekto at mga pagbabagong hatid ng nasabing sakit mula Enero taong 2020 (Edrada et al., 2020). Buhat nito, naglabas ang administrasyon ng mga panuntunan upang manatiling malusog at ligtas ang bawat mamamayan. Sa mga ina ng mga batang inilagak sa mga Bahay Pag-asa dahil sa diumanong krimen na kanilang nagawa, masakit ang mahiwalay sa anak lalo pa sa panahon ng di-katiyakan. Patong-patong na pasanin ang dala ng pagkakahiwalay sa anak dahil kasabay nito ang distansyang dulot ng pandemya, at ang negatibong konotasyon ng pagkakaroon ng anak na nasangkot diumano sa krimen.

Ang akademya ay hindi rin nakaligtas sa mga pagbabagong nabanggit na nagbunsod sa *remote mode of learning* o paggamit ng teknolohiya sa pagkakatuto bilang alternatibo sa *face-to-face* o tradisyunal na moda ng interaksyon sa klase. Naging mapanghamon ito sa bawat akademikong institusyon tulad ng Kolehiyo ng Gawaing Panlipunan at Pagpapaunlad ng Pamayanan sa Unibersidad ng Pilipinas, partikular sa *Field Instruction Program* na karaniwang isinasagawa sa ahensya o komunidad habang patuloy na nakikipagsalamuha sa bawat indibwal, pamilya o grupo at komunidad. Kaugnay nito, inaasahang makabuo ang mga mag-aaral ng gawaing panlipunan sa gradwadong antas ng mga modelo ng praktis at interbensyon na tinuturing na mapagbuo *(integrative)* at makabagong-isip *(innovative)*.

Ang pagaaral na ito ay hango sa datos na nakalap mula sa pagbuo ng modelo sa kursong SW 287 o Field Instruction sa gradwadong lebel. Ang modelo, na unang tinawag na *FamBaM model* (De Vera, 2022), ay nabuo ng mga mananaliksik bilang alternatibong tugon sa kawalan ng dalaw sa panahon ng pandemya sa pagitan ng mga magulang at kanilang mga anak na Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) sa loob ng Tanglaw ng Pag-asa Youth Rehabilitation Center, isang Bahay Pag-asa sa Bulacan. Bagamat hindi tinatalakay sa artikulong ito ang kabuuan ng modelo ng praktis, tinalakay naman dito ang tatlong alternatibong interbensyong inaakala ng mga mananaliksik na may kaugnayan sa alternatibong pamamaraan ng dalaw: ang (1) panunumbalik ng komunikasyon sa pagitan ng ina at CICL sa pamamagitan ng online na kumustahan; (2) ang patuloy na pagbibigay ng *psychosocial support* sa mga CICL at mga magulang; at (3) alternatibong pamamaraan sa *home visitation* para sa pagpapatuloy ng proseso ng *case management*.

Paglalahad ng Suliranin

Ang paglaganap ng COVID-19 sa Pilipinas ay nagresulta sa mahigpit na protocol at sunod-sunod na *lockdown* na nakaapekto sa pang-araw-araw na pamumuhay ng mga mamamayan. Patunay nito ang mga kinahaharap na suliranin ng mga kabataan sa mga Bahay Pag-asa na kinailangang pansamantalang mawalay sa kanilang mga magulang dahil sa diumanong krimen na kinasangkutan nila. Nagbunga ito ng paudlot udlot o *delay* na *court hearings* dahilan upang mas lalong mapatagal ang pananatili ng mga kabataan sa Bahay Pag-asa at paglimita sa pagbisita ng mga mahal sa buhay (Bumanlag, 2023; Malaguit, 2021). Ito ay nagdulot hindi lamang ng pisikal na kasakitan sa katawan ngunit lalo't higit sa *mental* at sikolohikal na kalagayan (Kahambing, 2020) sa mga kabataan.

Ang nabanggit na mga suliranin dala ng COVID-19 ay lumabas rin sa pakikipanayam ng mga mananaliksik sa mga magulang, mga anak na CICLs, at mga *social worker* at kawani sa Tanglaw

ng Pag-asa Youth Rehabilitation Center. Pinalalá ito nang tumigil pansamantala ang ilang serbisyo dahil sa pagkakasakit ng mga kawani at mga CICLs ng COVID-19. Nagbunga ito ng agam-agam at pag-aalala sa mga magulang sa labas ng ahensya. Isa sa lumutang na suliranin ay ang isyu tungkol sa"dalaw" at kung paano makakakuha ng impormasyon tungkol sa kalagayan ng kanilang mga anak noong inihinto ng ahensya ang pagtanggap ng dalaw bilang pagsunod sa alituntunin ng Inter Agency Task Force (IATF) at ng administrasyong lokal sa lalawigan ng Bulacan. Ang restrikyon sa dalaw ang nagdulot suliranin sa makabuluhang pagkikita ng magulang at mga bata, sa pagdalaw ng social workers sa mga magulang, at maging sa epekto nito sa lusog-isip ng mga CICL at kanilang mga ina at magulang.

Ang pag-aaral na ito ay bunga ng adhikain ng Departamento ng Gawaing Panlipunan sa Unibersidad ng Pilipinas ng paghalawan ang mga karanasan sa Field Instruction ng *theorizing* at *knowledge creation*. Sa ganoong kaugnayan, ang pag-aaral ay naglayong maabot ang mga sumusunod:

1. Suriin ang pakahulugan ng mga magulang sa salitang "Dalaw"
2. Ilarawan ang mga karanasan ng mga ina ng CICL noong panahon ng pandemya hinggil sa hirap ng pagdalaw sa kanilang mga anak
3. Ilapat ang balangkas ng pagiging malikhain sa pagbuo ng balangkas ng pakahulugan ng mga magulang sa "Dalaw"
4. Makabahagi sa pagbuo ng teorya ng Lugar, Panahon, Pangyayari, at Pagkilos kaugnay sa identidad ng mga magulang bilang "Dalaw"
5. Bumuo ng balangkas ng muling pagsasalarawan at pagsasateorya ng konsepto ng "Dalaw"

Pagsiyasat ng Kaugnay na Literatura

Mayroong isang grupo ng mga artikulo na kung tawagin ay mga pananaliksik hinggil sa dalaw o *visitation research*. Subalit, kapag gumamit ng search terms na "visitation," "CICL," or "young offenders," lumalabas ang mga pag-aaral na tungkol sa mga karanasan sa bilangguan. Maging ang mga pag-aaral tungkol sa mga *juvenile offenders* ay tinatawag silang nakakulong *(incarcerated)* o mga bilanggo *(prisoners)* (hal. Young & Hay, 2020). Ayon sa RA 9344, hindi dapat isama ang mga bata sa bilangguan kundi dapat ay dumaan sa naaayon na interbensyon o dumaan sa proseso ng dibersyon. Ito ang pinakadiwa ng nagpapanumbalik ng hustisya *(restorative justice)* kung saan nagbabalik-loob ang bata sa komunidad at nagiging bahagi sa paghilom ng mga sugat ng mga biktima. Subalit, ayon sa Supreme Court Revised Rule on Children in Conflict with the Law (2019), ang katagang "in conflict with the law" ay binibigyang kahulugan na ang bata ay nasa kustodiya o detenido o kinasuhan ng dahil sa aktong labag sa batas. Sila ay tinuturing na detenido sa Youth Rehabilitation Home or Youth Detention Home. Dahil kaunti lamang mga pag-aaral hinggil sa dalaw sa mga CICL, ang mga pag-aaral hinggil sa dalaw sa bilangguan ang pinakamalapit na kaugnay (proxy) na mga pag-aaral na nagbigay ng mga konseptong magagamit sa pag-aaral na ito.

Nahahati sa dalawang bahagi ang pagsiyasat ng literatura. Una, tinatalakay dito ang mga kabutihan ng dalaw sa lusog-isip ng mga taong napagkaitan ng laya. Tinatalakay naman sa huling bahagi ang mga pakikibaka at ang pighati ng mga ina bilang mga babae at kung paano sila pinapaging-iba ng lipunan.

Dalaw bilang Panlipunang Suporta

Ayon sa pag-aaral ni Meyers at ng kanyang mga kasama (2017), maaaring may kaugnayan ang kalidad ng dalaw sa pagpapaunlad ng relasyon sa pamilya at ang kanilang positibong pagtingin sa maaaring matanggap na suportang sosyal *(social support)* kapag lumaya na sila na mula na rin sa naranasan nilang suporta mula sa pamilya at kaibigan habang sila ay nasa loob ng kulungan o institusyon. Ayon sa Social Support Theory (Cullen, 1994; Cullen et al., 1999), ang tuwiran o di-tuwiran na suporta mula sa pamayanan, mga kaibigan at *social network* ay isang mabisang paraan para mabawasan ang krimen, taliwas na pag-uugali *(deviant behavior)*, o muling paggawa ng krimen. Kadalasang akma ang *Social Support Theory* sa mga CICL dahil mas nangangailangan ng suporta ang mga anak kaysa sa kabaligtaran nito. Ayon kay Cullen (1994), ang pagbibigay ng emosyonal, instrumental, at impormasyonal na suporta ay maaaring maging dahilan upang mabawasan ang paggawa ng taliwas na gawain at ng krimen sa pamamagitan ng dalaw (Kort-Butler, 2017). Ayon naman sa pag-aaral ni Bulatao (2023), ang isang positibong support system ay nagdudulot ng pagkakaroon ng pag-asa sa mga CICL, at malaki ang bahagi ng pamilya sa suporta na ito. Ang mga ina ay nagbibigay ng emosyonal na suporta sa kanilang mga anak at ang mga kasama sa bahay at pamayanan ay maaaring gumawa ng mga bagay upang makadalaw ang mga ina sa kanilang mga anak. Ito ang instrumental na suporta.

Ayon sa *stress and coping* na perspektiba ng panlipunang suporta, nakakatulong ang dalaw sa kalusugan ng bata at magulang dahil nakakabawas ito ng *stress*. Ayon naman sa *social constructionist* na pananaw, nakakatulong ang dalaw upang magkaroon ng positibong pagtingin sa sarili at *self-esteem* ang mga bata. Ayon naman sa *relationship* na perspektiba, ang suporta ay sabay na nangyayari dahil sa pagiging malapit at mahusay na relasyon ng magulang at ng bata (Lakey & Cohen, 2000). Gamit ang tatlong perspektibang ito, makikita ang mga benepisyo ng dalaw.

Benepisyo ng Dalaw bilang Panlipunang Suporta

Ayon kina Young at Hay (2020), ipinapakita ng mga pananaliksik ang kahalagahan ng dalaw at positibing epekto nito sa lusog-isip, sa pag-*adjust sa confinement*, at sa tagumpay sa kanilang paglisan sa institusyon (p. 54). Sa pangkalahatan, ang dalaw ay nakakatulong sa mga CICL upang mabawasan ang maling gawi *(misconduct)*, pag-unlad ng kanilang *mental* na pagganap, at upang mabawasan ang recidivism o muling paggawa ng krimen (Cochran et al., 2020; Young & Hay, 2020).

Sa iba't ibang pag-aaral, ang dalaw ay nagdudulot sa mga bilanggo ng mga sumusunod na kabutihan:

1. Ang dalaw ay isang pamamaraan para makaranas ang mga taong pinagkaitan ng laya ng makabuluhan panlipunang interaksyon at maramdaman na bahagi pa rin sila ng pamayanan (Arditti, 2003; Meyers et al., 2017; Young & Hay, 2020; Brunton-Smith & McCarthy, 2017);
2. Mapanatili ang koneksyon sa komunidad (McNeeley & Duwe, 2020);
3. Pagkabawas ng pagkakaroon ng pakiramdam ng *tension* at alyenasyon (Cochran & Mears, 2013);
4. Nakakatulong upang umunlad ang lusog-isip at maging ang pisikal na kalusugan (Visher & O'Connell, 2012);
5. Nakakatulong na maibsan ang pagka-buryong sa institusyon (Turanovic & Tasca, 2019; 2022);

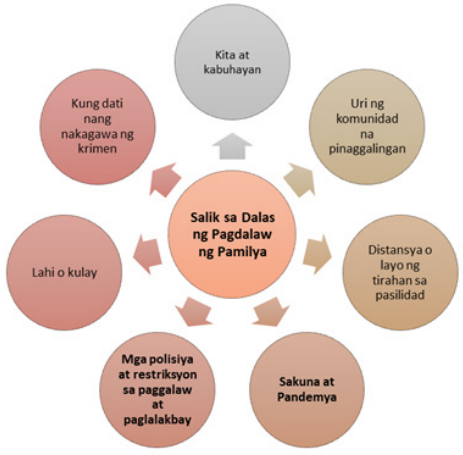
6. Nakakapagpabawas ito ng maling gawain (Cochran, 2012; Siennick et al., 2013; Meyers et al., 2017); at
7. Nakakapagpabawas ng pagbalik sa muling paggawa ng krimen *(recidivism)* (McNeeley & Duwe, 2020; Meyers et al., 2017; Mitchell et al., 2016).

Pinapakita sa Pigura 1 ang mga benepisyo ng dalaw bilang panlipunang suporta sa mga CICL.

Pigura 1. Benepisyo ng Dalaw bilang Panlipunang Suporta

Mga Salik na Nakakaapekto sa Pagdalaw ng Pamilya

Ayon kina Young at Hay (2020), karamihan ng mga *vistation studies* ay tumatalakay sa mga karanasan ng mga *adult offenders*. Kung kaya nagsimula sila ng pag-aaral na magsisiyasat sa mga *predictors* ng dalaw sa mga batang *offenders* or mga CICL (hindi ginamit nila Young at Hay ang terminong CICL). Ayon sa kanilang pag-aaral, may kinalaman sa uri ng dalaw ang kulay ng balat at kung dati nang nakagawa ng krimen ang bata. Sa kanilang pagsusuri, mas madalang ang dalaw ng mga itim at ng mga batang dati nang napasok sa institusyon dahil sa paggawa ng krimen. Ang iba pang *predictors* ay ang kita *(income)* at layo *(distance)* ng tirahan sa lugar kung saan nilagak ang bata. Habang lumalaki ang kita ng pamilya ay mas dumadalas ang dalaw. Mas dumadalang naman ang dalaw kung malayo ang tirahan ng pamilya. Ayon kay McNeeley at Duwe (2020), ang layo ng distansyang kailangang lakbayin para makadalaw sa piitan ay isang salik upang bumaba ang kalidad ng dalaw na kaugnay sa pagtaas ng pag-ulit ng paggawa ng krimen. Halimbawa, dumalang ang bisita ng mga magulang sa RRCY sa Cebu dahil sa layo ng pasilidad sa kanilang mga tirahan (Save the Children UK Philippine Programme, 2004). Subalit, pinaliwanag nila McNeeley at Duwe (2020) na sa mga kapamilya na nakakadalaw pa rin kahit malayo ang pinangagalingan, nagdudulot ito ng inspirasyon para sa nakapiit at nagbibigay ng motibasyon na magbago. Ipinapakita sa Pigura 2 ang iba't ibang salik na nakaka-apekto sa pagdalaw ng magulang sa mga CICL.



Pigura 2: *Mga Salik ng Dalas ng Dalaw ng Pamilya sa CICL*

Dagdag pa dito, habang nagtatagal ang bata sa institusyon, dumadalang na rin ang dalaw marahil dahil sa naaapektuhan na ang relasyon sa pamilya at nahihirapan na sila sa pinansyal na aspeto (Young & Hay, 2020). Ibig sabihin, nag-iiba ang pagkakasunod-sunod ng dalaw *(visitation sequence)*. Minsan ay madalas sa panimula at sa gitna, ngunit hindi na nagtutuloy ang dalaw sa huli. Mayroon ding madalang o walang dalaw sa simula pero nakakabawi na sa gitna at sa huling yugto ng pagtira sa institusyon (Young & Hay, 2020). Nabanggit na balakid sa pagdalaw ang kakulangan sa kita ng pamilya at maging ang layo ng tirahan ng pamilya sa pasilidad, ngunit hindi pa naisama dito ang balakid ng restriksyon ng pandemya.

Bagamat may batas na naglalayong huwag ikulong ang mga bata, ang mga institusyong itinayo para sa kanilang pagreporma tulad ng Bahay Pag-asa, at iba pang pansamantalang tirahan para sa mga batang inaakusahang nakagawa ng krimen, ay mga lugar kung saan nilalagak ang mga kabataan at upang ilayo pa rin sila sa karamihan sa lipunan. Dahil ang kanilang pagtira sa mga institusyong ito ay tinuturing na "involuntary" o sapilitan, sapilitan din ang kanilang pagkakahiwalay sa kanilang mga magulang, tagapag-alaga, at mga kapatid. Ang dalaw ay isang manipestasyon ng suporta ng lipunan sa pamamagitan ng kanilang mga magulang. Ang pagpapakita ng kagustuhan ng mga magulang na bumisita at magdala ng pagkain at gamit sa kabila ng restriksyon ng COVID-19 ay maaaring magbigay ng inspirasyon sa kanilang mga anak na umiwas sa maling gawain. Ang pandemya ay mas higit pang malaking balakid sa pagdalaw kaysa sa distansya o layo ng lugar. Bagamat hindi layunin ng pag-aaral ang sukatin ang uri ng dalaw, magagamit ang Social Support Theory bilang paunang basehang teorya na kaugnay ng dalaw.

Pagiging-ina ang Kahulugan ng Dalaw

Ayon sa ilang mananaliksik, nabawasan ang mga pananaliksik tungkol sa pagiging-ina bilang tema sa peministang pananaliksik nitong bagong siglo (Kawash, 2011; Miller, 2020). Kaugnay dito, maraming matatagpuang artikulo na tumatalakay sa mga ina na nakagawa ng krimen at nahiwalay sa anak dahil sa kanilang pagkakakulong, ngunit kulang sa mga pag-aaral tungkol sa pagiging-ina habang ang anak na bata naman ang nasa loob ng institusyon. Dahil sa kakuntian ng mga pag-aaral hinggil sa dalaw at sa pagiging-ina, mahalaga na maipakita ng mga mananaliksik ang mga natuklasan hinggil sa dalaw at pagiging ina, mula sa hinalaw na datos sa pagbuo ng modelo ng praktis para sa gawaing panlipunan, upang makadagdag sa literatura hinggil sa mga ina ng CICL.

Ang Estado ng Pagiging Ina sa Kasaysayan

Bagamat nagdudulot ng ibayong kagalakan ang pagiging ina, makikita sa kasaysayan na ang pagbubuntis bilang ebidensya ng pagnanasang sekswal na hindi maihihiwalay sa katawan ng ina bilang nagdadalangtao o "corporeality of pregnancy," ay naging dahilan ng mas mababang tingin sa kababaihang nabuntis (Leskošek, 2011). Nabigyan sila ng estado na tagadala ng anak ng mga kalalakihan. Maging ang pagbubuntis ng walang asawa ay itinuring na kasalanan at pagiging mababang-uri ng kababaihan (Leskošek, 2011).

Sa mundo ng krimen, nagkaroon ng mga pag-aaral na sinisisi ng publiko ang mga ina ng gumawa ng mga kagimbal-gimabal na krimen tulad ng pamamaril sa mga paaralan (Melendez et al., 2016). Halimbawa, pinakita ng pag-aaral nila Vujović at Mijanović (2013) na ang pagiging agresibo ng tatay, ang pagpapabayang emosyonal ng ina, at ang mga kontradiksyon sa pamamaraan ng pagdidisiplina ay mga salik sa taliwas na gawi ng mga bata. Mula sa mga pag-aaral na ito, kumalat ang kaisipan na kasalanan ng magulang, lalo pa na nagpapakitang sinisisi ng lipunan ang mga ina sa pagka-abuso ng kanilang mga anak (Fentiman, 2017). Ayon sa *baseline study* ng Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) at UNICEF (2016) hinggil sa karahasan laban sa mga bata sa Pilipinas, ang ilang ina ay nagiging mapang-abuso rin at dahil dito hindi malayo na masisi ang mga ina para sa mga maling gawain ng kanilang mga anak. Masasabi na ang pagkasangkot ng isang anak sa krimen ay nagdudulot ng komplikadong *stressors* sa buhay ng isang ina. Kasama dito ang pisikal, sikolohikal, relasyonal, sosyal at eonokimong mga epekto, lalo pa ang istigma ng lipunan at ang epekto sa relasyon ng ina at anak (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2011, p. 395).

Ang pagtingin sa kababaihan bilang mga natural na "maalaga" (Alfandry, 2020, Talata 13) ay makikita sa kung paanong hanggang sa kasalukuyan ay inilalagay ang kababaihan sa pangdomestikong gawain o r*eproductive work*. Makikita ito sa pagturing sa ina bilang pangunahing tagapangalaga sa kanilang mga anak at sa mga gawain o propesyon na may kinalaman sa pagkalinga (Alfandry, 2020; Tongson, 2019). Sinasabing sa makabagong panahon ay hindi na ikinukulong ang mga kababaihan, o sa pag-aaral na ito, ang mga ina ay hindi na nakatali lamang sa tahanan at gawaing bahay dahil nakikita na rin ang ina bilang tagapagtaguyod sa pang-araw-araw na pangangailangan bunsod ng kanyang trabaho na pinagkakakitaan *(productive work)*. Ngunit kung lilimiin, hindi pa rin naiwawaksi nang tuluyan ang stereotipikong pananaw sa babae bilang tagapangalaga sa tahanan. Sa akda ng ILO International Training Centre (2008), tinatawag itong "triple role" (Moser, 1993), ang paggampan ng kababaihan sa *productive work, reproductive work* at *community work* nang sabay-sabay. Ginagampanan ng kababaihan o ina ang *productive work* dahil nagkaroon na siya ng pakikilahok sa trabahong binibigyan ng karampatang sahod o sweldo dahilan para makapagsampa siya ng pera sa tahanan. Kaalinsabay nito ay ginagampanan pa rin ng ina ang kanyang mga nakasanayang gampanin sa tahanan tulad ng pag-aalaga ng anak (o magulang) at paglilinis ng bahay kahit pa siya ay buhat rin sa trabaho. Sa huli, babae rin ang laman ng pangkomunidad na gawain o nagiging boluntaryo sa pag-aalaga sa komunidad na kinabibilangan. Kung gayon, masasabing bagama't nagkaroon ng pagkakataon na magtrabaho at kumita ang babae, hindi pa rin naiaalis ang konotasyon ng ina bilang tagataguyod ng tahanan o sa ganitong pag-aaral tagapangalaga ng kanilang anak. Maliban sa pagiging ina, ang mga ina na buhay pa ang mga magulang ay maaaring nag-aalaga rin ng kanilang mga magulang. Tinalakay ni Tongson (2019) ang *phenomenon* ng "sandwich generation" kung saan ang mga kababaihan ay may mga gampaning trabaho na walang sweldo *(unpaid labor)* tulad ng pag-aalaga ng kanilang mga anak habang nag-aalaga rin ng kanilang mga magulang. Sa ibang mga literatura tinatawag din itong "multiple burden." Naiulat na tumindi

ang "multiple" at "complex" *burdens* ng mga kababaihan noong panahon ng pandemya (COVID-19 crisis; Rivera et al., 2021). Sa perspektiba ng Panlipunang Suporta, ang pagpapagal ng mga ina ay instrumental na suporta upang makadalaw ang ibang miyembro ng pamilya habang ang ina mismo ang nagbibigay ng emosyanal na suporta sa bata (Kort-Butler, 2018).

Ang Pagiging Iba

Kadalasan na tinuturing ang ina bilang makabuluhang iba *(significant other)* ng isang anak. Sa isang bata na nagiging katunggali ng batas, nananatili ang pagiging makabuluhang iba ng ina, lalu pa at dapat ibalik sa magulang ang mga CICL sa halip na ilagak siya sa isang institusyon. Subalit, kapag ang bata ay ipinasok sa Bahay Pag-asa, nagkakaroon ng limitasyon ang komunikasyon sa pagitan ng magulang at ng anak. Inaangkin ng estado ang kustodiya at pangangalaga sa bata (Supreme Court Revised Rules for CICL, 2019). Pinalala pa ito ng COVID-19 kung saan nalimitahan ang pisikal na pagdalaw sa Bahay Pag-asa dahil sa restriksyon na pinatupad din ng pamahalaan (Bumanlag, 2022; De Vera, 2022). Nilalayon ng estado na ihiwalay ang CICL sa kalakhang bahagi ng lipunan para sa seguridad nito. Subalit, ang mga magulang ay tinuturing din na "iba" o bahagi ng kalakhang lipunan, dahil sa paglagak sa institusyon ng mga CICL. Kasama ang mga ina sa mga nasa-labas ng bakuran ng Bahay Pag-asa, na nananatiling hiwalay sa kanilang mga anak. Ayon sa post-modernong peminismo, maaaring tutulan ng isang babae ang mga gawing pinapataw ng patriyarkal na lipunan sa pangkalahatan, taliwas sa konsepto ni De Beauvoir (2009/1949) na ang pagiging iba ng isang babae ay isang estado na dapat niyang lampasan (Mahoney, 1996).

Ayon naman kay Zygmunt Bauman (1991), produkto ng isang dikotomiya ang pagiging iba. Ang "pangalawang tao" ay itinuturing na iba at mas mahina sa "unang tao." Ang mga CICL na nasa Bahay Pag-asa ay parang mga ikalawang tao na hinihiwalay sa lipunan, pansamantalang inaalisan ng laya na makihalubilo sa lipunan. Ngunit, ang mga magulang ay tinuturing din naman na mga taga-labas at hindi maaaring pumasok na kasama ng kanilang mga anak sa Bahay Pag-asa. May ikalawang antas ng pagiging iba ng isang ina kung saan, sa halip na ituring siya na mahina o "inferior," itinuturing ang mga magulang, lalo pa ang mga ina, na "alien" o hiwalay (Brons, 2015). Sila ay mga taga-labas, mga dalaw lamang sa Bahay Pag-asa. Nangyayari ang pagdidistansya ng pagiging ina dahil hindi niya magampanan lahat ng tungkulin bilang isang magulang. Sang-ayon ito sa teorya ni Lacan (1977/1982; 1979; tignan din si Žižek, 2006) kung saan ang mga ina ay tinuturing na bahagi ng "Big Other.." Dahil sa iba ang lengguwahe at mga simbolo sa loob ng Bahay Pag-asa, ang mga ina ay hindi bahagi ng mundong ito. Sila ay mga dalaw lamang. Dahil dito, nabubuo rin ng pagdidistansya sa pagitan ng magulang ang anak sa pamamagitan ng isang *Total Institution* (Brons, 2015; Goffman, 1961). Ito ay isang sopistikadong uri ng pagiging iba kung saan ang identidad ng ina ay maituturing na taga-labas habang ang identidad ng pagiging taga-loob ng CICL ay hinihiwalay sila sa kalakihan ng lipunan.

Dahil dito, nagpapatong ang *multiple burden* bilang babae as tripleng pasanin na dala bilang mga magulang ng CICL, na makikita sa Pigura 3: ang mahiwalay sa kanilang anak, ang kahirapan ng pagdalaw sa kanilang anak dahil sa pandemya, at ang paninisi ng lipunan o istigma sa kanila bilang hindi mabuting magulang o pagkakilanlan bilang ina ng isang CICL (ayon sa Teorya ni Goffman, 1963/1986).

Pigura 3. *Balangkas ng Pagiging-iba ng Ina bilang Dalaw*

Pamamaraan ng Pag-aaral

Malikhain at Kritikal na Penomenolohiya

Sa pagbabalik-aral ng mga makabagong-isip na interbensyon sa pamamagitan ng modelong nabuo noong internship, ginamit ng mga mananaliksik ang Balangkas ng Pagiging Malikhain sa Gawaing Panlipunan (Creativity in Social Work Framework, Nicolas, 2019) at ang balangkas ng mga sistema sa paglikha ng kaalaman (Knowledge Creation Systems, Nicolas 2022) bilang balangkas sa pagsusuri. Ayon sa mga balangkas na ito, ang mga makabagong-isip na interbensyon ay nagmula sa mga kaalaman mula sa mga kliyente, komunidad, dalubgurong tagapangasiwa sa larangan, tagapangasiwa sa ahensiya, sa gradwadong magaaral, at maging sa mga teorya ng gawaing panlipunan at mga teoryang ginagamit para sa gawaing panlipunan. Ang pagbuo ng bagong kaalaman ay bunga ng kolaborasyon ng mga kliyente, komunidad, at komunikasyon ng mga iba't ibang *actor* sa praktis (Nicolas, 2019). Lumalawak ang hangganan ng disiplina ng gawaing panlipunan sa pamamagitan ng pagiging malikhain ng mga miyembro ng larangan ng gawaing panlipunan (Nicolas 2016). Nabubuo ang mga solusyon sa pamamagitan ng pakikipagtalastasan ng manggagawa sa mga kliyente at ng tagapangasiwang dalubguro at ng gradwadong magaaral at maging sa mga manggagawang panlipunan sa ahensyang panlipunan. Sa ganitong paraan, tinitignan ng mga mananaliksik na ang uri ng pagiging malikhain sa pagbuo ng modelo sa praktis ay kalát o nakabahagi *(distributed)* at hindi nakasalalay sa pagiging dalubhasa o sa kaalaman lamang ng propesyonal na manggagawang panlipunan. Dahil dito, tinuturing din ang mga kliyenteng kalahok sa pananaliksik na mga kapwa mananaliksik dahil kasama silang humahanap ng sagot sa kanilang mga katanungan.

Mayroong bahagi ng kanilang realidad na hindi pa nila alam (halimbawa ay ang kalagayan ng kanilang mga anak noon panahon ng COVID-19). Kung kaya nga, gumamit din ang mga mananaliksik ng isang kritikal na realistikong pagtingin sa penomolohiya ng pagkakahiwalay ng mga anak at magulang sa panahong maging katunggali ng batas ang mga bata. Sinunod ng mga mananaliksik ang realistikong pamamaraan ng pagpapaliwanag ng lipunan (Danermark et al., 2002) na hango naman sa mga sulatin ni Bhaskar (2008; 2014) na naging basehan ng kritikal na realismo. Ayon kay Bhaskar, ang realidad ay baha-bahagdan *(stratified)* at binubuo ng mga

bagay na totoo pero hindi-tuwirang nararanasanan, at ng mga tuwirang nararanasan na mga pangyayari. Kaya naman, hindi lahat ng totoo ay nasa kamalayan ng isip ng tao, ngunit totoong nagaganap. May mga bagay na tunay na lingid sa kaalaman ng tao *(intransitive)* ngunit nangyayari o umiiral *(existent)*. Dahil dito, may mga pangyayaring hindi pa nararanasan ng mga tao, ngunit nangyayari, at may mga istrakturang nagdudulot nito *(causal structures)* na kapag naisakatuparan ay magdudulot ng pangyayaring tunay. Ang realidad ay binubuo ng isang bukas na sistema kung saan madaming dahilan ang maaaring pagmulan ng isang pangyayari at mayroong mga mas malaking kadahilanan na mas kompleks at hindi maaaring ituring na simpleng kadahilanan lamang. Ito ang pinagmumulan ng tinatawag na *emergence*. Maraming kadahilanan ang nagtutulak sa isang bata na makagawa ng krimen. Marami ring kadahilanan ang pinagmumulan ng hindi pagkakaunawaan ng mga miyembro ng pamilya. Ang mga istraktura ng lipunan at mga institusyon ay maaaring panggalingan ng ilan sa mga kadahilanang maaaring magsimula o magpalala ng sitwasyon sa isang relasyon.

Metodo ng Pagkalap ng Datos

Ang aktwal na pagkalap ng datos ay naganap noong SW 286 - SW 287 Field Instruction mula Pebrero 2021 hanggang Enero 2022. Sa panahong ito nakapanayam ang mga magulang ng CICL, ang mga *social workers* at kawani, at maging ang mga bata. Sa panahon ding ito nabuo ang relasyong pampangasiwaan sa pagitan ng guro at gradwadong magaaral sa layong makapagpakilala ng mga makabagong modelo ng praktis. Ang pamamaraan ng pangagasiwa ay *online* at ang pamamaraan din ng pakikibahagi sa mga kalahok ay *online*. Sa mga sesyong pangagasiwa naganap ang pagpaplano at pagpipino ng modelo. Iniulat ang resulta ng Field Instruction sa pamamagitan ng Integrative Paper para sa SW 286 sa pagtatapos ng Ikalawang Semestre noong AY 2020-2021 at ng SW 287 Integrative Paper sa pagtatapos ng Unang Semestere ng AY 2021-2022. Ang pangunahing pamamaraan na ginawa ng mga mananaliksik ay ang pagbabalik-tanaw sa karanasan sa Bahay Tanglaw at ang pagsusuri ng nilalaman ng Integrative Paper sa SW 286 at SW 287 at mga *journals,* ang muling pagsilip sa mga datos na nakalap noong mga panahon na ito, at ang pagbalik-tanaw sa mga repleksyon tuwing panahon ng superbisyon. Ang unang pagbabalik-tanaw ay noong 2022, bilang paghahanda sa presentasyon sa kumperensiya ng Pambansang Samahan ng Sikolohiyang Pilipino (PSSP). Ang ikalawang antas ng pagbabaliktanaw ay naganap nitong 2023.

Sa unang pagkakataon mula pa noong *internship,* binalikan ng mga mananaliksik ang mga tema na nabuo noong panahon ng internship. Sa pagkakataong ito, muling tinignan ng mga mananaliksik ang datos at namili sa mga magulang na node (parent nodes) tulad ng "Dalaw," "Hustisya," "Pagkakasundo," "Pagbabati," at maging "Pagpapasa-Diyos" o "Pananalig sa Diyos." Dahil pinakahigit ang bilang ng salitang "dalaw" bilang node, dito nag-pokus ang mga mananaliksik. Maihahalintulad ito sa *theoretical sampling* sa *grounded theory.* Ang pagpino ng mga kategorya na lumabas sa pagsusuri ay siyang gagamitin sa pagsasateorya (Charmaz, 2006; 2014). Sa ikalawang antas ng pagbabalik-tanaw, binuo ng mga mananaliksik ang paunang pagsasateorya sa dalaw.

Ang Pag-aanalisa at Paglalapat ng Teorya

Kasang-ayon sa realistikong lapit, gumamit ang mga mananaliksik ng lohikang abdaktib *(abductive logic,* salin ng may akda) para bigyang kahulugan ang mga temang nabuo at mga anak na nodes ng mga tema. Ang manu-manung *coding* ay kinumpara sa mga nodes na ginamit at mga temang lumabas gamit ang NVivo 12 Plus. Bagamat mayroon nang paunang pagsisiyasat ng kaugnay

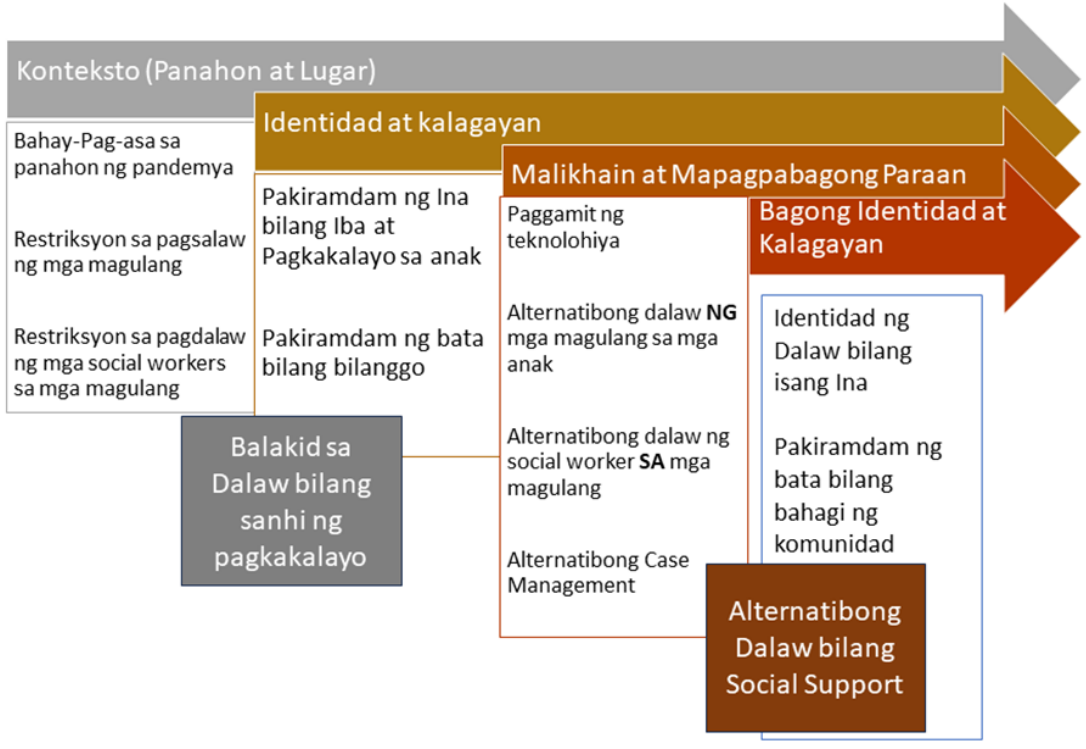
na literatura noong panahon ng *internship*, muling binalikan ng mga mananaliksik ang literatura upang mangalap ng kaugnay na teoryang hinggil sa dalaw, hustisya, at pagkakasundo. Ang mga teoryang ito ang naging basehan ng muling pagsasalarawan ng teorya *(theoretical redescription)* matapos na makabuo ng mga temang kaugnay sa dalaw. Sunod sa Malikhain at Kritikal na Penomonolohiya (Nicolas, 2019), ang mga karanasan ng mga ina at magulang ang naging basehan ng mga tema ng "dalaw." Ang pagsasalarawan ng teorya ng dalaw at pagiging iba ay ang malikhaing bahagi sa lapit kung saan ang mga karanasan ng mga ina ay ibinangga sa mga teorya tulad ng Social Support (Cullen, 1994), Pagiging-iba (Bauman, 1991; Brons, 2015), na tinalakay sa pagsisiyasat ng kaugnay na literatura. Dagdag dito, ginamit din ang malikhaing pagkilos sa panahon ng krisis (Beghetto, 2021, tignan ang Nicolas, 2022), at ang mga asembliya (assemblages) ng mga pangyayari, panahon, at lugar bilang basehan ng paglalarawan (Nicolas, 2021).

Ayon kay Beghetto (2021), sa panahon ng krisis, ang tao ay nakikipagsapalaran sa pagharap sa mga gawaing mapanganib *(risk-taking)* at ito ay humahantong sa mga malikhaing pagkilos *(creative action)* at mapagpabagong mga tugon sa krisis. Ginamit ito ni Nicolas (2022a) upang ipakita na ang malikhaing pagkilos ay produkto ng kolaborasyon ng *social worker,* ng kliyente, ng komunidad, ng ahensya, at minsan, kasama ang akademya o mga guro ng gawaing panlipunan. Madalas na nabubuo ang mga modelo ng praktis bunga ng kolaborasyong ito. Ang konteksto, pangyayari *(event)*, panahon, at lugar ay paraan upang suriin ang mga istraktura at mekanismo na ginagawang posible ang malikhaing kilos at kung paano ito humahantong sa mapagpabagong praktis (Nicolas, 2021).

Sa muling pagsasalarawan *(redescription)* ng pangyayaring dalaw, gumamit ang mga mananliksik ang kritkal na realismo upang suriin ang mga mekanismo na sanhi upang matupad ang isang pangyayari *(event)*. Sinuri ng mga mananaliksik ang mga kondisyon na nagiging salik upang matupad ang pangyayari (Danermark et al, 2002; Sayer, 2000), sa kasong ito, upang mapaunlad ang pagdalaw sa mga CICL at mga magulang, at mapaunlad ang pamamaraan ng *case management.*

Konseptwal na Balangkas

Tinitignan ng mga mananaliksik ang dalaw bilang isang *phenomenon* na binibigyang halaga ng mga magulang ng CICL. Subalit, ang pagiging dalaw din ay nagdudulot ng pakiramdam ng pagiging hiwalay dahil sa mga restriksyon na pinatupad ng pamahalaan noong panahon ng pandemya at maging ang ilang alituntunin na naglilimita sa pagdalaw (kahit na walang pandemya). Ang konteksto ng mga ina ng mga CICL ay nababatay sa lugar at panahon at ang mga pangyayaring kanilang kinabibilangan at dulot ng kontekstong ito. Sa kasong ito, ang pagkakalagak ng kanilang mga anak sa Bahay-Pagasa sa panahon ng pandemya ang pangunahing konteksto. Ang kalagayang ito ay nagdudulot ng identidad o pagtingin sa sarili. Nagdudulot ito ng pakiramdam ng Pagiging Iba. Sa pamamagitan ng mga malikhain at mapagpabagong paraan, nagpapasimula ang *social worker* ng mga interbensyon na maaaring tumugon sa mababang tingin ng ina ng mga bata sa kanilang sarili. Makakatulong din ang mga ito sa patuloy na komunikasyon ng magulang sa anak at ng patuloy na ugnayan ng *social worker* at ng magulang bilang pakikipagtulungan sa pag-usad ng kaso at reporma ng bata.



Pigura 4. *Konspetwal na Balangkas*

Ang paunang *assumption* ng mga mananaliksik na ang alternatibong dalaw ay nagdudulot ng identidad o pagkakilanlan sa mga dalaw bilang mga ina na nakakapagbigay suporta sa kanilang mga anak. Ang alternatibong dalaw ang isang pamamaraan upang magampanan ng mga magulang ang kanilang bahagi sa pagbibigay ng Social Support (Pigura 4). Ang teknolohiya at *social media* ay mga mekanismo upang makabuo ng alternatibong pamamaraan ng *case management* at mekanismo ng *social support*.

Mga Natuklasan

Sang-ayon sa Batas Republika Blg. 10630, ang mga CICL o Children in Conflict with the Law na nasa kostodiya ng Tanglaw ng Pagasa Youth Rehabilitation Center (TPYRC) ay yaong mga kabataan na may edad 15 at hindi tataas sa 18 na nakagawa ng o nasangkot sa mga krimeng nabanggit sa Seksyon 20-A ng parehong batas. Dahil dito, ang TPYRC ang magiging pansamantalang tahanan ng mga CICL habang dinidinig ang kani-kanilang kaso sa korte na nangangahulugan ring pansamantalang pagkakawalay sa kani-kanilang mga magulang. Ang dalaw ay terminong ginagamit ng mga CICL at kawani ng Tanglaw bilang pagtawag sa mga magulang, *girlfriend,* o kaanak na bumibisita sa ahensya isang beses bawat linggo o higit pa depende sa umiiral na alituntunin sa ahensya.

Sa panayam ng mga magulang sa tanglaw na binubuo ng 10 magulang, 8 rito ay mga ina na pawang may mga trabaho at may edad mula 30-40 taong gulang. Ang isa (1) ay lola na syang nangangalaga sa kanyang apo dahil nasa ibang bansa ang ina bilang *domestic helper*, at isa ang ama na pangangalakal ang trabaho. Kung lilimiin sa mga kalahok, lahat sila maliban sa isa ay mga kababaihan. Ang karamihan ay nananatili sa bahay *(housewife)* ngunit naghahanap ng impormal na mapagkakakitaan. Ang isa ay may trabaho bilang *medical representative* at ang ilan ay namamasukan

bilang kasambahay sa Maynila. Ngunit, sa kabila ng kanilang paghahanap-buhay, nakikitang sila pa rin ang inaasahang dumalaw at magbigay ng gabay sa kanilang mga anak na CICL.

Ibinahagi ng mga magulang ang lubos na pag-aalala sa kanilang mga anak na nagkasakit habang nasa loob ng TPYRC. Naging dagdag sa kanilang pag-aalala ang kawalan ng dalaw na nagiging paraan nila upang malaman ang kalalagayan ng kanilang mga anak. Halos lahat ng mga nakapanayam ay nagsabing mas lalong higit na kailangan nilang makita o makausap ang kanilang mga anak ngunit tila hindi mapagbigyan dahil sa mga hamong hatid ng pandemya. Sa ganitong diwa, naisakonteksto ang pagbubuo ng modelo na layuning magamit ang mga *platform* sa *social media* tulad ng Google Meet at FB Messenger, upang makita at makausap ang mga anak na CICL, at maituloy ang *case management* at *counseling*, kahit sa *online* na pamamaraan. Bagamat alam ng mga mananaliksik ang kahalagahan ng pisikal na interaksyon na hindi mapapantayan ng anumang birtwal na pagkikita o pag-uusap, inaasahan na makatutulong ito sa pagbawas ng alalahanin ng mga magulang na hindi kapiling ang mga anak sa mapanghamong panahong tulad nito.

Matingkad din ang pagpapakita ng pananalig sa Diyos, haba ng pasensya, at pagtitiis ng mga magulang na itinuturing na pagsubok lamang ang paghantong ng kanilang mga anak sa Tanglaw at ang sakit na naranasan nila dulot ng COVID-19. Sa ganitong diwa, mababanaag pa rin ang pag-asa sa mga magulang na muling makakapiling rin ang kanilang mga anak sa kanilang sariling tahanan.

Pagpapakahulugan ng Salitang "Dalaw"

Ang salitang dalaw ay maaaring tumukoy sa isang pangngalan o tuwirang layon. Halimbawa, maaaring sabihin ng *social worker* na, "Mayroon kang dalaw." Maaari rin itong maging isang pandiwa o salitang kilos. Halimbawa, ang salitang dalaw ay maaaring pinaikling bersyon ng dumalaw. Maaaring kolokyal na sabihing, "Dalaw ka ulit sa susunod." Ganoon din sa pakahulugan sa salitang "dalaw." Hindi lamang ito semantiko kundi tunay na simbolikong pakahulugan ng mga kalahok sa konspeto ng dalaw.

Ang mga pakahulugan ng mga kalahok sa pananaliksik sa salitang "dalaw" ay nahahati sa tatlong kategorya: 1) bilang katangian ng isang indibidwal o grupo ng tao na karaniwang taga-labas; 2) bilang kumakatawan sa kabutihan o benepisyong dulot ng dalaw; at 3) bilang bahagi ng proseso ng kaayusang lipunan *(social arrangements)* sa tuwing may napapasok na kapamilya sa isang *Total Institution* (Goffman, 1961) at nahihiwalay ang isang kaanak. Sa bawat tema, nagbigay ang mga mananaliksik ng mga halimbawa ng mga tugon kung saan hinalaw ang mga tema. Mapapansin ang ilang salita na nagpapahiwatig ng restriksyon o pagkakalayo o pagkakaroon ng distansya (Tignan ang Talahanayan 1).

Dalaw bilang Katangian ng Indibidwal o Grupo

Tema 1: Dalaw bilang "Kapamilya o Mahal sa Buhay" – Girlfriend, mga Magulang na Naghahatid ng Pagkain at Nangangamusta sa Kalagayan ng mga CICL sa Tanglaw. Karaniwang dalaw rin ang tawag sa mga kaanak o mahal sa buhay na bumibisita sa kanilang mga anak na "naaayon sa iskedyul" o "pinagkasunduang petsa" bunga ng pakikipag-ugnayan sa *social worker* na *in-charge* sa kanilang anak. May restriksyon sa oras at tagal ng dalaw. Hindi maaaring dumalaw kung kailan nila gustuhing pumunta.

Tema 2: Dalaw bilang "Bisita" – mga Bisita na Karaniwang Nagbibigay ng Donasyon sa Tanglaw. Tinatawag rin na dalaw ang mga pribadong indibidwal, mga kawani ng organisasyon at iba pang institusyon na karaniwang nagbibigay ng donasyon (materyal man o sa pamamagitan ng salapi), nagbabahagi ng serbisyo (hal. pakain o *feeding*, pagsasanay o gawaing ekstensyon, espiritwal, akademiko at iba pa). Inihahalintulad nila ang kanilang sarili sa mga hindi kaanak na pumupunta sa ahensya – mga "nagbibigay ng donasyon" at mga "nagbibigay serbisyo." Isang pahiwatig ito na nabubuo ang kanilang tingin sa sarili na bilang ibang tao or taga-labas.

Dalaw bilang Kumakatawan sa Kabutihan o Benepisyo

Tema 3: Dalaw bilang Paraan ng "Pagsasama-sama ng Pamilya o Family Interaction". Sa Tanglaw, bahagi ito ng programang *family preservation* and *reunification* (pagpapatibay ng relasyon ng pamilya) na naghihikayat sa patuloy na pagbisita ng mga kaanak sa anak na CICL upang hindi maudlot ang kanilang relasyon bilang pamilya. Binibigyan rin sila ng oras upang magkaroon ng salu-salo sa pamamagitan ng pagkain nang sabay sa isang lugar na nilaan para rito. Nagiging paraan rin ito upang malaman ang kalagayan ng kanilang mga anak sa kabila ng pansamantalang pagkawalay.

> CICL # 2: Mahirap po kasi hindi po namin ano makasama po yung mga pamilya namin, wala pong dalaw.
>
> Social Worker # 2: Nung nagkapandemic ang challenges is yun nga naglessen yung interaction nung client dun sa family. Kahit na alam kong may mga cellphone sila. Pero yun, kasi before yung mga madalas nadadalaw ng family, hindi na nadadalaw.
>
> Social Worker # 1: Magkakaroon sila ng time na pwedeng kumain kasama yung kanilang anak, ngayon wala talaga.

Makikita sa mga tugon ng CICL at social worker na nabawasan ang pagkikita ng ina at ng CICL sa panahon ng pandemya, at ito ay naging sanhi ng agam-agam.

Tema 4: Dalaw bilang "Pananggal ng Inip, Anxiety at Lungkot". Karaniwang tinitignan ng mga CICL ang pagbisita o pagdalaw ng kanilang mga mahal sa buhay bilang pananggal ng inip sa karaniwang gawain sa loob ng ahensya. Ito ang nagiging paraan ng mga CICL upang makibalita sa mga pangyayari sa labas. Mariin din ang pagbanggit ng mga anak na CICL at gayundin ng kanilang mga magulang na ang dalaw o pagdalaw ay paraan upang mapawi ang anxiety at lungkot buhat ng pagkakawalay sa isa't isa. Ang pagdalaw ay nagbibigay ng oras para magkita, makamusta at makasama ang kanilang mga mahal sa buhay lalo't higit sa mga mahahalagang okasyon ng kani-kanilang buhay bilang isang pamilya (hal. kaarawan ng anak o magulang).

> CICL # 3: Nakakatanggal lungkot po kasi kapag nakita mo yung magulang mo na dinalaw ka po e.
>
> CICL # 7: Minsan po nakakainip, dumarating po sa point na naiinip po kami. Una po sa lahat dahil hindi po namin nakakasama po yung mga pamilya po namin, dahil limited nga po yung sa dalaw po…

Social Worker # 2: Isa pa yung anxiety nung mga bata, syempre wala nang dalaw.

Ang kondisyon ng mga bata noong panahon ng pandemya ay naiinip sila, nais makita ang kanilang mga magulang, at ang pagkakaroon ng *anxiety* dahil walang dalaw.

Dalaw bilang Bahagi ng Proseso ng Pagkakahiwalay ng Kaanak

Tema 5: Dalaw bilang "Paghahatid o Paabot ng Pagkain". Tinukoy rin ng magulang gayundin ng kanilang mga anak na ang dalaw ay nangangahulugan rin ng paghahatid o paabot ng pagkain. Karaniwang kaalinsabay na sa pagdalaw ang pagdadala ng pagkain na kadalasan ay paborito ng kanilang mga anak lalo't higit sa mga espesyal na okasyon tulad ng kanilang kaarawan. Ibinahagi rin ng mga anak na CICL sa panayam na isa rin sa inaabangan nila ay ang pagkain na niluluto ng kanilang mga magulang. Sa parte naman ng mga magulang, ang pagdadala ng pagkain sa pagdalaw ay repleksyon ng pagmamahal sa kanilang mga anak.

Nanay # 1: …bawal ang dalaw. Bawal maghatid daw, dati kasi ma'am pwede namang maghatid ng pagkain, pwedeng ipaabot tapos aalis.

Nanay # 5: …payagan na po nila yung mga dalaw para din po may pagkain din pong maayos.

Nanay # 3:…bawal na din po kasi kahit po paabot.

Nanay # 2: … pinaabot lang po dyan sa labas na ano medyo ano pagbigyan naman dun sa pagkain kasi minsan po kulang ang pagkain.

Ipinapakita dito ang pagkadismaya ng mga ina dahil ayaw silang payagan na dalawin ang kanilang mga anak. Naging *frustration* sa mga ina ang hindi makapagdala ng pagkain para sa kanilang mga anak, at ganun din naman sa mga anak.

Tema 6: Dalaw bilang Paraan ng "Pangangamusta o Pag-alam sa Kalagayan ng CICL sa Tanglaw at Kapamilya sa Labas ng Ahensya". Katulad ng naunang nabanggit, ang dalaw ay paraan ng muling pagkikita ng mga anak at mga magulang kahit sa limitadong oras. Sa mga oras ng dalaw naibabahagi ng anak at magulang ang kanilang mga nasa isip, damdamin at karanasan sa magkaibang tinitirhan (sa Tanglaw at tahanan sa labas ng Bahay Pag-asa o komunidad). Ito rin ang isa sa naging suliranin na kinaharap ng mga magulang sa pagkakasakit ng kanilang mga anak sa Tanglaw na nagresulta sa agam-agam at lubos na pag-aalala bunga ng kawalan ng komunikasyon.

Nanay # 2: Pero po sa ngayon tinatawagan ko po yung hipag ko na nandyan po dyan sa Malolos pinakamusta ko po.

Nanay # 5: Mahirap po kasi po hindi po sya pwede pong dalawin, saka po isa pa di po namin alam kung ano pong kalagayan nya kasi po katulad po ngayon bawal naman po ang cellphone dun e. Saka wala pong means kami para makamusta siya.

CICL # 5: Nawalan po kasi kami ng dalaw. Hindi ko po makita yung mga pamilya ko hindi ko po makamusta.

Makikita naman dito na ang kondisyon ng mga ina ay nahihirapan sila dahil hindi man lang nila makausap ang kanilang mga anak. Naging sapat na sa kanila ang makibalita na lamang mula sa kamaganak na malapit-lapit sa Tanglaw.

Tema 7: Dalaw bilang paraan ng "pagkikita, pagpasyal o pagbisita ng pamilya." Ang dalaw ang bumabali sa pansamantalang distansya na dulot ng pagkakawalay ng mga magulang at kanilang mga anak. Dito nila nakikita nang personal at nakakapiling ang kanilang mga anak na CICL. Karaniwang kasama ang mga magulang, kapatid, at iba pang kaanak o mahal sa buhay sa pagdalaw sa CICL.

> Nanay # 1: … mula talaga nung 1 year ma'am parang minsan lang po kami nakaano dyan, nakapasyal.
>
> Nanay # 2: Dinadalaw po namin dyan…Nabibisita po namin dyan noong hindi pa po pandemic.

Ang kondisyon ng mga ina ay iba sa panahon bago nagkapandemya dahil dati silang nakakabisita. Nabawasan ang pagbisita ng pamilya dahil sa restriksyon ng pandemya.

Talahanayan 1. *Mga kategorya, pakahulugan at katagang nagpapahiwatig ng pagkahiwalay*

Kategorya	**Pakahulugan (Tema)**	**Mga katagang nagpapahiwatig ng pagkahiwalay**
Dalaw bilang katangian ng indibidwal o grupo	Tema 1:Kapamilya o mahal sa buhay	"sangayon sa iskedyul" "takdang panahon"
	Tema 2: Mga nagbibigay ng donasyon sa Tanglaw	Mga tagalabas na "nagbibigay ng donasyon" at "nagbibigay serbisyo"
Dalaw bilang kumakatawan sa kabutihan o benepisyo	Tema 3: Pagsasama-sama ng pamilya o *family interaction*	"hindi makasama ang pamilya"; "hindi na nadadalaw"
	Tema 4: Pananggal ng inip, *anxiety* at lungkot	"Naiinip"; "*limited* ang dalaw"
Dalaw bilang bahagi ng proseso ng pagkakahiwalay ng kaanak	Tema 5: Paghahatid o paabot ng pagkain	"bawal ang dalaw"; "bawal maghatid"; "bawal na din… paabot"
	Tema 6: Pangangamusta o pag-alam sa kalagayan ng CICL sa Tanglaw at kapamilya sa labas ng ahensya	"Mahirap…hindi siya pwede dalawin"; "bawal ang cellphone"; "nawalan kami ng dalaw"
	Tema 7: Pagkikita, pagpasyal o pagbisita ng pamilya	"Minsan lang kami nakapasyal"; "nabibisita nung hindi pa pandemic"

Pagtatalakay

Ang pakahulugan ng mga kalahok sa salitang "dalaw" ay nagpapahiwatig ng mga istraktura at mekanismo sa pagbuo ng pagkakilanlan at pagiging-iba ng isang ina. May mga dati nang mga

istraktura *(existing structures)* tulad ng mga batas, at pisikal na pasilidad. Subalit, mayroon ding nabubuo pa lang o emerging na mga istraktura tulad ng mga bagong batas, mga pagbabago sa teknolohiya at komunikasyon. Pangalawa, mayroong dalawang lebel ng istraktura, ang paakyat na istraktura at pababa na istraktura. Ang paakyat ay tungo sa mga mas malalaking Sistema *(macro)* tulad ng batas at alituntunin. Ang pababang istraktura ay tungo sa mas malilit na Sistema (micro) tulad ng personalidad at mga pag-iisip ng tao. Ang pataas at pababang mga istrakturang ito ay ang mga mekanismo ng sanhi *(causal mechanisms)* upang maging totoo ang akto ng pagdalaw. Kung kaya nga may paakyat na sanhi *(upward causation)* at pababang sanhi *(downward causation)* at itong mga sanhing ito ay may relasyon sa isa't isa o *reciprocal* at hindi *linear* (tignan ang Mingers & Standing, 2017).

May mga iba't ibang istraktura na humuhubog sa istraktura ng dalaw. Una, mayroon pisikal na istraktura na naghihiwalay sa bata sa kanyang mga magulang, sa komunidad, at sa kabuuan ng lipunan. Ito ang Bahay Pag-asa na siyang pinaglalagakan ng mga CICL. Pangalawa, mayroon na ring istraktura ng *juvenile justice* na kinabibilangan ng mga tagapagpatupad ng batas, ng korte, ng komunidad, kasama ng mga magulang. Sa istrakturang ito nabibilang ang mga *social workers*, mga kawani ng barangay, *local social welfare* and *development office* (LSWDO), maging mga kawani ng Bahay Pag-asa. Ang mga *actor* sa istrakturang ito ang may tuwiran at di-tuwirang kinalaman sa proteksyon at pangangalaga ng bata sa Pahay Pag-asa. Pangatlo, ang mga batas at panuntunan ay siya ring nagtatakda ng nararapat na istraktura at proseso sa bawat yugto ng pagkakalagak ng bata mula sa unang pagkikita nang magawa ang diumanong krimen hanggang sa pagkakalagak, rehabilitasyon, paghahanda sa paglaya at pagbalik sa komunidad, at serbisyong pagkatapos na lumabas ang bata sa Bahay Pag-asa. Noong panahon ng pandemya, nagkaroon ng mga ispisipikong batas tungkol sa kalusugan, sa paggalaw, paglalakbay, at mga restriksyon. Dahil sa mga batas at alituntunin na may kinalaman sa COVID-19, nagkaroon din ng mga bagong istraktura sa mga Bahay Pag-asa tulad ng pagbabawal sa mga magulang na dalawin ang kanilang mga anak. Sa kabuuan, ang maaaring tawagin ang mga istrakturang ito hindi lamang mga istraktura ng katarungan para sa kabataan kundi istraktura at mekanismo rin ng Social Support. May mga kondisyon na nagdudulot upang mabuo ang mga mekanismong makakatulong mapaunlad ang dalaw. Ang pandemya at ang teknolohiya ay mga kondisyon para mabuo ang mga *online* na pamamaraan upang makagawa ng mga alternatibong uri ng dalaw. Kung paano nais maibsan ang *multiple burden* na nararanasan ng mga kababaihan sa panahon ng pandemya (Salcedo, 2021), ganoon din na nabawasan ang pasanin ng mga nanay sa pamamagitan ng pansamantalang pamamaraan ng *online* na pagdalaw. Nang matupad ang pagdalaw at pakikipagusap sa kanilang anak, naging mekanismo naman ito para mabuo ang kanilang pagkakakilanlang dalaw pero bilang ina.

Mga Salik na Nagpapadali o Nagpapahirap sa Pagdalaw

Ang pagdalaw ng mga magulang o kaanak ay mahalaga sa proseso ng pagpapanibagong buhay ng mga CICL. Dito ipinapakita ang mahalagang ambag ng pakikiisa ng mga magulang sa paghubog ng pagkatao ng kanilang mga anak. Inaasahan na sa pamamagitan ng pagdalaw ay hindi mapapatid ang koneksyon at relasyon ng mga magulang sa kanilang mga anak sa kabila ng pisikal na pagkakalayo o pagitan ng konkretong pader at rehas. Kaya naman, maigting na sinusuportahan ng bawat kawani, partikular ng mga manggagawang panlipunan, ang gawaing ito. Ang pagdalaw ng magulang at ang pagtulong ng *social worker* para maganap ito ay bahagi ng Social Support (Cullen, 1994; Cullen et al., 1999; Kort-Butler, 2017). Gayunman, ang suliranin sa kawalan ng dalaw ay hindi lamang nagsimula sa pagkakaroon ng pandemya. Ayon sa sagot ng mga kawani sa

isinagawang panayam, mayroon pa ring mga magulang na hindi nakakadalaw dahil sa kawalan ng salapi sa pamasahe partikular sa mga magulang na nagtatrabaho o nakatira sa malalayong lugar sa Tanglaw na mas pinalala pa ng pandemya.. Ito ay patunay na sa pag-aaral nila Young at Hay (2020) na ang kita o pinagkakakitaan ay salik sa dalas ng dalaw ng mga magulang. Tulad ng sabi sa literatura, isang balakid ang layo o distansya ng pasilidad sa kakayahan ng mga kapamilya na dumalaw (McNeeley & Duwe, 2020). Sa Pilipinas, ang distansya ay nangangahulugan din ng mas mahal na pamasahe o mas magastos. Ngunit hindi ito inalintana sa ilang magulang na gagawa at gagawa ng paraan maisakatuparan lamang ang dalaw sa takdang oras. Ang pandemya ay ang naging pangunahing balakid. Kahit malapit lamang ang kinaroroonan ng dalaw, tila pinalayo ito ng pandemya dahil sa kahirapang makapasok sa pasilidad. Samakatuwid, pinalala ng simbolikong pagkakalayo ang pisikal na pagkakalayo ng magulang sa CICL. Makikita dito ang ugnayan ng lugar at pagkilos ng pagiging dalaw. Hindi mapipigilan ng layo o distansya ang pagdalaw ng mga magulang, ngunit may mga balakid na bunga ng konteksto ng pandemya at ng mga istraktura at polisiyang pinapatupad ng estado.

Mga Mekanismo sa Pagpapatupad ng Makabagong Interbensyon

Istraktura ng social media at teknolohiya. Sa patuloy na pag-unlad ng teknolohiya, naging daan ang *social media* sa pagkikita at pag-uusap ng mga magulang at mga anak na CICL kahit na nasa magkaibang lugar. Ang *online* kumustahan ay isinagawa sa Tanglaw ng mga mananaliksik na nagturo ng paggamit ng Google Meet sa mga magulang nang walang pagsasantabi sa mga batayang ligal at umiiral na batas. Naglabas rin ng Panuntunan kaugnay ng paggamit nito sa pakikipag-usap sa kanilang mga anak na CICL na may paggabay ng mga kawani o manggagawang panlipunan. Ang mga panuntunan ay bahagi ng paglalapat ng mga bagong istraktura para sa alternatibong pagdalaw. Sa pagkatuto ng mga magulang sa paggamit ng mga platapormang online, kailangang magkaroon din ng kaayusan upang tanggapin ito ng mga pamunuan ng LSWDO at ng pamahalaang local. Dahil minsan ay parehas ang lugar na ginagamit sa birtwal na sesyon at ang "live" o "real time" na sesyon, kailangang maghalo ang mga panuntunan sa harapang pagdalaw sa panuntunan sa pakikipagtalastasang birtwal. Tugon ito sa mga puna ng mga magulang na hindi nila madalaw ang mga anak at pinagbawal pa ang *cellphone* sa simula. Ngunit upang makatulong sa kalusugang mental ng nga bata at mga magulang at upang maisulong ang alternatibong *case management*, pinayagan ng administrasyon na gumamit ng *cellphone* at ng s*ocial media platforms*. Sa puntong ito, makikita na nagsimula ang mga ina sa pagkakaroon ng malakas na pakiramdam ng pagiging iba, ngunit natugunan ito ng instrumental na *social support* mula sa mga *social workers* at intern upang magawan ng paraan ang kanilang pakiramdam ng pagiging hiwalay. Maraming gumamit ng online na pamamaraan noong pandemya ngunit nagkakaiba sa mga ispisipikong hakbang para maipatupad ito. Halimbawa, gumawa ng *instructional video* ang mananaliksik upang mapanoond ng mga nanay at mabalikan nila sa pagkatuto ng mga *online* na pamamaraan ng komunikasyon. Gumagamit ng malikhaing pamamaraan upang maipatupad ang alternatibong *case management* noong pandemya.

Mga Malikhaing Paraan ng Dalaw at *Case Management*. Ang paggamit ng *online* na pamamaraan ng komunikasyon ay instrumento upang mapagpatuloy ang kooperasyon ng mga magulang sa pagpapabuti ng kaso ng kanilang mga anak. Isa lamang ito sa mga mapag-ibang ideya upang mapabuti ang praktis noong panahon ng pandemya. Marami pang malikhaing paraan na nabuo sa mga dating programa upang isulong ang alternatibong *case management*. Isang halimbawa ng alternatibong dalaw ay pinapakita sa karanasan sa Bahay Pasilungan kung saan pinapayagan ang

mga bata na dumalaw sa kanilang mga magulang minsan sa isang buwan (Save the Children UK Philippine Programme, 2004). Sa ganitong paraan, nagkaroon ng aktibong bahagi sa pagpaplano sa paglaya ng bata.

Ang kalidad ng dalaw ay mahalaga rin. Sa papel ni Bumanlag (2022), ipinakita niya kung sa pamamagitan ng paggamit ng sining, nagkaroon ng mga gawain kung saan ang mga magulang at anak ay nakapagbukas ng saloobin sa isa't isa upang mapabuti ang kanilang relasyon. Tinawag niya itong HOPE *reframing family reconciliation model*. Ipinapakita dito kung paano ang *social worker* ay maaaring gumawa ng mga paraan upang umunlad ang kalidad ng dalaw sa mga CICL.

Espasyo bilang Istraktura ng Dalaw bilang Pagkakilanlan

Ang dalaw ay karaniwang katangian ng isang taga-labas. Kumakatawan din ito sa pamamaraan ng interaksyon na bunga ng paghihiwalay ng espasyo. Dahil sa sapilitang paghiwalay ng CICL, nagkaroon ng dalawang magkahiwalay na espasyo, ang espasyo sa loob ng institusyon at ang espasyo sa labas ng institusyon. Ang espasyo sa loob ng institustyon ay pinapalooban ng bata (CICL), ng *social worker*, at ng iba pang kawani. Ang espasyo naman sa labas ng institusyon ay ang lugar kung saan matatagpuan ang mga magulang at tagapag-alaga. Subalit, mayroon ding *social workers* sa espasyo sa labas ng institusyon na maaaring maglabas-pasok sa Bahay Tanglaw. Nalimitahan din ang kapangyarihang ito noong panahon ng pandemya kung kaya't may *social worker* sa loob ng institusyon, at may *social worker* din na nasa labas na bahagi pa rin ng pamahalaang lokal. Dahil sa istrakturang ito, may dalawang uri ng pagkakilanlan ang dalaw: ang taga-labas na nais dumalaw sa institusyon (magulang/tagapag-alaga) at ang taga-loob na nais bisitahin ang mga pamilya *(social worker)*. Dahil dito, ang pagkakilanlang ipinagpapalagay ng magulang ay isang taga-labas kahit anak niya ang kanyang nais makasama.

Kung ang CICL ay sumailalim sa programang dibersyon at nasa pamamahala ng komunidad o korte ang kanyang pagbibigay serbisyo bilang bahagi ng reporma at kabayaran sa nagawa niyang krimen, hindi sana magiging tagalabas ang papel ng magulang. Dahil nasa kostodiya ng magulang ang bata, ang espasyong ginagalawan ng CICL ay ang kanyang sariling tahanan at komunidad. Sa ganitong pagkakataon, ang mga ahente ng estado tulad ng *social worker* ang mga taga-labas at siya namang nagiging dalaw sa CICL. Subalit, kabaliktaran nito ang nangyayari sa "dibersyong panginstitusyonal". Bagamat hiwalay ang mga CICL sa mga bilanggong may edad na, maituturing na hiwalay pa rin sila sa komunidad, lalo pa sa kanilang mga magulang. Dahil dito, ang identidad ng isang magulang, ng isang ina, bilang isang dalaw, ay isang taga-labas. Bagamat ang magulang ay tinuturing na "significant other," pinapalayo nito ang distansyang sosyal dahil sa mga kaayusang itinakda ng estado. Ang distansyang sosyal na ito ay pinaigting pa dahil sa mga restriksyon ng pandemya. Sang-ayon ito sa literatura, na ang dalaw, pisikal man o *online*, ay nakakatulong upang patuloy na maiugnay ang mga bata sa komunidad (McNeeley & Duwe, 2020).

Para sa bata naman, ang dalaw ay simbulo ng pag-asa. Ito marahil ang dahilan kaya tinawag ang mga pasilidad para sa CICL na Bahay Pag-asa. Umaayon naman ito sa sinabi ni Bulatao (2023) na ang suporta ng pamilya ay nagdudulot ng pagkakaroon ng pag-asa sa mga bata. Dapat na ituring na Karapatan ang pagkakaroon ng dalaw dahil ito ay isa sa mahahalagang pamamaraan upang mapanatili ang koneksyon ng bata sa komunidad na nasa labas ng institusyon. Subalit, dahil may mga bata na walang pumupuntang dalaw, ang pagkakaroon ng dalaw ay nagiging pribilehiyo. Ang mga may dalaw ay may dagdag na pagkain at gamit. May mga bitbit silang kuwento na hindi

nararanasan ng mga batang walang dalaw. Ang pagkakaroon ng dalaw ay pinanggagalingan din ng saya (at minsan ng lalo pang pighati). Pribilehiyo rin ito dahil minsan pinipigilan ang pagdalaw ng mga magulang ng mga bata ng nakagawa ng hindi mabuti sa *center.* Ang pansamantalang pag-alis ng kanilang karapatan sa dalaw ay ang kanilang kaparusahan. Kung gayon, ang pagkakaroon ng dalaw ay maituturing din na isang gantimpala. Isang pabor na binibigay dahil sa mabuting gawi na pinamalas ng CICL. Sa ganitong pangyayari, ang mga *social worker* ay nakakadagdag sa pagkakaroon ng *secondary deviance* dahil nagpapatibay sa mga bata na sila ay laging gumagawa ng taliwas (Lemert, 1967; Nooe, 1980) habang lalong nahihiwalay ang bata sa mga magulang.

Ang Lugar at ang Pagkakilanlan ng Dalaw at Dinadalaw

Dalawa ang naging basehan ng pagiging iba ng mga ina at magulang ng mga CICL. Una, naging iba sila dahil sa mga panuntunan ng nasyonal at local na pamahalaan. Bagamat pinapakita ng mga makakanluraning pag-aaral na ang mga magulang ang pinakamainam na *social support* na maaaring tanggapin ng mga bata, ang mga panuntunan ng pamahalaan ang humaharang din sa ganitong layon. May responsibilidad ang pamahalaan na maglaan ng *resources* para mabigyan ng *social support* ang ina at ang CICL. Pangalawa, ang konteksto ng pagiging iba ay nakabase sa lugar. Nagkakaroon ng pagdistansya ng mga taga-labas at mga taga-loob ng institutsyon. Kahit na hindi tinatawag na kulungan o piitan ang Bahay Pag-asa, pumapaloob pa rin ito sa istraktura na kung tawagin ay *Total Institution* (Goffman, 1961) kung saan hiwalay ang mga bata sa kalakhan ng lipunan.

May tatlong pangyayari *(event)* kung saan nabubuo ang pagkakakilanlan ng pagiging dalaw: 1. *Online kumustahan* – ang pagkakilanlan ng mga magulang bilang dalaw sa kanilang mga anak (e3a); 2. *Alternatibong home visitation* – ang pagkakilanlan ng mga *social worker* bilang dalaw ng mga magulang (e3c); at 3. *Pagbisita ng dating kasama* – ang pagkakilanlan ng mga dating CICL na dumadalaw sa Bahay Pag-asa. Nakabatay ang bawat pangyayari sa katangian ng lugar na kinabibilangan. Ang paunang pangyayari ay nagdudulot upang matupad ang ikalawang pangyayari na katumbas ng interbensyon na ginawa bilang tampok ng modelo ng praktis sa gawaing panlipunan. Ang mga pangyayaring ito ay mga halimbawa kung paano mapapalakas ang dalaw bilang pamamaraan ng *social support* sa CICL at kanilang mga magulang.

Ipinapakita ng Talahanayan 2 ang unang pangyayari kung saan ang magulang ang dalaw at ang anak ang dinadalaw. Dalaw ang ina dahil siya ay taga-labas ng institusyon. Ang mga pagkilos ng ina ang maoobserbahan sa mga katagang *dadalaw ako o dumadalaw ako*. Dahil sa restriksyon ng pandemya, pinakilala sa mga ina ang online kumustahan kung saan madadalaw nila ang kanilang mga anak sa pamamagitan ng mga platapormang *online* tulad ng Google Meet. Ang alternatibong interbensyong ito ay naglayon na maging tulay na huwag maputol ang komunikasyon sa pagitan ng magulang at anak na CICL.

Talahanayan 2. *Pagkakilanlan ng Magulang bilang Dalaw (Event – Online Kumustahan)*

Pagkakilanlan	**Lugar na kinabibilangan**	**Pagkilos**
Dalaw (magulang)	Taga-labas ng institusyon	*Dadalaw ako; dumadalaw ako*
Dinadalaw (anak)	Loob ng institusyon	*May dalaw ako; Dalawin mo ako*

Pinapakita naman ng Talahanayan 3 ang pangyayaring home visitation na natigil noong panahon ng pandemya. Sa pangyayaring ito, ang *social worker* ang dalaw bilang taga-loob ng institusyon, at tagalabas naman ng komunidad. Sa pagkakataon na ito, ang *social workers* ang sumasambit ng mga katagang dadalaw ako o dumadalaw ako. Ang pangyayari ay dalaw "sa" mga magulang (e3c sa Pigura 4). Ang modelo ang nagtampok ng alternatibong pamamaraan ng *home visitation* sa pamamagitan muli ng mga *online* na palataporma. Sa tuluy-tuloy na pangangamusta ng *social worker*, maiibsan ang pakiramdam ng ina na malayo siya sa kanyang anak at mababawasan ang agam-agam hinggil sa kalagayan at kalusugan ng kanyang anak. Ang *social worker* ang tulay sa pagitan ng institusyon at ng komunidad bilang kanyang propesyonal na mandato.

Talahanayan 3. *Pagkakilanlan ng Social Worker bilang Dalaw: (Event – Alternatibong Home visitation)*

Pagkakilanlan	Lugar na kinabibilangan	Pagkilos
Dalaw *(social worker)*	Taga-loob ng institusyon/ Maaaring taga-labas o taga-loob ng komunidad	*Dadalaw ako (home visit); dumadalaw ako* (alternatibong pagdalaw sa komunidad habang nasa loob ng institusyon) - *remote*
Dinadalaw (magulang)	Taga-komunidad	*May dalaw ako; Dalawin mo ako*

Ang pangatlong pangyayari ay nakuha mula sa hiwalay na panayam sa dating CICL na bumabalik sa Bahay Pag-asa para kumustahin ang kanyang mga dating *house parents* at kapwa bata. Nagkakaroon dito ng transisyon mula sa pagiging taga-loob sa pagiging dating-tagaloob. Dito na nagsisimulang magbago ang pagkakilanlan ng bata, mula sa pagiging CICL at taga-loob ng Bahay Pag-asa sa pagiging kabahagi muli *(reintegrated)* na kasapi ng komunidad. Ito marahil ang sinasabi ni Paul Ricoeur (1992) na ang sarili *(oneself)* bilang iba *(another)* dahil nakita muli ng dating CICL ang kanyang pagkakilanlan bilang kabahagi ng komunidad at muling kapiling ang kanyang mga magulang at pamilya. Ang dating CICL, bagamat salamin na lalong nagpapakita ng pagiging iba ng mga taga-loob na CICL, ay tulay din dahil naranasan na niya ang tatlong mundo, ang pagiging bahagi ng komunidad, ang pagkahiwalay sa komunidad, at ang pagbalik niya sa komunidad. Nagkakaroon ng pag-asa ang mga ina na may hangganan din ang kaniyang pagiging layo o hiwalay sa kanyang anak, at pagiging laya na rin sila. Maaaring maging iisa na ang lugar na kinalalagyan ng ina at anak. Kung hindi man, ay malaya na nilang madadalaw ang isa't isa sa anumang panahong maaari at naisin nila.

Talahanayan 4. *Pagkakilanlan ng Dating CICL bilang Dalaw: (Event – Pagbisita sa mga Dating Kasama)*

Pagkakilanlan	**Lugar na kinabibilangan**	**Pagkilos**
Dalaw (dating CICL)	Dating Taga-loob ng institusyon; *Reintegrated* sa komunidad; Taga-labas ng institusyon	*Dadalaw ako; dumadalaw ako*
Dinadalaw (mga CICL; *social worker; house parents)*	Taga-loob ng institustyon	*May dalaw tayo; Dalawin mo kami*

Kung gayon, ang pagiging dalaw ay isang pagkakilanlan na mag-iiba depende sa *actor*, at sa lugar kung saan naroon ang *actor*. Maaaring gamitin ang pagkakilanlang dalaw sa ina, sa *social worker*, at sa dating CICL (na dating taga-loob).

Pakahulugan ng Dalaw sa Praktis ng Gawaing Panlipunan

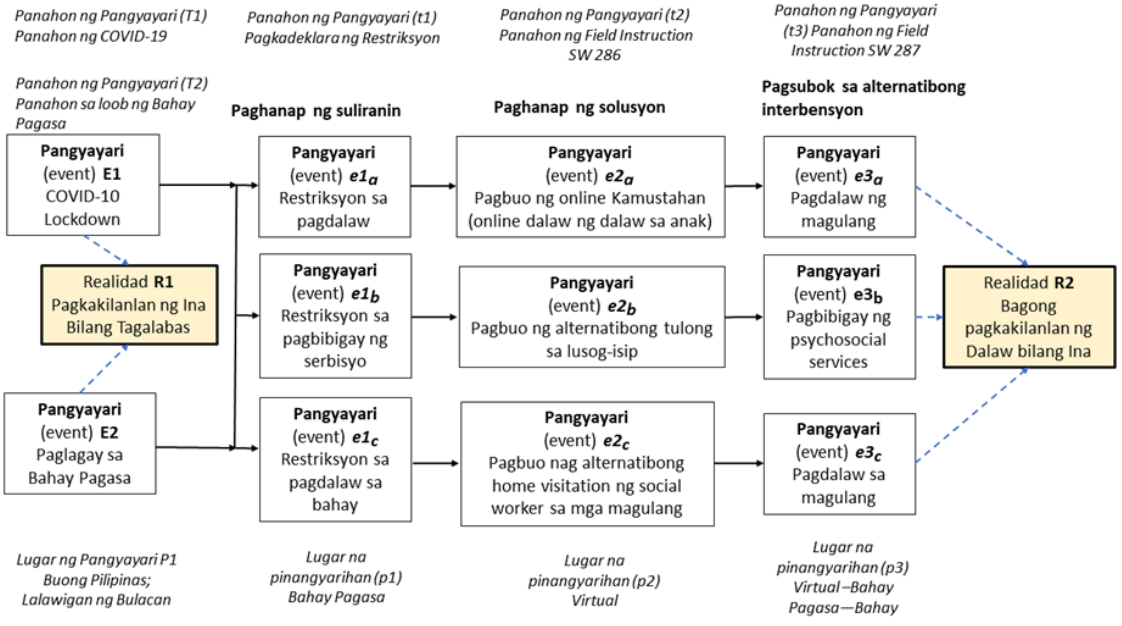
Ipinapakita sa Pigura 5 ang interseksyon ng dalawang pangyayari: ang panahon ng pandemya (T1) at panahong nalagak ang mga bata sa Bahay Paga-asa (T2). Sa panahon na ito ay dalawang pangyayari ang naganap: ang pagkakaroon ng *lockdown* noong panahon ng pandemya (E1) at ang paglagak ng bata sa loob ng Bahay Pag-asa (E2). Maaari rin na ang bata ay nasa Bahay Pag-asa na noong nagsimula ang pandemya. Dahil sa pagkahiwalay ng ina sa anak at dahil nasa loob ng bakuran ng Bahay Pag-asa ang kanilang anak, nagsimulang magkaroon ng pagkakilanlan ang ina bilang Tagalabas. Ito ay pinalala ng panahong nagdeklara ng restriksyon sa paggalaw ng mga tao noong panahon ng pandemya (t1).

Ang *field instruction* ng gradwadong kursong Masterado ng Gawaing Panliupunan ay pinatupad ang proseso ng pagbuo ng *integrative* at *innovative* na mga *practice models*. Ito ay binubuo ng dalawang semestre: ang SW 286 sa unang semestre (t2) at and SW 287 sa ikalawang semestre. Sa isang taon na *intern* ang gradwadong mag-aaral, ginabayan siya ng kanyang *faculty supervisor* na isang *social work educator*. Natupad ang tatlong pangyayari: 1) ang paghanap ng suliranin sa ahensya (e1); 2) ang paghanap ng solusyon (e2); at 3) ang pagsubok o *pilot test* ng alernatibong interbensyon sa panahon ng pandemya (e3).

Sa pamamagitan ng teknolohiya at *social media platforms*, nilayong ituloy ang mga dating serbisyo ngunit sa birtwal na lugar (p2). Gumamit ng teknolohiya at *social media* para maisakatuparan ang mga layunin ng modelo: 1) magkaroon ng tuloy-tuloy na komunikasyon sa pagitan ng mga magulang/tagapag-alaga at ng mga bata; 2) makapagbigay serbisyo sa mga bata sa loob ng Bahay Tanglaw at maging sa mga magulang na nasa kani-kanilang mga tahanan at komunidad; at 3) maipagpatuloy ang case management sa kabila ng pandemya. Maliban dito, nilayon din ng modelo na maturuan ang mga magulang ng paggamit ng mga *social media platforms* tulad ng Google Meet na siyang ginamit sa iba pang serbisyo tulad ng pagsasanay sa kabuhayan upang matulungan ang mga magulang magkaroon ng dagdag na kita noong panahon ng pandemya. Lahat nang ito ay nagmula sa pagtukoy ng suliranin na pagkakaroon ng limitasyon sa pagdalaw sa mga bata. Ang naging solusyon ay ang pagkakaroon ng alternatibong pamamaraan ng dalaw gamit ang teknolohiya at *social media*. Pinapatunayan nito ang balangkas na nabuo noong pandemya na pagsasanib-puwersa ng mga makabagong-isip na pagbabago sa pagbibigay ng serbisyong panlipunan sa larangan at mga *remote* na pamamaraan ng *field instruction* sa pag-aaral ng gawaing panlipunan, upang makapagpasimula ng makabagong-isip na mga pamamaraan sa pamamagitan ng pagbuo ng modelo ng praktis (Nicolas, 2022a).

Dagdag sa pakahulugan ng dalaw ay ang gamit ng alternatibong pamamaraan ng dalaw sa pagpapaabot ng serbisyong panlipunan sa panahon ng pandemya (e3). Ito ang naging kahalagahan ng konsepto ng dalaw sa gawaing panlipunan at marahil sa lahat ng propesyong ang layon ay tumulong. Ang dalaw ay isang pamamaraan ng interaksyon ng magulang at anak upang maiugnay pa rin ang CICL sa komunidad (pagdalaw ng magulang e3a). Ang dalaw din ang pamamaraan ng *social worker* upang makapag-*home visit* at makumusta ang pamilya at maiusad ang iba pang panukala sa kaso (pagdalaw sa magulang e3c). Ang dalaw din ang naging daluyan ng pagbibigay

serbisyo tulad ng *psychosocial support* (e3b). Sa kinalaunan, sa pamamagitan ng mekanismong alternatibong dalaw na gamit ang platapormang online, nagkakaroon ng pagkakilanlan ang dalaw bilang isang ina. Nakakatulong ito sa lusog-isip, hindi lang ng mga bata, ngunit maging ng ina at mga magulang.



Pigura 5. *Mga Pangyayari, Panahon at Lugar sa Pagbuo ng Alternatibong Interbensyon sa Panahon ng Pandemya at ang Pagkakilanlan ng Dalaw*

Panghuling Salita at Rekomendasyon

Ang pagiging dalaw ay katangian ng pagiging iba dahil sa pangyayari at lugar. Para sa isang ina ng isang CICL, siya ay kapwa tinuturing na iba dahil pinaghihiwalay siya at ang kanyang anak ng mga bakod ng institusyon. Hiwalay din siya sa ibang miyembro ng komunidad dahil kailangan niyang dalhin ang pasanin ng pagiging magulang ng CICL. Ang mga alternatibong interbensyon sa pag-aaral ay nagpapakita na ang pagiging-iba ng ina at ng mga magulang ng CICL ay maaaring labanan sa pamamagitan ng mga pagkilos na magkokonekta sa kanilang mga anak upang mabawasan ang distansya sa pagitan nila. Sa *redeskripsyon* ng teorya hinggil sa dalaw, bagamat mahirap baguhin ang konteksto ng lugar, maaaring magpakilala ng pangyayari at alternatibong pagkilos (interbensyon) para labanan ang identidad nang pagiging iba at hiwalay.

Maaari pa ring gamitin ang alternatibong mga pamamaraan gamit ang teknolohiya at s*ocial media platforms* kahit na hindi na panahon ng pandemya. Halimbawa, maaaring limitado ang pondo at gamit ng lokal na pamahalaan tulad ng sasakyan. Kung isang sasakyan lang ang gamit at apat hanggang limang bahay lamang ang mabibisita, maaari pa ring ituloy ang pagbisita ng s*ocial worker* sa mga magulang gamit ang *online* na pamamaraan. Gayundin, kung walang pamasahe ang mga magulang, o may kadahilanan tulad ng karamdaman, maaari pa ring makita ng mga magulang ang kanilang mga anak, gamit ang *online* na pamamaran. Ang online na pamamaraan ay isa nang kasangkapan (tool) sa *case management* na maaaring gamitin ng mga *social workers*.

Ang pag-aaral ay kinalahukan ng mga magulang ng CICL na karamihan ay binubuo ng kababaihan o mga ina. Sa ganitong diwa, maaaring tignan ng mga susunod na mananaliksik nang mas matalas na gamit ng lente ng feminismo. Ang mga pananaw at pagbibigay kahulugan ng mga kalahok na binubuo ng mga ina o kababaihan ay maaaring may kinalaman sa pagpapakahulugan sa babae na hindi naipaliwanag sa pag-aaral na ito. Kung sakali man, maaari ring ikumpara ang pananaw at pagpapakahulugan ng salitang "dalaw" sa mga magulang na lalaki (ama) at magulang na babae (ina). Maaaring suriin kung mayroong ibang pananaw o pagpapakahulugan sa salitang dalaw buhat sa magkaibang kasarian.

Dagdag pa rito, naging tampok rin sa mga kasagutan ng mga magulang sa panayam ang pagpapakahulugan sa salitang "hustisya" na kadalasan ay inihahambing sa pananalig o plano ng Diyos. Hindi nabanggit o naipaliwanag ng mga mananaliksik ang aspetong ito dahil hindi na ito saklaw ng pag-aaral, ngunit maaaring talakayin rin ito sa mga susunod na sulatin ng mananaliksik. Buhat ng mga nabanggit, ang kasarian at relihiyon ng mga kalahok ay maaaring idagdag bilang mga namamagitang salik sa mga susunod na pananaliksik na katulad nito. Makikita na isang estratehiya sa pagpapaunlad ng lipunan ang Social Support at pagpapabuti ng relasyon ng magulang sa mga anak na nasa poder ng *justice system*. Sinasabi sa papel na ito na dapat kabahagi ang mga ina sa social support na ito sa pamamagitan ng pagtanggap sa kanilang pagkakilanlan na ina ng mga CICL at hind lamang dalaw na taga-labas.

Ang estado ay itinuturing ring magulang ng mga mamamayan. Makikita ito maging sa Konstitusyon na syang tinukoy ang estado bilang *"parens patriae"* na sa wikang Latin ay nangangahulugang "magulang ng nasyon o mamamayan." Sa ganitong diwa, nagsasagawa ng mga batas, programa, o serbisyo na may kinalaman sa pagprotekta at pangangalaga sa kanyang mga nasasakupan, lalo't higit sa natatanging grupo *(marginalized sector)*. Ang pagtatayo ng *rehabilitation center* tulad ng Tanglaw ng Pag-asa ay isa sa mga serbisyong patunay ng paggampan ng estado sa pangangalaga sa mga CICL. Subalit, kailangan paigtingin ang *social support* ng pamahalaan sa pamamagitan ng pagpapatupad ng *community-based interventions* upang hindi maging balakid ang lugar sa pagitan ng anak at kanyang ina. Sa ganitong paraan, maiiwasan na ipaubaya na lamang sa ina ang *social support* bilang "natural carers" na nagbibigay ng pagkalinga sa lahat ng natatanging sektor (Alfandry, 2020, Par. 13). Bilang *duty bearer* at magulang sa kanyang mga anak, tungkulin ng gobyerno na siguraduhing kabahagi ang magulang sa *social support* sa mga CICL at hindi pawang dalaw lamang.

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Juggling or Sailing through Everyday Life?: Understanding the Lived Experiences of Filipino Mothers as Online Freelancers and Outsourced Workers

Rafaella R. Potestades

ABSTACT

As more and more Filipino mothers are going into the online gig economy as informal workers, it is essential to reassess the definition of what a freelancer is and to reignite the resolution to fight for their rights. Transcending international boundaries and blurring national rights, the online freelancing economy may be a place of exploitation and discrimination. For mothers who wish to enter this world in hopes of regaining their self-esteem or gaining economic empowerment, its facilitating factors for or impeding harms on women should be analyzed. This study narrated the lived realities of four Filipino mothers working as online freelancers and outsourced workers using Moser's Triple Roles framework. The intersections of their everyday experiences as mothers, workers, and community organizers were analyzed. The findings suggest that Filipino women found online work relatively better than office work as it provides alternative and flexible working conditions that can help them juggle their role as mothers and workers, but it is still challenging in terms of working conditions for women and safeguarding their rights. The study also unearthed their practical gender needs, such as maternity leaves and social security, access to information and services, and redistribution of care work;, as well as their strategic gender needs such as reinforcement of women workers' rights in the gig economy, control over personal work decision-making, and state recognition of unpaid care and domestic work as everyone's responsibility, which suggests that the gig economy lacks spaces to question power relations and gender injustice.

Keywords: *gig economy, crowdwork platform, online freelance platforms, online outsourced jobs, Filipino mothers, on-demand economy, freelancer rights, women in the informal economy*

Introduction

In a dominantly neoliberal global economy, the on-demand or gig economy—characterized by service providers tapping workers for short-term crowdwork and contract-based gigs—normalized flexible employment relations and an entrepreneuralized form of work solely based on the needs and demands of corporations and international businesses (Gandini et al., 2017). Competitive workers from the global south are sourced out by companies from the global north for their cheap labor (Soriano & Cabañes, 2020). Specifically, businesses outsource labor through digital labor platforms (e.g., Onlinejobs.ph, Fiverr, Upwork, etc.) and assign them jobs, such as virtual assistantship, graphic designing, video editing, or customer service, among many others, and these digital labor platforms broker the relationship between freelancers and individual clients or companies (The ASEAN Post, 2019; Kalleburg & Dunn, 2016). Freelancers are viewed

as entrepreneurs who have the flexibility to be hired by companies for designated projects during particular durations. However, in reality, their work falls within the spectrum of employee to entrepreneur—which if not properly monitored or regulated, can easily lead to exploitation (Nawaz et al., 2020).

The on-demand market promises opportunities in an "egalitarian" fashion, wherein anyone can do microtasks regardless of their age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, among other identities, where flexibility, work-life balance, and autonomy are ideally employed (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2016). In this framing, it appears that jobs are abundant as employers now come from different parts of the world, however, the question of what type of jobs are available, "whether secure or precarious, economically satisfying or scarcely paid, and especially what kind of 'quality'" (Kalleberg, 2011, as cited in Gandini et al., 2017) is still overlooked. More threateningly, the "employer-employee" relationships are being reshaped to "service providers" and "clients" relationships, where online workers are viewed as mere service providers or contractual freelancers. Companies often hire freelancers or contractors to transfer the "risk (uncertainty) from capital to labour, and increasing capital's share of returns (altering the share of income growth going to labour and profits)" (Peetz, 2019, p. 144). Additionally, there is an individualization of work, which happens through

> "dispersing work and workers, by extending the use of temporary contracts, and by putting workers in different parts of the globe in competition with one another, so that they must readily be on-call to the employer whenever required, regardless of the ramifications in their lives away from paid work." (Webster, 2016, p.58)

This reshaping of dynamics towards "flexibility" is dangerous as it removes the protection of workers' rights (Webster, 2016) and results to a "precaritization" of work. Companies and capitalists attempt to minimize costs, risks, and accountability and centralize all profits by contracting out the services of freelancers (Peetz, 2019). Peetz (2019) also stated that there is a "growth of nonstandard employment, including through casualisation and independent contracting, in which workers become self-employed and take on the risks of the self-employed" (p.142). Since outsourced freelance workers are still within the boundaries of the informal economy, most governments also view them as self-employed individuals responsible for their own taxes and social protection, such as their healthcare or pension (Hong & Pavlou, 2013).

The lack of a contract or of benefits can lead to potential risks for Filipino freelancers, especially women freelancers. Their rights as workers may not be recognized and their welfare—which may be affected by their working environment and conditions—may not be accounted for. The individualization of their work means difficulty for unions to organize and demand for their rights (Peetz, 2019). At times, the definition of their role as either freelancer or employee or service provider becomes blurred, as Filipino freelancers would be hired as contractors or part-time noncasual workers "where the worker has the appearance of being self-employed but is actually dependent upon one organization to provide him or her with work" (Peetz, 2019, p.153). Not having their rights as workers recognized nor their mental and physical health considered can lead to a myriad of problems, such as not being paid on time, no guarantee of financial benefits or salary increase, limited room for working condition-negotiations, and no social protection from the state. The gig economy has firmly placed itself in Southeast Asia as millions of professionals flock to more flexible but temporary jobs. The Philippines was ranked sixth in the list of countries with the greatest number of freelancers (Payoneer, 2019) and according to Paypal (2018), 2% of the

country's population consists of freelancers—meaning to say that the country has an estimated 1.5 million freelancers. Such numbers even prompted the Senate to craft and discuss the Freelancer Bill (Torregoza, 2019) to protect the country's budding freelance economy (Magsino, 2020). The Philippine government even views online work as a better flexible alternative for workers to working overseas (Soriano & Cabañes, 2020). Paypal (2018) stated that around 65% of that overall figure are composed of women and that most reasons for shifting to freelancing or online jobs revolved around being able to dictate when, where, and how they work.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the government's lack of long-term solutions, especially at the time of writing, most people were left at a standstill in terms of being unemployed or underemployed—thus, further pushing people into migrating to freelance jobs as a means to cope with the lack of income and stability (Conde, 2020) —as was apparent with most of the participants in this research. A study conducted by Risi and Pronzato (2022) on the lives of Italian online workers during the pandemic suggests that remote workers felt the need to be "always-on" as their digital and personal spaces converged. Additionally, in most disasters and devastating crises, gender inequalities are exacerbated as women and girls are disproportionately affected compared to men and boys. Women and girls, who mostly handle unpaid care work, are significantly impacted when it comes to handling the crisis during and after it occurs as they take on a major role in the family's safety and health (GBV AoR REGA, CARE Philippines, & UNFPA Philippines, 2020). The literature on Filipino mothers doing freelancing work is mostly limited to news articles (Schnable, 2018; Gotinga, 2020; Martinez, 2020; Magino, 2020) and statistics (Paypal, 2018; Payoneer, 2019), save for an article written by Tiffany Jean Villegas (2019) entitled "Freelancing — Hope for Filipino women" on the platform Medium. She states that freelancing is a great way to empower Filipino women who are just starting with their families and who just want to balance their work and family responsibilities. In addition, she explains that this is one great way for Filipino women to gain economic power and save themselves from abusive relationships.

According to the World Bank (2022), the labor participation rate of women is just over 50% while men's participation in the market is at 80%—with numerous factors such as unpaid care and domestic work, maternity discrimination, lack of educational and training opportunities, and so on affecting women's participation rates. Mothers who work in online freelance platforms often valiantly juggle multiple and simultaneous responsibilities and burdens as they are not just caretakers, but also educators, workers, community organizers, and volunteers working towards the education, safety, and nurturance of their families (Lirio et al., 2022; Bayudan-Dacuycuy & Baje, 2021). In addition, their productive and reproductive labor are often undervalued and overlooked. Even in developed and liberal nations such as Britain, maternity discrimination is deeply felt, as around 54,000 new mothers may be forced out of their jobs (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2015). Negative experiences in their working environment, such as discouragement from attending appointments for their antenatal care due to workload, pressure to hand in resignation letters, and lessened opportunities post-pregnancy, were surfaced. The intersecting identities of their gender, class, age, language, ethnicity, and so on deeply affect their privileges and vulnerabilities, which may be factors that push numerous mothers to enter the online gig economy (Bögenhold & Klinglmair, 2015). In the UK, there are an estimated 287,000 mothers freelancing, accounting for 15% of the country's freelancer population. Similarly in the Philippines, the number is also increasing. FHMoms or Filipina Home-based Moms, an online organization for Filipino mothers doing freelance work, shared that during the pandemic, the organization went through 100-200

new member requests daily[2] —it is also worth noting that they have expanded their membership to women who do not have children, as well. The organization, which primarily operates online, had about 200,000 members within and outside of the Philippines as of this writing (Martinez, 2020).

Bayudan-Dacuycuy and Baje (2021) shared that digital job platforms center around the delivery of services through online means and these platforms may offer clerical work such as microtasks or microwork (e.g., data entry, scheduling social media posts, etc.), and macrowork that require specialized skills (e.g., software development). According to Kalleburg and Dunn (2016), online jobs differ from offline work in terms of "(1) their amount of control over the worker, and hence how much control workers have over their jobs; and (2) their wages and duration" (p. 11). Additionally, there are four major gig platform categories, namely crowdwork platforms, delivery/home task platforms, online freelance platforms, and transportation platforms. Crowdwork platforms entail low control and low wages for freelancers as the work involved is often simple, clerical, and low-paid. These forms of work usually center around set compensation, high oversight, lower participation, and low autonomy. Delivery/home Task Platforms and Transportation Platforms are often characterized by local aspects, such as Lalamove or Grab, and drivers are often core components of these platforms. The former primarily centers around the delivery of goods and items, while the latter focuses on offering ride-sharing services. Both platforms are often managed by set metrics (e.g., type of vehicle used, driver's license, results of background checks, etc.), punitive participation requirements (e.g., punishment for cancelling or turning down orders), and they dictate the rate and wages of the drivers. Lastly, Online Freelance Platforms (e.g., Fiverr, Upwork, OnlineJobs.ph) offer gigs to freelancers with specific skills. These types of platforms may offer spaces for freelancers to "negotiate their own wages, differentiate themselves by their portfolios, take competency tests, and rate their employers" (Kalleburg & Dunn, 2016, p.12). This study emphasizes the freelance work undertaken by Filipino mothers through digital platforms, specifically in crowdwork platforms and online freelance platforms.

This study aims to surface the issues faced by working mothers in online crowdwork platforms and online freelance platforms, as their gendered experiences in the jobs they found through these platforms highly affect their autonomy and wages. In outsourcing microwork and macrowork through these platforms, the transfer of risk from capitalists to women laborers is apparent as their gendered needs and concerns are invisibilized. Crowdwork Platforms can be spaces that further gendered work (e.g., clerical and secretariat tasks) on women, which are often characterized by low pay and low autonomy. On the other hand, it is important to take note of Online Freelance Platforms because, even though they promise high wage and high autonomy for workers, the platform's capacity to regulate negotiations and working conditions between online mother workers and clients is limited—given that these ideal conditions are dependent on the freelancer's confidence, capacities, and skills. This article also seeks to contribute to the developing conversation about the gig economy, providing space for mothers' voices, and highlighting their experiences to inform development work, possible interventions, and policymakers by using Moser's Triple Roles Framework, including identifying their Practical Gender Needs and Strategic Gender Needs.

Specifically, this study asked the following research questions:

1. How do they view the online gig economy? What are the challenges and opportunities that they have experienced while working as outsourced freelancing employees?

[1] Please note that the influx of memberships was during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, the author cannot confirm if the number of membership requests remains the same.

2. How do they handle their roles as mothers, freelancers, and/or community managers?
3. What are their practical gender needs and strategic gender needs in balancing all these roles?

The intersections of their everyday experiences as mothers, crowdwork and online freelance platform workers, and community organizers were detailed and analyzed to emphasize the multiple burdens that they carry and that are (re)perpetuated through the traditional gender division of labor found within their public and private spheres. The study also unearthed their practical gender needs and strategic gender needs, which can help break the perpetuation of their subordinated positions as women informal micro-workers in the online gig economy.

This paper argues that the social positionality of Filipino mothers working in the gig economy leaves them vulnerable to exploitation and marginalization, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating said vulnerabilities. Further, gender roles may become further entrenched as freelance work in online spaces may commercialize the gender division of labor. For example, in Milkman et al.'s study (2021), majority of women working gigs in online food delivery platforms are "pickers" or "shoppers" under the grocery section. The study expressed that this type of work further "commodifies the tacit shopping and food preparation skills that many women routinely develop in their households, usually without monetary compensation" (p. 358). The neoliberal ethos of women's unpaid care and domestic work may be perpetuated through such gendered jobs, such as what has been portrayed with women bloggers "sharenting" or sharing their parenting on social media. In a context of post-austerity and precarity, mothers working online are pushed to reconcile their motherhood and careers (Jorge et al., 2022). Women, especially ones burdened with unpaid care and domestic work, find the online gig economy attractive as it provides alternative working conditions where they could practice their autonomy. Compared with other jobs, the on-demand market's remote environment enables them to control their work schedules in order to not impede their caregiving responsibilities (Milkman et al., 2021). Yet, "this type of work arrangement provides a neoliberal solution to work-family conflict, enabling women to perform paid work while still prioritizing family and caregiving" (Milkman et al., 2021, p. 358).

Further, spaces for collective bargaining and negotiations are limited, as Filipino freelancers are mostly involved in microwork or isolated working environments. However, efforts by digital laborers to address such gaps exist. For instance, in a study conducted by Soriano and Cabañes (2020), they interviewed over 31 Filipino freelancers from Cebu, Davao, and Manila to document how they collectivize and organize themselves through social media groups (e.g., Facebook). They explored how Filipino digital laborers practice their agency to form collective solutions to common problems through Facebook groups, and these online groups become their support system. In terms of women-specific online groups, one of the organizations that exist to offer support systems is the FHMoms or Filipina Homebased Moms. FHMoms is an organization and online community for Filipino mothers who are interested in or are currently doing online freelance work, and recognize women's increased carework alongside the difficulties of mothers transitioning into freelance and online jobs. Their efforts can potentially lead to bettering the current situation of freelance workers, yet these "entrepreneurial solidarities…also serve to dampen possibilities to meaningfully challenge the structures of power underlying digital platform labor (Soriano & Cabañes, 2020, p. 9)." Additionally, the question of whether or not they assess the very nature of unpaid carework or the entrenchment of gender stereotypes in the gig economy has yet to be explored.

Numerous studies expressed how problematic the gig economy is (Jorge, 2022; Milkman et al., 2021; Risi & Pronzato, 2021; Ettlinger, 2017; Webster, 2017; Kalleberg & Dunn, 2016; Powell & Craig, 2015), especially for women. Given its flexibility and short-term nature, online gigs commonly do not give predictable salaries, social benefits, or clear career progression paths. These conditions are exacerbated as women most likely work part-time jobs compared with men, and men working in the online gig economy earn more than women (Milkman et al., 2021). Further, time spent on unpaid carework, leisure, and remote work are gendered. Women often choose to work online gigs in order to balance their unpaid care work, such as taking care of their family, with their productive work while men often choose to work remotely to control their paid work and recreational time (Powell & Craig, 2015). Studies have also shown that people working at home tend to work more hours, as this can be attributed to the lack of "workload comparison" with workmates and the lack of other checks and balances. Microworkers often work in isolated conditions and generally interact only with their employer (Powell & Craig, 2015; Nätti et al., 2011; Golden, 2008; Peters & Van der Lippe, 2007). On the other hand, Kalleberg and Dunn (2016) argues that,

> "the reality of the gig economy is more nuanced: the gig economy produces both good and bad jobs. Understanding this variability in the quality of jobs helps to better assess the conflicting benefits and costs associated with the spread of this emerging work arrangement. We argue that jobs in the gig economy differ in their wages and in the degree of control that workers have over their work" (p. 11).

Hence, having "good" jobs in the gig economy entails having higher and more stable pay, and the ability to afford healthcare and other safety nets. Usually, entry to online freelance platforms entails a certain kind of knowledge, such as doing business (e.g., business registration), to acquiring such "good" jobs. These types of knowledge, which are not readily accessible, can help empower the jobseekers to utilize the platforms' powers such as spaces to negotiate wages and rate their employers–although this is still dependent on the freelancers' need for financial stability and their power relations with the client (Burke, 2015). Registration meant they could take on bigger gigs because of the "legitimacy" offered by business registrations (e.g., official receipts). To better understand the situation of Filipino women working in online gigs, it is crucial to nuance the type of jobs they have and the working conditions that they experience. Most of the participants in this study have limited knowledge and access to "good" gigs as they are just starting out and are caught up in "bad" gigs. Critically analyzing their situation as mothers, workers, and community organizers requires understanding how their specific positionality in the gig economy affects their everyday lives. Given that the women taking on these jobs are as diverse as the gigs available in the on-demand economy, "it is unlikely that it offers equal potential for flexibility across groups where it is prevalent including: low skilled workers on low wages; high skilled workers with high levels of agency; and self-employed people" (Powell & Craig, 2015, p. 572).

Theoretical Framework

The study also employed Moser's Triple Roles Framework (TRF) and Strategic Gender Needs and Practical Gender Needs (in March et al., 2005) to analyze the gender situation of Filipino mothers doing online outsourced jobs within and outside of the Philippines. The Moser Framework primarily aims to emancipate women from their subordinated and marginalized position towards equity, equality, and empowerment. Moser poses that low-income women are usually involved in three roles, such as their reproductive, productive, and community management roles, and it

questions "who does what?" to map out the gender division of labor. Reproductive work centers around the care work that involves taking care of the family and household, including child rearing and household chores, among many others. Reproductive work in the community is usually labor-intensive and time-consuming, which explains why women face time constraints and poverty. Productive work revolves around producing goods and services for trading and consumption. These productive activities may be conducted through employment or self-employment. Women and men often experience different functions and responsibilities in these productive activities based on their gender. According to Moser (March et al., 2005), "women's productive work is often less visible and valued than men's" (p. 56). Community work involves the collective activities and organizing towards the community's cultural and spiritual development, which may involve local political activities, ceremonies and celebrations, and local organizing activities. This form of work often involves voluntary time and may not be considered as economic analyses. Amidst both men and women participating in community work, the (re)perpetuation of gender division of labor still exists. The TRF was used to examine the productive, reproductive, and socio-cultural responsibilities and challenges of freelancing mothers and how they handle such roles on a daily basis.

In Moser's gender needs assessment, determining the practical gender needs and strategic gender needs of the community deeply matters. Moser argues that men and women have gender-differentiated needs, which arise not only because of their roles but because of their subordinated and marginalized social positions (March et al., 2005). The practical gender needs are immediate interventions that respond to the current situation of women. These immediate perceived needs are commonly related to lack of access to basic needs and inadequacies in living conditions. It is worth noting that responding to their practical gender needs does not necessarily challenge the existing power relations within the gender division of labor or the social positionality of women. Examples of this category include provision of water, healthcare, housing and basic services, among others. Strategic gender needs center around interventions that can transform social relations and power imbalances between women and men. Additionally, these needs may differ depending on the community's context and they relate to "gender divisions of labour, power, and control, and may include such issues as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages, and women's control over their own bodies" (March et al., 2005, p. 58). For example, these needs may be challenging the distribution of unpaid care and domestic work within the family or the removal of sexist traditional laws that pose as barriers to women's empowerment.

Methodology

Current literature and policies fail to consider the lived realities of Filipino mothers, who often find the gig economy attractive given its flexible nature. Hence, the study was conducted to analyze their everyday lives as mothers, freelancers, and community workers. This research utilizes Feminist Standpoint Epistemology to highlight the social location of Filipino mothers, which is shaped by their everyday experiences as a result of the intersections of their gender identity, sexuality, class, age, (dis)ability, language, ethnicity, and other social identities, and how it can contribute to knowledge production on the gig economy. Their lived realities are crucial to knowledge production in order to build better policy discourses and frameworks targeting employee-employer relationships and workers' rights within the Filipino gig economy. The framework informed the research design and the research questions produced as key informant interviews and a focus group discussion were conducted to delve deeper into the Filipino freelancing mothers' everyday lives.

In this study, the Filipino mothers' needs were extracted from the issues, challenges, and explicit needs expressed in the interviews. To achieve the mentioned objectives, the study has employed qualitative research methods, such as key interviews and a focus group discussion.

Purposive sampling aims to elucidate certain concepts, themes, and phenomena rather than relying on rigid sampling frames (Robinson, 2014). The study chose key informants and focus group discussion participants on-purpose to ensure that the main research question of challenges, opportunities, and triple role struggles would be addressed. The research participants for both the key informant interview and focus group discussion were chosen based on the following criteria:

- They should be a natural-born Filipino;
- They should have one child or more;
- They should be working as an online freelancer for the past six (6) months or more; and
- For the focus group discussion specifically, they must be working within FHMoms to garner a more organizational-level perspective.

Four Filipino mothers working in freelance jobs were chosen as the key informants of the study as they most likely possess the experiences that illustrate the subordinated and gendered positions of women in the Philippine gig economy. Three to four members of FHMoms were also invited to partake in the focus group discussion to validate the insights from the KII, however, only two members were able to join the online FGD. In addition, their specific social positionality surfaces specific gender themes and phenomena experienced within the gig economy and are often invisibilized in common Philippine economic discourse. Since there are various domains existing within the gig economy, no specific industry was chosen. As long as the participants were mothers and they were part of the online gig economy, they were eligible to be interviewed.

KII and FGD participants were invited for an interview in September 2020 and they were interviewed within the span of October to November 2020. During this time, the participants were sent an invitation letter and a list of questions for their review. As soon as they agreed to join the interview, the participants were asked to fill out consent forms via Google Forms to ensure that they know their rights and power within the research process. During the actual data gathering activities, the informed consent form was reiterated and their rights as research participants were highlighted. The interviews and focus group discussion were conducted online via Zoom, Skype, and Google Meet within the months of October and November 2020—due to their varying schedule. The summary of data collection is as follows:

- Gathering of relevant materials and reports to the study;
- Key informant interviews with four (4) Filipino moms working in online freelancing outsourced jobs for the past six months to two years; and
- A focus group discussion with two (2) members from the FHMoms organization, who has over 200,000 members, to validate the data.

The data gathering activities were guided by the basic principles attached to Moser's Triple Role Framework such as analyzing the potential unequal distribution of labor within households and how the freelancing Filipino mothers perceive such work. Recognizing that the framework potentially isolates women from their social relationships, the study has sought to ask the participants how their family members or acquaintances help them in handling their double shifts or multiple burdens.

Feminist Research Ethics

Feminist research requires reflexivity in making sense of other women's experiences, and how ethics and care should be at the center of every research inquiry. Ensuring feminist ethics, care, and reflexivity are practiced is crucial so that critical and meaningful representation ensues. Mechanisms such as informed consent forms, benefits and reciprocity, and privacy and confidentiality (Paredes-Canilao, 2002) were implemented to practice said principles. Additionally, analyzing the "everyday accounts" of Filipino mothers working in the gig economy means understanding their feeling of frustration caused by barriers in the freelancing world, and their proposed solutions into existing theoretical knowledge (Doucet & Mauthner, 2002).

As someone who has worked in the gig economy for the past five years, my experiences have also informed the framing of this study and the conclusions and thematic analyses formed from the gathered data. Working with different clients and on different projects, I have experienced varied forms of freelance work such as transcribing, content writing, proofreading, editing, lay outing, data entry, social media management, website maintenance, and other forms of microwork. Most clients or employers would give me a myriad of microwork, or "fractured form of work in which complex tasks or projects are broken down into extremely small tasks" (Webster, 2016, p. 57). Working arrangements are usually the same: no contracts established between employee and employer or service provider and client; freelancers have a flexible working schedule as their work is often deliverable-based and rarely time-sensitive; freelancers are responsible for their own laptop and internet connection; freelancers are given no social protection (e.g., Philhealth, HMO); holidays and vacation leaves are complicated discussions; and we are rarely given any form of salary increase or bonus. I have been working with one "client" for the past three years now, but they still view me as a freelancer regardless of the regular number of working hours and work that I do. In all the businesses that I worked with, there would always be Filipino mothers. You would either hear an infant crying in the background or mothers excusing themselves to do their reproductive duties. These myriads of experiences have shaped my motivation in conducting this kind of study, as there appeared to be patterned challenges and barriers in their work and home life.

Understandably, my experiences do not represent nor generalize the whole experience of all Filipino women working in the gig economy. My social positionality in the gig economy, vis-a-vis inviting Filipino mother research participants from the businesses that I worked for, ethical considerations may be possibly raised. Hence, questions about positionality, privilege, and epistemology should be answered. Primarily, my own experiences in the freelancing world may affect how I make sense of the lived realities of the research participants. Minimizing this issue entails "participating in an ethical model of responsibility," which was proposed by Margaret Urban Walker (as cited in Birch & Miller, 2002). Throughout the data gathering activities, I ensured that I confirmed my understanding of the shared experiences with the participants themselves. For instance, when making sense of how they viewed the "flexible" nature of freelance work, I confirmed with them how they felt when trying to balance taking care of their newborn baby while working on their freelancing deliverables at the same time, by asking what their usual schedule was and what were its mental and physical implications on their bodies. My social positionality as a freelancer and a researcher may have contributed to the research process as it gave me epistemic privilege to note down in-depth observations of the power relations surrounding the participants' roles as mothers, freelancer workers, and community managers across various social institutions such as the state, market, community, and family. As someone used to the "bulimic" and capitalistic

gig economy, knowledge on cutthroat process has been very helpful in giving me insight to make sense of its harmful systemic patterns on women, in terms of working conditions, and its (re) perpetuation of the gender division of labor. Listening to the stories and lived realities of Filipino mothers doing freelance work allowed me to reflexively think about the roots and depths of the impact of the gig economy on women's subordinated and marginalized position.

Findings and Discussion

This section of the study will first discuss four (4) key informants' everyday accounts and their lives as freelancers, which will highlight their triple roles as mothers, freelancers, and community managers. Recurring themes from these are also surfaced, such as the challenges and opportunities they have found in online freelancing jobs, and the practical gender needs and strategic gender needs that arose from the intertwined adversities they face as freelancing mothers. This is followed by data obtained from the focus group discussion that was used to validate freelance moms' collective struggles and needs and inform some of the analyses. In the following narratives, the real names of the participants were changed to ensure their right to privacy and confidentiality. It is worth noting that aliases were used in presenting the narratives of all the research participants

Participants' Narratives

Tin, 24. At the time of the interview, Tin was currently living in Singapore with her 11-month-old baby, and her Singaporean-Malaysian husband and his parents. Her household consisted of six (6) people: herself, the baby, her husband, her husband's mother, father, and sister. Tin currently was working as a content writer for a content mill website business, which was owned by a Caucasian Canadian man. In this job, she researched assigned topics (e.g., topics such as VPN software, online ticketing services, etc.) and wrote content articles, which were posted on their website. Her content writing job was her first freelancing job and, at the time of writing, she had been working for the business for six (6) months.

Since she had just moved to Singapore a couple weeks prior to the COVID-19 quarantine, she expressed feeling isolated as she barely had enough time to make friends. She mostly stayed at home to take care of the baby, do some household chores, and do some work. Tin summarized that she did about four to five hours of household chores, four to five hours dedicated to the baby, three to five hours of research and writing for her online job daily, and about four to five hours of volunteer work on the weekends.

Tin would start out her day by waking up at 5:00 AM to feed her baby, have some breakfast, and do some daily prayers. Come 8:00 AM, she played with her baby to tire him out and to avoid any tantrums. As the baby was playing, Tin then did the laundry, prepared the baby's food, and bathed the baby. After two hours of tiring the baby out through some playing, she did some work while the baby slept—which she admitted was a "hit or miss" event, as there were times where the baby could not fall asleep. Then she would clean up the baby's toys two hours before lunch and do some "me" time for the next hour or so. Her "me" time comprised of doing a bit of her online work, DIY projects for kids, and other personal tasks. Once the baby would wake up by 11:00 AM or so, the process repeated, Tin entertained him, cleaned up after him, and put him to sleep. This repeated around 3:00, 5:00, and 7:00 PM—a common struggle, she stated, that new mothers face. During those time increments, she usually had no time to do her online work as she entertained and took

care of the baby. As soon as the baby slept at 8:00 PM, she would then go straight to writing and researching articles until 12:00 midnight. Then the cycle would repeat the next day. During the weekends, she dedicated about four to five hours volunteering for church—managing and leading online gatherings. In terms of household chores, Tin said that everyone had their assigned roles, such as her in-laws cleaning the toilet and floor on some days, her mother-in-law doing most of the cooking, her sister-in-law occasionally pitching in the cooking, and her husband vacuuming on rare days. While she was doing some volunteer work, usually her in-laws would take care of the baby.

Tin and her family were also undergoing the brunt of the pandemic's economic standstill. Her husband was forced to take unpaid leaves in the laundry service company he was working for, and her in-laws were already past the working age—meaning to say that they virtually had little to no means of income. Tin took it upon herself to get an online freelancing job to make sure that she could help the family financially because she said that she "felt guilty kasi walang natutulong sa bahay" (I am not able to help with anything in the house). After a week of looking for an online job, she was able to swiftly get a writing and researching gig as a Content Writer. Working before as a university instructor, she explained how an online job had quite a different working environment than her previous job, namely, work flexibility and no more "hellish" commuting. But when it came to the challenges, her first concern was with the compensation. She felt like she was "exploited" because her current rate for writing and researching was incredibly low. Tin added that the company's meticulous and strict standards for research were too much for such a low pay. She stated that she felt like she was "dying with too much research." When asked if she had attempted to negotiate her pay, she explained that she felt like she was still a newbie and did not have the right to ask for such things. Regardless of being an academic researcher and university instructor in her previous job, in this new working environment, she still felt like a novice and even questioned her own "worth." In addition to such financial concerns, she was also worried about the sustainability of the freelancing gig and the lack of insurance—leading to her questioning if the whole writing gig was even worth it, given how tiring it can get. Furthermore, she could not ask anyone about this as she felt like the online work setting tends to isolate employees. Compared to the traditional work setting where you could rely on a colleague, she said that this usual support system was absent in her current working environment.

When asked how she balances being a mother, writer, and a volunteer, she answered that "every day is a struggle." Handling a newborn baby who was then entering the "separation anxiety" stage, she expressed how she was having a hard time trying to balance her job, some of the care work, and volunteering—although the latter she considers her "me time." Her in-laws, most especially her mother-in-law, would do some of the household chores on some days, which would help lessen the burden to a certain extent. But when it came to taking care of the baby, it was her primary responsibility. She said that at this point, "as sad as it sounds, I have come into (sic) terms that I would always be tired"; that as a mother, this was and is the norm. She added that she only ever asked for her husband's help in taking care of the baby whenever she felt extremely overwhelmed. Even if he was unoccupied throughout the quarantine period, she explained that as a "default parent" she still tasked herself to be the "first responder" to her baby's needs. This was also the same reason why she rarely asked for her husband's help and that she was thankful that he was at least "willing" to play with the baby for a short while she took a quick nap. She expressed that it would be nice if he could play with the baby a little bit more instead of just watching TV, but she says that all it takes is a little bit of communication to resolve this issue. It appeared that, although

freelancing has been helpful in earning a bit of income for their family, Tin still found it difficult to balance her role as a new mother, online content writer, and church leader.

Lily, 28. Lily was living with her parents and 11-month-old baby in Metro Manila at the time of the interview. Lily had yet to marry her partner, who also lived in Metro Manila, as they were still saving up for their wedding and their own house. At the time, she was working in the same content writing job as Tin, owned by the same white Canadian man. This content writing job was her first freelance work, and she had been working for them for over seven months.
Similar to Tin's case, Lily's day was mostly filled with taking care of the baby and working—she added that it was hard to work, as her baby would always throw tantrums due separation anxiety. Her day was usually comprised of caring for her baby (i.e., 2:00 to 4:00 AM, 5:30 to 6:00 AM, 10:00 AM to 12:00 NN, 3:00 to 4:00 PM, and 6:00 to 8:00 PM) and working in between up until 11:00 PM. Sometimes her schedule was not as clear cut because having two jobs—her online freelancing job and remote corporate job—meant having multiple meetings in a day. Fortunately, majority of the household chores were done by her parents, so she primarily used 50% of her time taking care of the baby, 40% on work, and 10% on resting. She expressed that she was grateful for her parents taking on some of the housework, but she still carried the load of taking care of her newborn baby while juggling it with two jobs. She shared that since her partner lived separately from her, he rarely took care of their child.

Lily was forced to look for an online job during the first few months of the COVID-19 lockdown. Since she was working in the sales department of her company, quarantine restrictions resulted in loss of clients and declining sales; in effect, her salary was reduced, and she lost her usual financial benefits such as sales commissions and bonuses. In addition, her aunt died due to the virus, and they had to handle some of the costs—she explained that it was an emotionally and mentally challenging time. Upon venturing into the online freelancing world, she explained how difficult it was to look for her first gig as online job platforms were filled with various job postings about different forms of microwork (e.g., audio editing, color grading, answering emails, etc.). Aside from the overwhelming structure of the online platform, she said that it was because most of these job postings required a skill set that she was not familiar with, such as SEO writing or social media management. Luckily, she was able to secure a position as a Content Writer and wrote enough articles to somewhat substitute for the loss of income and additional costs, such as emergency costs and the baby's vaccines (which amounted to about PhP10,000.00). Lily was quite happy with the extra income and new skills learned, but she explained that she felt like she had no time to rest and that the "work was never-ending." As her line of online work comprised of multiple deadlines, she stated that the mental load of having to remember them was mentally and emotionally taxing. But her supervisors were somewhat flexible when it came to the deadlines, as compared to her corporate job. When it came to the work environment, she stated that she had a hard time adjusting because she did not have the usual support system that she could tap into in case shehad any questions about the job—on her end, there seemed to be this barrier when it came to communicating, which left the impression that she had no choice but to accept the company's working conditions. She also added that men freelancers adjusted to the gig economy more effortlessly than women due to how easy it was for them to communicate with employers. She explained that her partner, who was also working as an online freelancer, had this confidence in speaking casually with his employers. When she compared it to her own experience, despite having a master's degree in communications, she explained that it was difficult for her to talk to her employer because she felt like being "a newbie" meant just following instructions and not questioning anything. Another issue she also had with the job was the pay and insurance, she felt like the pay was too low for the work demanded (e.g.,

meticulous research, annotations, etc.) and that it was static (i.e., no pay increases, bonuses, and other financial benefits). This proved to be a challenge on her end as she explained that being on the computer all day could pose some physical challenges as well, such as eye strain and back pains. Although not entirely different from the effects of any other offline or online deskwork, Lily shared that having to do two jobs meant that she spent twice the hours at her desk and computer, which worsened the physical toll on her body.

When asked how she managed to balance all her roles, she replied that she merely accepted the situation and strongly believed in "come what may." To help cope with the mental load, she stated that she would set boundaries and deadlines and sticks to them as much as possible (e.g., not working on the weekends). Since her partner lived in his parents' house, she would usually just ask for her own parents' help in cases where she was overwhelmed. At the time of the interview, Lily and her partner were saving up so they could get their own house. Since she relied on her parents when it came to household chores, she expressed her concern on how she would be able to handle the reproductive work once they become independent. But in the end, she expressed that she would "just have to live with it."

Freya, 34. Freya lived in Metro Manila, with her husband and newborn baby. Her parents and in-laws all lived in Mindanao, so their care support system was quite limited compared with the other interviewees. At that time, Freya was working as a content writer in the same business as Tin and Lily, and for another business, which she did not directly identify. Freya also previously did freelance work for some Philippine development projects and research projects during her pregnancy. In these projects, she still worked with a Philippine team and management. She shared that the working environment was different as the locally based setup offered a more tight-knit community and work culture.

Freya would wake up every day at 7:00 AM to have breakfast and clean up the house. She would spend her mornings taking care of her baby, and her afternoons (roughly around five hours) on doing some consultancy and writing work. By 5:00 PM, she would prepare dinner and waits for her husband to arrive. From 6:00 to 9:00 PM, she spent time working and studying new online freelancing skills, and then at around 10:00 PM, she would sleep. She stated that her baby was then going through the "clingy" phase, so she would try to clean the house as quickly as possible and prepare the things her baby needed (e.g., milk) once she woke up. She explained that, although it was difficult at first, she was able to establish a daily rhythm. She also spent some of her working hours and weekends on volunteer work. She would constantly cook up projects with her former colleagues, such as teaching online tutoring classes for students and fundraising projects for certain communities. She explained that it came so naturally to her because "nasa puso ko ang pagtulong" (helping is at the core of my heart).

Compared to the first two mothers, Freya started working online months before the pandemic. Prior to her online job, right after graduating college, Freya worked in the development sector and was extremely passionate in helping her organization's partner communities—even going as far as working overtime on most nights and on the weekends. Her husband, although supportive of her passion throughout the years (e.g., going back and forth from Bulacan to Manila to adjust to her new working station), expressed that she barely had time for him and their plans to form a family. He added that she was always concerned about the problems of others rather than theirs. They had been married for eight years and just had their first baby in their eighth year. Hearing her

husband's reasoning, she explained that she felt like she was being "unfair" to her family. She added that she needed to balance her priorities as she had already given a good eight years of her life to development work. After months of deciding and praying, she finally decided to resign and say her goodbyes to the community—whom she treated like her own family.

In the first few months of just being at home, Freya was fine as she was still able to talk to the community she worked with every now and then. But after another month or so, she expressed feelings of emptiness and losing her self-worth. She stated that, since she had always been an achiever, she felt like her self-worth was lessening. Simply put, she did not want to be stuck as a housewife her whole life. So, she decided to look for an online gig. There, she stumbled upon a writing job and got the job immediately. She said that through online gigs and freelancing jobs, she was able to find this sense of freedom and self-worth. She eventually had multiple gigs, such as being a freelance writer for two different clients, and a consultant to another NGO. She explained that, although there were multiple benefits to freelancing, such as having extra income for expenses such as utility bills, vaccines, and others, however, it was extremely tiring. She felt like there was no boundary between her work and home life. She expressed that after a while, she realized that there was no difference between working a full-time job with multiple freelancing gigs since she still spent her days working and beating deadlines. So, she decided to take a step back and lessen the work and some of the volunteering jobs she was doing. Admittedly, even after lessening the number of activities she was involved in, she still continued volunteering for the communities she had worked with in the past. The adjustment to freelancing and being a new mother was gradual but also difficult on her end. The hardest part for her was parting with the community she treated like family. In addition to this, she felt like being at home meant losing her "creative juices." She would question herself multiple times about being a stay-at-home mom and wife, "Tama ba ang desisyon ko?" (Did I make the right choice?), and she would always just pray and get her confirmation from her prayers. It appeared that Freya's decision to enter freelance work was largely influened by her motherhood, as she felt like this was the best compromise that she could have with her husband in terms of building their family while still using her "creative juices." The intersections of her identities as a mother and a freelancer showed that the promise of a "gig economy" to offer alternative working conditions merely adheres to the gender division of labor, wherein the wife works at home to continue her reproductive work.

Another adjustment they had was the loss of income. Since she had been making up to 50% of their overall income, it was a huge blow on their finances. She stated that they were still coping with this loss and adjusting their budget. Since the online environment was completely different when it came to communicating, she also had trouble with not being able to face people directly and having no rigid company structure as compared to her past job. She complained that the pay was way below her job description and that it was difficult to budget things as the pay completely depended on the work you put in—she expressed that in freelancing, "walang gawa, walang sahod" (no work, no pay). This proved to be difficult as she had multiple burdens and had no insurance in case she got sick from overworking, nor did she have any financial benefits such as bonuses.

When asked how she was able to cope with all the issues she faced in her job, home, and volunteer work, she answered that it was all about establishing a rhythm. It was important to "establish a pattern" and know one's boundaries. Since her parents and her in-laws were all in Mindanao, they were all alone in Manila, so they only had themselves to rely on. But during the pandemic, they were able to form connections with their neighbors (e.g., sharing food and other supplies) so some

of them would take care of her baby whenever she had a tight deadline. In addition, her husband also knew when she was overwhelmed and would volunteer to take care of the baby's needs. Her husband also took care of the baby on the weekends and would do some of the household chores every now and then, such as doing the laundry. According to her, proper communication with her husband was one of the ways she balanced her multiple burdens, and another way was to check if her potential gigs were "a waste of time or opportunity to be productive."

Ava, 34. Ava was living with her parents, her brother, and eleven-year-old son in the Province of Rizal during the data gathering process. Her husband was working as a seafarer and his routes were mostly outside of the Philippines; she shared that her husband would usually be gone for months on end and would only return for a month or two before being deployed again. Ava worked two freelance jobs, as a virtual assistant for a young Vietnamese man living in Australia and a customer service representative for a Caucasian man living in America. As a virtual assistant, she usually did different forms of microwork such as coordinating meetings, taking notes, responding to emails, and ad-hoc creative tasks such as social media management, graphic designing, and human resource management. As a customer service representative, she essentially worked for a virtual BPO where the freelancers responded to hundreds of customer service concerns and inquiries.

Since her parents handled all the household chores, Ava spent a large chunk of her time working and taking care of her son. When asked to divide her time, she expressed that she probably spent around 70% of her time on working, 10% on her son and his modules, 10% on household chores, and 10% on resting. She stated that she was working as much as she could because she was saving up for a house—her partner, who was working as a seafarer, was also doing the same. She said that although her schedule seemed clear cut, in between her breaks, she would also do some cleaning around the house. She expressed that it bothered her to see the house messy and since she had an eleven-year-old son, she would inevitably keep cleaning after him during her breaks. Prior to the pandemic, on her weekends, she would always do some volunteer work in the church, including organizing outreach programs and managing fundraising projects.

Ava started her freelancing career back in 2016 due to her friends who were already exploring the field as early as 2011. When she first heard about the gig economy, since it was still relatively an unknown field, she decided that it was too much of a gamble. So, she decided to work in a call center company for a couple of years instead. But eventually, she got sick and tired of the commute as living in Rizal and traveling to Manila was too much for her physical and mental health. Thus, she went back to her province. As there were no nearby BPOs in her province, she decided to finally venture into online freelancing jobs. Eventually, she found work as a customer service representative. She stated that it felt like a large burden was lifted off her shoulders when she started working online since she no longer had to spend time commuting; in extension, getting physically and mentally drained from the commute alone. In addition, she felt like she finally had control over her time as compared to a regular 9-to-5 job. Ava admitted that she experienced difficulties in transitioning to online jobs such as lacking the experience stated on common online job boards (e.g., being a virtual assistant or graphic designer). She said that, while analyzing the descriptions on the different job boards (even ones related to customer service), she was 50% to 60% unsure of what they meant. But after getting the hang of it, she managed to find a job after a week or two. The first obstacle she came across was the medium of communication. Since the company's communication system was a bit vague or different compared with the communication systems in the Philippines, she had a difficult time adjusting. She mostly had difficulty with the company structure as it was not clear

whom she could talk with to complete some of her tasks (e.g., answering unique inquiries in the customer service). She did not know who to talk to and when. Moreover, she expressed that she also struggled with the remote working environment. Compared with the traditional job setting, she explained that she had no way to vent out her frustrations because remote work commonly meant limited communication with other employees.

Ava's work as a customer service representative comprised of offering email support to hundreds of customers every single day. She said that, since she was working for a big company, there were 200 of them working in the customer service team—all of whom were women. Her second job consisted of doing multiple roles ranging from customer service to social media management to human resources management. She expressed that, although the pay was relatively less (around PhP12,000.00 for a full-time job) and the job description was more demanding than her other job, she still favored the second job because it was more creatively challenging and fulfilling. She mentioned that this was also beneficial on her end as she was learning new skills common to the online gig economy, at the same time, improving her management skills for both customer service and human resource. But she expressed that these benefits came with a cost, such as the loss of financial stability (since there was no contract signing that took place), the wage gap between her and her white colleagues, and the lack of a friendly working environment. When asked how she managed to balance working and taking care of her son, she answered that it was all about discipline and building a sustainable work culture. She added that it was easier for her compared to other moms because she had her parents take care of most of the household chores.

Life as an Online Freelancer: Challenges, Opportunities, and Strategic and Practical Gender Needs

In this section, representatives from FHMoms were invited for the focus group discussion to validate certain issues and thematic findings in Filipino moms' challenges, opportunities, and strategic and practical gender needs in online freelancing. As mentioned, FHMoms is an organization dedicated to helping Filipina moms land online freelancing jobs and adjust to the work from home environment. The organization first started as a support group on Facebook, until eventually, their membership grew to 200,000; thus, resulting in the formation of their own online platform (e.g., website and Facebook presence) and reputation (e.g., connection with national government agencies and INGOs). They provided multiple programs and projects—some free, and some with a fee—to give support to their members, such as weekly support group meetings, online tutorials on in-demand freelancing skills, rent-to-own laptops, and many more. The following were the common themes found throughout the KII participants' narratives, as discussed with FHMoms' representatives. The themes that were identified were based on both the KIIs and FGD:

1. Sailing through Everyday Life (?): The Opportunities and Advantages Found in Freelancing for Filipino Mothers. In terms of the opportunities and advantages gained through online freelancing, all the KII participants stated that working from home was convenient and practical. They explained how the work from home set-up meant that they no longer had to go through the trouble of traffic, additional costs (e.g., commuting fee, food, etc.), and extra preparation (e.g., doing make-up, choosing their clothes, etc.)—stating that it helped them save time and money. They emphasized that such a set-up can be freeing for women as they now "control their own time" and are free from age-old issues such as the endless traffic in Metro Manila. Moreover, it was more practical than the typical 9-to-5 job as they could use the income for their utility bills

and baby expenses, such as their vaccines, diapers, and milk. Since freelancing gigs mostly focus on one type of job (e.g., writing, video editing, or email marketing) or a series of small and simple tasks (e.g., data entry, note taking, emailing), it was easy to do the online job alongside another job (either another gig or corporate). When concluding the importance of the set-up being convenient and practical, they all shared the sentiment that this made it easier for them to take care of their child and "balance" it with their work life. Since freelancing jobs are somewhat flexible, they could rearrange their schedule anytime they needed to. The representatives from FHMoms agreed and explained that this was the very reason why their organization was created to begin with. One of the focus group discussion participants shared that they used to work as a call center agent and then decided to move into the freelancing world to save time and money.

Consistent with the premises in the article by Milkman (2021), Filipino mothers appear to find ease in the online work set-up as it offers power over their own time. Through an online set-up, they could control their work schedule so as to not interfere with their caregiving responsibilities. Since women often experience time poverty in juggling their multiple roles and burdens, they find the flexible working environment of remote jobs appealing and convenient. In addition, as they are no longer slaves to the exhausting Manila commute and unnecessary strict 9-to-5 arrangements of corporate work, they can better organize their day based on their needs. In the case of most key informants, they could immediately take care of their newborn baby or children as they are in the same vicinity while not being reprimanded by employers. However, the mental load provided by such a flexible time schedule was another issue.

2. Juggling through Everyday life: Challenges, Anxieties, and Fears in Freelance Work. FHMoms explained that Filipino mothers often look for online freelancing jobs due to anxiety regarding their self-worth and confidence. Freya felt this way as she spent a good eight years of her life dedicated to development work and her community. She said that, after deciding to become a full-time housewife, she felt like she was losing her self-worth and creative juices. FHMoms explained that women who were full-time corporate employees felt that being a housewife does not entail the same "creativity" nor "productivity." Across all the interviews, it was apparent that being a first-time mother or a mother in general was one of the major driving factors as to why the participants chose to stay at home, but the pandemic (such as in the case of Lily) and the exhausting working conditions in urban areas (e.g., long commute and added costs) also affected this decision. Soon after, the trigger of losing their "self esteem" and income resulted in them acquiring online gigs to fill in such gaps. And when they did find an online job in the gig economy, they experienced a sense of "enlightenment" and "source of hope." Through their online support groups, they would often encourage new freelancing mothers as they maneuvered through online platforms while balancing their roles as moms.

Upon finding her first online gig, Freya stated that she had this desire to explore the gig economy, thus encouraging her to take up some online classes to develop other skills, such as web designing and social media management. Ava felt the same way, and that was why she was willing to take on a full-time job with a measly pay of PhP12,000.00 to acquire further training on new freelancing skills. Indeed, freelancing work has the potential to provide spaces for women to deepen their knowledge and strengthen their technical skills in new technologies and innovative niche markets. However, the working conditions surrounding their endeavour to learn more may leave them vulnerable to exploitation. Most of the participants shared that they felt like they were being paid way below their job description and experience, and this pay may even be threatened

because of the gig economy's "no work, no pay" set-up and lack of social benefits. Freya added that she feared getting sick because not only did it mean that she had no pay, but she might fall into debt because she had no insurance nor other safety nets. It appeared that to them, these working conditions were a relatively acceptable trade-off as they were able to take care of their children and beat the cost (in time and money) of working in Metro Manila. These circumstances align with Jorge et al.'s (2022) conclusion, that in the context of post-austerity and precarity, Filipino mothers working in the gig economy are pushed to reconcile their motherhood and careers. Further, as expressed by Milkman et al. (2021), "this type of work arrangement provides a neoliberal solution to work-family conflict, enabling women to perform paid work while still prioritizing family and caregiving" (p. 358).

In terms of the specific challenges and hardships with being an online freelancer, three main common themes appeared from the interviews:

a. Struggle with Time: Filipino Mothers' Time Poverty in Balancing their Multiple Roles and Responsibilities. The participants had difficulty in terms of balancing and establishing boundaries between their work life and private life, thus affecting them emotionally and mentally. Further, they lacked the usual communication support system that helps make work smoother. With regard to the first challenge, the participants explained that the flexibility of their working schedule meant difficulties in establishing boundaries between their work and personal space. Lily explained that she felt overwhelmed with her two jobs and her baby, she expressed that "parang walang pahinga sa freelance" (there is no rest in freelancing) because of how the thought of the job stays in her mind even as she rests or sleeps. She added that it was just one deadline after another and it was extremely stressful, especially since she had an 11-month-old baby. All of the participants shared that they felt like they were just moving constantly the whole day as they had to continuously work, take care of their children, and in some cases, fit in their volunteer work. Almost all of them barely shared having their own recreational time. Since the work-from-home environment entails mixing one's work and home space, the participants stated that it was extremely difficult to distinguish their work hours from their child rearing time, let alone their personal time. But eventually, they shared that they had established a certain rhythm to manage the boundaries. The representatives from FHMoms agreed with this problem personally and admitted that this was extremely common, especially for their new members. They highlighted that it was stressful especially for new mothers, but all their members in general still felt the time poverty when it came to balancing their work and all of their family members' needs. They explained that "*'pag flexible yung trabaho…nawawala yung line*" (if the job is flexible, the boundaries disappear) as it was hard to separate your online job when you juggle your tasks throughout the day (e.g., taking care of the baby in the afternoon and doing your gig at night or doing your online gig in between household chores). Online freelancing mothers are constantly hounded by the mental load of their online gig compared to a traditional corporate job where they can leave their work (and thoughts surrounding it) after they clock-out. As stated by Powell & Craig (2015), time spent on unpaid carework, leisure, and remote work are gendered. As in Lily's case, she chose to do online work to control the time involved in her reproductive work (i.e., time to take care of her newborn baby) and productive work, while her husband did online work to control the time involved in his productive work and recreational time (Powell & Craig, 2015).

b. Struggle with Working Conditions and Social Benefits: Filipino Mother's Lack of Financial Security and Work Support Systems. Filipino mothers in the gig economy lack the common financial benefits and social security of a regular job (e.g., reasonable and stable pay, paid leaves, or health insurance). Most of the participants explained that having gigs meant not having the financial stability that regular employment offers. In gig work, since freelancers are mostly hired for short-term projects or given microwork, they are often paid through a "no work, no pay" scheme. This payment arrangement requires that they should submit their deliverables (e.g., research article, video, etc.) before they could get paid. In addition, since freelancers are viewed as "service providers" rather than employees, they are not provided social safety nets such as healthcare. For the participants, regular employment ensures a steady income and social security, such as having paid leaves, healthcare, and support systems. While, in the gig economy, they shared that they needed to work even on sick days or else they would lose one of their main sources of income. Since most of them did not sign any contracts, they needed to show up to work consistently or they could get retrenched any time. In addition to this, it was not clear what their employment really was because, although they were freelancers, their job descriptions were similar to those of full-time employees. For instance, participants working in content writing and customer service shared that they needed to achieve their prescribed quotas (e.g., at least three articles in a week or 100 customer concerns answered in a day). In addition, some were even required to log in at specific times and submit timesheets of the work that they had accomplished. It appeared that the restrictions imposed on so-called "clients" appeared to be quite similar to regular employment. Some of them found the aforementioned problems the main reason they wanted to quit. Given their low pay, they felt like the working conditions were not worth the hassle or risk. Since three out of the four participants were working as writers, they claimed that their pay was below the average payment for writers (e.g., PhP2.00/word).

They also struggled with not having a deeper connection with workmates or colleagues. They expressed that this was challenging for them because they had no one to ask in case they stumbled upon a problem in their job or had grievances with the company's management. Ava added that in a culturally diverse online work environment, it was hard to communicate and collaborate with colleagues for projects—she expressed that it was quite noticeable how her Australian boss was more comfortable and casual with other Australian employees compared with her. Collaboration, Ava shared, was crucial in her line of work as she worked creative tasks such as producing social media content, increasing social media engagement, and drafting marketing materials such as newsletters and online campaigns. Usually, these are tasks that require brainstorming and repetition of previous content, success stories, and client testimonies—all of which can be acquired from other departments in their company. Since there was no contract to begin with and they had trouble interacting with their bosses, it was hard for these freelancers to negotiate their salary or ask for salary increases. As stated in Gandini et al. (2017), collaborative work deeply characterizes the jobs of freelancers as they are usually part of bigger projects which their microwork is part of, and deep connections and collaboration with clients or management can connect them with more or better gigs. For most of the participants, collaboration would enable them to understand their microwork better as sometimes these forms of work require deeper technical knowledge on the subject matter (e.g., audio editing, transcribing, etc.).

c. Struggle with Juggling Life: Filipino Mothers' Coping Mechanisms and the Impact of Unpaid Care and Domestic Work. In terms of coping with their multiple challenges, the emerging theme among the interviewees was that they would usually just go with the flow and establish

a certain rhythm to make sure that they could do all their tasks. They would set certain hours dedicated to each task, although all of them were willing to bend their schedule in case their child needed them. In cases where they felt overwhelmed, they explained that that was the only time they would directly ask help from their husbands or other close family members and friends. It seemed like they viewed asking for help as a last resort and that it was something that they would "rarely do." This may have been because they felt that the responsibility of child rearing is theirs to bear alone, as was very evident in Tin and Freya's cases. FHMoms agreed with this sentiment as even in their own personal lives, they still go through the same struggles and cope through support groups. They agreed with the participants that it was a learning experience; that the challenge of having to balance motherhood along with the flexible and boundary-less nature of online jobs was something that mothers who are freelancers eventually "overcome." In addition, they expressed that being able to adjust to such hardships and said working conditions is what makes Filipinos "good workers." However, this form of working arrangement can, in fact, contribute to the deeper entrenchment of the gender division of labor (Kalleburg & Dunn, 2016), as their triple roles as mothers, workers, and community managers are (re)perpetuated across the social institutions they are involved in. In this scenario, they have no choice but to sink into the neoliberal ethos that aims to exploit their need to reconcile their work and their motherhood (Milkman et al., 2021).

3. Practical and Strategic Gender Needs of Online Freelancing Filipino Mothers. In the following section, the practical gender needs and strategic gender needs that surfaced during the interviews and focus group discussion were identified. As Moser emphasized (March et al., 2005), these gender-differentiated identified needs can help develop interventions to uplift the current situation and transform social relations of online freelancing Filipino mothers towards gender justice and equality.

Table 1. *Practical and Strategic Gender Needs of Online Freelancing Filipino Mothers*

Practical Gender Needs	Strategic Gender Needs
Maternity leave and benefits; Health benefits and insurance (e.g., HMO, SSS, PhilHealth, etc.); Financial benefits (e.g., 13th month pay, severance pay, yearly increase, commissions, etc.); Operational needs and costs (e.g., laptop, WiFi)	Reinforcement of women workers' rights in the gig economy
Access to information and services: knowledge on the gig economy (e.g., difference of freelancer vs contractor vs employee); confidence to directly communicate with their employers about salary or working conditions; training and skill building in relation to the online gig economy	Control over personal work decision-making, such as accessing decent employment and better working conditions
Redistribution of care work	State recognition that care and domestic work should be everybody's responsibilities rather than women's alone

In sorting through their struggles, challenges, and direct statements, I have attempted to identify their practical and strategic gender needs—as presented in Table 1. In terms of their first practical gender need, the rights of women workers were emphasized, such as maternity leave and

benefits; health benefits and insurance (e.g., HMO, SSS, PhilHealth, etc.); financial benefits (e.g., 13th month pay, severance pay, yearly increase, commissions, etc.); and operational needs and costs (e.g., laptop, WiFi). Since they no longer had the same benefits that regular employment offers, they explained that it was hard to maintain the insurance costs on their own. They highlighted that this was important as it ensures their safety and the availability of funds in case of any emergencies—and as mothers, it was critical for them to have financial and health insurance as they now have dependents. The participants also expressed that working mothers need maternity leave and benefits. As most of them had their babies prior to working online, they expressed that they could not imagine giving birth in a hospital while working as a freelancer, because they adamantly shared that the costs of giving birth cannot be sustained by a freelancer's wage. Since freelancers are usually paid by the hour or based on the output they produce, childbirth and post-natal care would mean added costs, no income flow, and potentially loss of their job. FHMoms added that, ideally, employers or clients should be kind enough to be considerate of a freelancer's pregnancy but instead it is the burden of the freelancer to be prepared for such situations. In addition, the immediate need for operational support such as laptops and WiFi is to ensure that the workers can do their work well. Some of the participants shared that their laptops were a bit old and their internet connection was slow, and upgrading one's laptop and internet connection could be quite costly. FHMoms agreed with this view but stated that mothers who plan to enter the freelancing world should prepare to handle their own financial needs and health benefits. FHMoms expressed that freelancers have multiple clients and do not work for each client exclusively—hence, said clients are not obligated to provide such benefits. FHMoms' answer was consistent even when notified about the participants' needed help with operational costs (e.g., laptop upgrades, internet, etc.). They explained that freelancers are merely service providers, and they are expected to have said resources before even rendering their services.

However, FHMoms' answer might have overlooked the fact that, even though some participants are referred to as "freelancers," their jobs are almost akin—if not equivalent—to a full-time job. Blurring the relationships between employer-employee and viewing them as clients and service providers can largely impede the establishment of their rights as women workers. In addition, the absence of contracts means that working conditions and deliverables are non-negotiable—and since there is no room for negotiation, the power asymmetry may be skewed towards the employer's side. The participants shared the same sentiment as they felt like they had no power nor right to negotiate with their employers at all. Since the gig economy is a relatively new field, women freelancers from the global south often take in stride what appears to be the "norm," while employers or "clients" from the global north often exploit this or take advantage of these forms of working conditions. For instance, when asked if they should be able to charge operational costs, Lily answered that, "I think freelancers like me can't really demand gadgets or internet allowance from the employer. Though it would be great, I just feel like if we demand a lot, they might outsource the job to someone else." She explained that, since they were outsourced for the job, it would be improper to ask as she felt that this might threaten her position in the company—which was definitely possible given her contract-less situation. Since she had been working for the company for more than seven months at that time and had a quota to meet, she could be considered as one of their in-house writers—which should have merited a raise of sorts. But with no room for negotiation, Lily could not ask for a raise nor negotiate her quota. Women freelancers may know their proper rate, including all these operational costs, but they still find it difficult to negotiate their pay given the power that their employers have over them.

Admittedly, some freelancers—especially those working as casual employees—enjoy the freedom of having no contracts as they can easily leave the job if needed. However, some of them might not be informed about the consequences of the lack of a legal document protecting their rights (e.g., getting paid on time, negotiating payment or working conditions, asking for leave, etc.). In line with this, reinforcing their rights as women freelancers is vital, especially in the case of blurry employee-employer relationships and responsibilities. It would also be strategic for mothers doing freelancing jobs to be empowered to negotiate and communicate with their employers. Given that most of them are quite new to the online gig world and were probably conditioned to just follow, being informed about their rights and empowering them to expect and demand those rights can help build their confidence whenever negotiating or communicating with clients or employers. The second issue that the interviewees faced was access to information and services. Primarily, their limited knowledge of the kinds of employment (e.g., freelancer vs contractor vs employee) may have contributed to their lack of confidence in negotiating for their rights as workers, aside from the fear of retrenchment or reprimand by their employers. They also found it difficult to maneuver through the gig economy, such as understanding the specific language of online job boards and in-demand skills, and finding good jobs. Since online job boards have different ways to refer to job descriptions (e.g., in digital marketing—use of certain software and key performance indicators like "click through rates" or "conversion rates"), it could be confusing for a beginner to navigate through the world of online jobs and find one that best fits their needs and situation. Additionally, the freelancing moms expressed finding difficulty in accessing training and skills-building resources related to the gig economy. They shared that holistic courses, especially ones that offer the necessary frameworks and networks, are quite pricey. In this scenario, knowledge on the gig economy, contracts, and different types of employment is crucial as this educates freelancers on their entitlements and their rights. Additionally, to prevent getting trapped in exploitative outsourced jobs, it would help if the mothers could understand the language used in online job boards, including the key words or job titles. Since the language or the way certain job descriptions might be phrased differently in the international scene (e.g., "writer" vs. "optimized writer"), new freelancers might have a hard time sorting through risky and reasonable jobs. While scanning through online job boards, some new freelancers might get enticed into a below minimum wage job that combines the jobs of four or five people—basically, comprising a whole team. Control over their personal work decision-making, such as accessing decent employment and better working conditions, is viewed as a strategic gender interest as this can help equalize asymmetrical power and social relations between employer and employee across the gig economy. Capacitating freelance workers with the necessary knowledge to negotiate their rights can bolster their ability to control their personal work decision-making. However, this strategic gender need can only be strengthened if the structures surrounding their ability to demand their rights are supportive. For instance, the Philippine government should fight for the rights of Filipino freelancers in the international community in order to encourage other governments to establish laws in hiring such workers.

Lastly, there is an immediate need to redistribute the care work that Filipino freelancing mothers carry. The interviewees expressed multiple times how they were mostly the ones responsible for taking care of their children and doing household chores. The constant state of "feeling tired" and "not having enough time" was consistent across all their responses, as they had to address not just their own needs but also those of all of their family members. In describing their schedules throughout the day, the constant back and forth between working and taking care of their children or housework was apparent. Even FHMoms recognized this reality as they, too, face the same difficulties in balancing their reproductive and productive roles. Attached to this reality is the never-

ending mental load accompanying each role and the tasks needed to be done. Redistributing care work to family members within the same household or to their husbands could help lessen these mothers' mental load. It was apparent that most of the participants' husbands would only help out in specific household tasks (e.g., washing the dishes, doing the laundry), and occasionally take care of the baby or child when the wife was tired. Aligned with the analyses in the articles by Jorge et al. (2022) and Milkman et al. (2021), freelance work appeared to just widen the unequal social relations of women and men in reproductive and productive work. The online gig working arrangements align with the neoliberal ethos maintaining the gender division of labor. Therefore, redistributing care work and, most importantly, stressing that care work is everybody's responsibility rather than the woman's alone can contribute to transforming these power asymmetries.

Conclusion

For both clients and freelancers, it is quite easy to get lost in the "flexible" advantage that online gig work offers. However, the ever-expanding definition of the "freelancer" label can lead to exploitation and marginalization of Filipino mothers. Although framed as a beneficial alternative for unemployed and underemployed Filipinos, it is worth noting that based on the experiences of Filipino mothers, contingent pay schemes only work effectively when employees have the power to influence negotiations or directly influence their wage and working conditions. In neoliberal crowdwork and online freelance platforms, it is apparent that companies are merely transferring the market's risk and costs to workers without any accountability (Peetz, 2019). As more and more Filipinos, especially mothers, are going into the online gig economy, it is mandatory to reassess the definition of what a freelancer is and to reignite the resolution to fight for their rights and for governments and businesses to answer their gender-differentiated needs. Continuing with the current direction of policy discourses and development of the gig economy, the gender division of labor will deepen and the influx of precarious, scarcely paid jobs in the global south will increase (Gandini et al,. 2017; Kalleberg & Dunn, 2016). The individualization of such work also results in dispersing not only tasks, but workers as well—which means that spaces to collectivize and unionize are scarce and inaccessible (Webster, 2016). In all the narratives shared in the interviews and the FGD, it was apparent that Filipino mothers in the gig economy are pushed to apply this neoliberal solution as the freelancing working arrangement allows them to reconcile their motherhood and work, and answer the work-family conflict. In return, insidious forms of unequal relations among women and men, and in their forms of labor, continue.

The freelancing world seems to be boxed into this simple image of a client and service provider relationship, but the reality appears to be more complicated than that. There are freelancers who are rigid with their rates and demand for their rights; there are those who are willing to bend their rates and working conditions to get the gig; there are those who are not aware that the work that they offer is way beyond their pay; and there are those who are well-aware of their rights but have no way to fight. In identifying the social positionality of Filipino mothers in the gig economy, understanding the intersections of their triple roles as mothers, workers, and community managers was crucial (March et al., 2005). As they struggle to juggle all these roles, it is apparent that the cost of time poverty, lack of social security, and exploitative working conditions outweigh the "benefit" of earning while staying at home.

Transcending international boundaries and blurring national rights, the online freelancing economy may become a place of exploitation and discrimination. For mothers who wish to enter

this world in hopes of regaining their self-esteem or gaining a bit of income, this poses an added challenge. Freelancing for mothers can be materially enabling on the one hand while being mentally and physically crippling on the other. In maneuvering through the double shift or their triple roles, freelancing finds its spot by blurring the lines and adding another burden to the mental load or physical toll of being a mother, wife, daughter, worker, or volunteer. And as freelancers seek to expand themselves as workers, they find that negotiating and communicating in such a new world and economy proves to be difficult. With the fear of losing their means of income or with viewing "freelancing" as synonymous to "dispensable," stability, sustainability, and safety for mothers doing freelancing or outsourced jobs are yet to be secured.

In the current discussion of gender and development, the plights and realities of Filipino mothers freelancing in the gig economy should be given attention. Their practical gender needs and strategic gender needs (March et al., 2005) should be responded to. Their need for maternity leave and benefits, social security, and funds for operational costs should be answered by governments and businesses in the gig economy. In short, to solve the root cause of this issue is to reinforce women workers' rights in the gig economy. To establish sustainable pathways to easily access information and services (e.g., knowledge on the gig economy, job boards, communication, negotiations), capacity and knowledge building initiatives should be prioritized. The participants emphasized how they felt like they were just going through the motions without really understanding what was happening. Thus, gaining knowledge on the developing on-demand economy would mean better access to and safeguarding of their rights. In essence, they should have control over their personal work decisions such as accessing decent employment and better working conditions. Redistributing care work is also equally important as this practical gender need can help lessen the mental load and physical burden that freelancing mothers carry in their everyday lives. However, it is only through recognition by the state and society that care and domestic work is everybody's responsibility that women can truly feel uplifted. In this fast-developing technological world, the gender digital gap involves not only technical knowledge and access to the internet, but extends into the large and invisibilized spaces of online work in which Filipino mothers are now involved. The false promise of online work to "perfectly balance" motherhood and productive work poses grave dangers through the deeper entrenchment of the gender division of labor, as well as unequal power relations between women and men, and between the global north and the global south.

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Intersectionality in the Experience of Select Filipino Drag Queens during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Jorelyn Martina R. Viray
Cailla Marie R. Castro
Gianna Clara U. Cabochan
Jannina Francesca A. Capco
Queen Mary G. Baladad

ABSTRACT

This article looks into the lived experience of three Filipino drag queens during the COVID-19 pandemic using intersectionality as a lens. Specifically, the study describes their drag engagements before and during the COVID-19 pandemic—how it affected their activity spaces, and how the challenges they experienced intersect to engender a unique experience of marginalization. The study also probes the unearthed potentials of drag as a transfigurative practice, procuring a nuanced understanding of the social reality of select Filipino drag queens by examining the interplay of their two identities (i.e., lived identity and transfigured identity). Research methods include semi-structured interviews. Findings show that a Filipino drag queen's duplex identity entails both expansive and constrictive effect on the activity spaces where these identities are performed. The drag queens' transfiguration into their drag persona also carries a transformative potential, provides them protective functions to some degree, and offers them access to parallel social structures that similarly provide protection and support.

Keywords: *COVID-19 pandemic, drag queens, gender expression, intersectionality, activity spaces, social identity*

Introduction

"When we're on stage, and it's time to perform, it's a completely different space. We feel so energized. The aging process stops and the world stops turning for a moment," says Ramon Busa, also known as "Monique Dela Rue"—an elderly drag queen from Home for the Golden Gays, Inc. Drag performance allows drag queens entry to a new world—their own activity space, such as online drag shows, gay bars, pride marches, parades, or pageants. It also provides the opportunity to provide for their families. As Reyes (2017) sums it up, "Drag is a living. It puts food on the table." This study particularly acknowledges how, as the COVID-19 pandemic spread throughout the country, drag queens found themselves as "entertainers without their own stage on which to perform, socialites without a bar to call their own—queens without a palace" (Barnett & Johnson, 2012, p. 52).

The marginal status of Filipino drag queens who perform drag for a living, as determined by their nonconformist gender expression and socioeconomic class, overlap and engender intersectional disempowerment, a unique experience of marginalization. Such disempowerment may be examined using what Kimberlé Crenshaw calls "intersectionality."

Intersectionality is a term conceptualized and introduced by Crenshaw, a pioneering scholar on Black feminist legal theory, civil rights, law, and racism. Crenshaw (1989, 1991) employs intersectionality as an analytical tool to account for the " intersecting axes of oppression" when examining the unique experiences of marginalization of Black women (Ceperiano et al., 2016, p.10). She asserts that the marginalized identities of Black women, specifically their social identities of being " a woman" and " of color," overlap and engender "intersectional disempowerment" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1245). Such intersectional disempowerment is characterized by the "interlocking [of] systems of oppression… [which thereby] form a matrix of domination that structures power and inequality" (Ceperiano et al., 2016). The challenges born out of intersectional disempowerment then coalesce to give rise to a unique experience of marginalization. Crenshaw asserts, however, that such marginalization is more than an aggregate of experiences brought about by sexism and racism. That is to say, the way that both forms of discrimination are experienced "cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately" (Crenshaw, 1991).

Crenshaw (1989) points out that legislators often employ "single-axis frameworks" in creating anti-discrimination policies, allowing for such policies to exclude Black women and serve only Black men or White women (p. 139-140). In her landmark publication, *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color* (1991), she problematizes contemporary feminist and antiracist discourses, arguing that identity politics fails to recognize "intragroup differences." Making a Black woman's marginalized identities an "either/or" proposition "relegates the identity of women of color to a location that resists telling" (p. 1242). The employment of intersectionality as an analytical framework then has the liberatory objective of not only exposing the intersectional issues that marginalized groups face but also denouncing the exclusionary nature of the frameworks used to analyze them—laying down the pathways for empowerment in challenging various forms of discrimination (e.g., racism, sexism, ageism, etc.)

Beyond Black feminist discourse, Crenshaw's departure from using single-axis frameworks in analyzing experiences of marginalization has reshaped discourse on the issues faced by marginalized groups globally.

This study examines the drag queens' experiences before and during the COVID-19 pandemic—how it affected their activity space and gender expression, and how the challenges they experience, borne by the intersection of their age, class, and gender compound to engender a unique experience of marginalization. Particularly it asks:

1. What is the unearthed potential of drag as a transfigurative practice?
2. How is the intersectional experience constructed when it is uniquely borne by the duplex identity of Filipino drag queens?
3. How did these manifest in their lived experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Essentially, we argue that the impracticability of dichotomizing social categorizations, in highlighting the compounded discrimination experienced by Filipino drag queens, is attributed to the novelty of their intersectional experience. While intersectionality is often employed across lived experiences in which the subject assumes one compounded identity—akin to how intersectionality is adopted to expose "perspectives of both privilege and victimhood" between Black and White women—the intersectional experiences of Filipino drag queens differ in that they teeter between

two identities (Carbado, 2013, p. 306). A Filipino drag queen assumes both her lived identity and her drag persona, and traverses between the lived realities of both as she commits to the repetitious and ritualistic practice of drag. She regularly undergoes a transfigurative process, one that enables an ephemeral transformation of her gender identity, gender role, and gender expression, and is often thereafter perceived and addressed as female as warranted by the drag rhetoric, whether within or beyond the bounds of the spaces for drag performances.

We then argue that drag as a transfigurative practice holds transformative potential not just during drag performance but also in material reality; more than the transformation of her gender, the art of drag transforms her social status—her extravagance, eccentricity, and glamor allowing for her to step into the world of the micro-celebrity. The transfigured identity and celebrified status embodied and maintained by the Filipino drag queen lend her a degree of social protection from the discrimination she often faces, as they allow her to access both people and resources she would not otherwise have access to should she not have embodied her drag persona.

We also argue, however, that the protective functions of drag are not felt nor sustained to the same degree among drag queens. The protective functions of drag are the most potent when amid the following conditions:

First, the qualities espoused by the drag queen's lived and transfigured identities expand the activity spaces she traverses. This condition constitutes the Filipino drag queen's access to capital that would enable her to attain a higher aesthetic value of her transfigured identity (i.e., drag persona), such that it grants her greater access to necessary capital, and eventually allow for greater performance variability. With greater performance variability, her conduit for personal and artistic expression expands, broadening her performance landscape to more enabling, professional environments or activity spaces. This is often practicable in spaces of employment, residence, or recreation in physical communities.

Second, the activity spaces navigated by the Filipino drag queen expand her degree of transfiguration, and transform her reality and living conditions—even as her lived identity. This condition means that the Filipino drag queen has the means to access digital spaces, as they bestow liberties to unbridled public expression. Such liberties allow for performance variability which sequentially allows for greater conformity to drag trends, greater marketability, greater potential for celebrification, increased social and financial capital, and a higher aesthetic value of transfigurative practice. A higher aesthetic value of transfigurative practice then keeps her socially protected. Such condition is often practicable in virtual communities.

Should either of the conditions be unsatisfied, the protective functions of drag are thwarted by exclusionary factors that can lower a drag queen's prospects for success—that is, strained relationships with superiors who determine potentials for status mobility in physical communities, or lack of social and financial capital needed to thrive in virtual communities. We then argue that there appears to be a dialectical relationship between the duplex identity of a Filipino drag queen and her activity spaces.

Lastly, we argue that the transformative potential of drag and its protective functions have allowed for drag queens to find protection in drag houses, which serve as families parallel to their biological families—who often offer conditional support, if they are not completely intolerant or

unaccepting of their SOGIE. A drag queen's parallel family (i.e., drag house), can serve protective functions during times of crisis and had proven to do so during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their parallel social structures also offered them ways to buffer their financial concerns through informal systems of money-lending within the community, collective efforts to assist their sisters who lack technological affordances to thrive on online platforms—such as the members of the Home for the Golden Gays, support for those who were locked down in unsupportive households, as well as aid to their sisters who were reportedly underserved by their local government units during the brunt of the economic crisis.

Review of Related Literature

Within and beyond the bounds of the spaces for drag performances, the drag rhetoric convinces the audience to perceive and address the performers as female. In turn, the term "drag queen" has been used interchangeably with *female impersonator*, and "drag" with *gender impersonation* (Nixon, 2009). Physically, drag queens create the illusion of having female anatomy. This is done through chest contouring, silicone breast forms, hip pads, butt pads, and tucking—where they are "push[ing] their testicles up into the inguinal canal, [and pushing] their penis back between their legs," and secure their genitals in place using duct tape or athletic tape (Nixon, 2009, p. 8). Drag queens paint their faces with makeup looks that exaggerate the arch of their brows, eyelashes, lips, and other facial features in varying degrees.

But drag goes beyond impersonation. Depending on their stylistic preferences, some drag queens maintain the illusion, while some "announce from the start that they are gay men, they talk in men's voices, they make jokes about their large clitorises and 'manginas' and complain that they are having 'testical difficulties' when the music does not work" (Taylor & Rupp, 2006, p. 13). Drag queens shatter the linkages with which society ties biological sexes and social genders together (Nixon, 2009). "Drag shows illuminate gay life for mainstream audiences and provide a space for the construction of collective identities that confront and rework gender and sexual boundaries" (Taylor et al., 2005, p. 105). Drag shows demonstrate how easy it is to parody "the performativity of gender and the slipperiness of sexual desire" (Taylor & Rupp, 2006, p. 13). In the collective participation of its constituents in interrogating the rigid concepts associated with gender, drag—as a queer space—is seen as a space for power and empowerment.

Furthermore, "Precisely because drag shows are entertaining, they attract people who might never otherwise be exposed to gay politics [...] Because the shows arouse visceral emotions, even sexual desires that fall outside people's usual sexual identities, they have the potential to make a real impact" (Taylor & Rupp, 2006, pp. 16-17). Snatch Game, for instance, is a segment in RuPaul's Drag Race, where the contestants impersonate celebrities and other figures in popular culture humorously. Andrews (2020) found that Snatch Game is arguably perfectly positioned to allow queens "to demonstrate glamour and comedy simultaneously: glamour purloined from the impersonated celebrity, and humor in the impersonation itself" (p. 418). These portrayals are similar to the concept of caricature—where both familiarity and exaggeration are used for the purpose of entertainment.

Caricature overlaps with camp in its predilection for hyperbole and distortions to criticize the status quo through humor. A caricature, like camp, is a "lie that tells the truth" (Core, 1999, as cited in Andrews, 2020, p. 418). Caricature capitalizes on comedy's ability to temporarily demonstrate

the superiority of the vulnerable over the elite by using distortions to humiliate and figuratively strip its "subject of power" (Stott, 2005, as cited in Andrews, 2020, p. 421). It is a subversive form in this sense. When the critical eye of caricature is directed at subjects lacking in social or political authority, particularly underprivileged groups or disempowered individuals, this effect is nullified. The production of celebrity, then, can be regarded as a repeated display of recognizable, unique pictures and features. That is to say, the celebrity caricature is known to be a reduced set of traits rather than a whole person to echo the status of celebrities in popular culture. Drag queens' ability to imitate, exploit, and subvert these characteristics through performative caricature opens an interpretation of Snatch Game performances, and other caricatures performed by drag queens, as "queerings of celebrity identity" (Andrews, 2020, p. 427). Thus, Andrews (2020) posits that "drag celebrity impersonation is a queer caricature since drag and camp are queer parodies of gender relations under heterosexist patriarchy" (p. 427).

Jean Baudrillard's (1981/1994) concept of simulation furthermore suggests that "people come to live in pure simulations, replications of reality that resemble it in all respects." That is to say, "real" processes have evolved to be like products that can be simulated through referential cues or symbols where patterns consequentially occur regardless of the intrinsic reality of the staged circumstance. Similar to how camp and caricature are characterized as a "lie that tells the truth," drag queens serve as simulations, or simulacra of what is "real" about gender and social status.

Baudrillard likens the concept of simulation to feigning illness, where the subject performing the simulation eventually develops the symptoms of the illness in the process. In a similar way, when one simulates or stages a crime, the subject will "stay close to the 'truth,' so as to test the reaction of the apparatus to a perfect simulation." However, "the web of artificial signs will be inextricably mixed up with real elements. [...] In brief, you will unwittingly find yourself immediately in the real, one of whose functions is to devour every attempt at simulation and reduce everything to some reality: that's exactly how the established order is, well before institutions and justice come into play." The article then argues that when drag queens embody, perform, or "simulate" celebrity, they reportedly access a celebrity-like status during the process.

The transfigurative practice of drag queens goes beyond the transformation of their gender presentation—it also entails the ephemeral transformation of their social status. By social status, we mean how individuals are revered in in-group and out-group settings, marked by their complementary interactions (Rege, 2006). Complementary interactions in broader and more varied social circles, especially when these reach the domains of the celebrity in the mainstream, then, imply greater access to social capital. This phenomenon is called "celebrification" (Feldman, 2020). While "the audience knows that what they see on stage are not really designer clothes or genuine diamond rings, that the elaborate updos are wigs and that the fingernails are press-ons," says Horowitz (2012), drag queens' performance of celebrity qualities and opulence, either by inspiration or impersonation, can ephemerally transform their social status.

The "reiterative performativity" (p. 124) of drag queens' transfigurative practice embodies ritualistic qualities (Jensen & Hapal, 2022). Rituals are completed across a trilateral process composed of "separation," "liminality," and "reintegration" (Van Gepp, 1960). Drag, as a performative practice in both sociological and theatrical senses, hauls its audience into a liminal performance space, compelling them to undergo a "suspension of disbelief, " such that they, whether willingly or unwillingly, perceive and address drag queens as their transfigured identity (Coleridge, 1817, as

cited in Tomko, 2007).

On one hand, Bourdieu (1984) posits that both cultural and economic capital is what constitutes *class*. It has two-dimensional aspects: the vertical and horizontal. The first dimension is determined by the sum of the drag queen's levels of economic and cultural capital. Hence, an individual's social position within the stratification system (i.e., social class) is directly correlated with their capital volume (i.e., a drag queen's number of followers, bookings, gigs, and amount of costume and makeup investments she has gained) (Bourdieu, 1984). On the other hand, Gans (1973) states that moral principles and aesthetic standards influence people's decisions. Rarely do choices happen just because of happenstance. Due to individual's different values and aesthetic standards, and consequently tastes and lifestyle choices, each has its own distinctive art, music, poetry, food, and so forth. Gans (1973) calls these groups of people "taste publics." All these groups of values and aesthetic standards—what Gans (1973) calls "taste cultures"—bring people together and constitute a group of people who make similar choices for similar reasons. Additionally, Bourdieu develops a similar concept to "taste cultures" and "taste publics." He developed a theoretical understanding of how different tastes and lifestyles emerge among various groups of people in his work on how social class interacts with habitus. *Habitus* is defined as "a subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 86). Cultural practices, in Bourdieu's view, reveal people's diverse preferences and lifestyles as well as the underlying class divisions (Swartz, 1997, as cited in Yuksek, 2016). This perspective focuses on Bourdieu's view of social class and *habitus* in his explanation of how people constitute different groupings and generate diverse practices, bringing forth his main goal, which is to demonstrate how culture and social structure correlate. For drag queens, this scale or spectrum of culture from highbrow, middlebrow, to lowbrow, is available for their disposal at any time. However, not all queens have access to the same capital volume to utilize in their drag careers or personas. Some queens only use capital (cultural or economic) that is necessary for their respective activity spaces (e.g., bars or fiestas).

Key Concepts

Drag as a Transfigurative Practice. Drag is a transfigurative practice that involves drag queens' embodiment of a new identity, i.e., their drag persona, through the use of the fashioned body; that is, the use of aesthetic apparatuses such as wigs, gowns, bodysuits, and shapewear. Drag queens use these apparatuses to "replicate" and "repeat" qualities society has associated with femininity to assume a female persona.

Duplex Identity. The interplay of the drag queens' duplex identity comprises their lived identity non-drag persona. A drag queen's lived identity is the distinct character or personality of a drag queen in their daily lives, outside their drag identity. Meanwhile, their drag persona is an identity created by the drag queen—who the drag queen becomes after she transfigures. Drag personas vary as they are typically influenced by single or multiple celebrities, or by their personal experiences (B. Barretto, personal communication, May 26, 2022). Filipino drag queens assume these two identities, identifying with the contexts and lived experiences of both. The term "transfigured identity" is used interchangeably with drag persona in the study.

Activity Spaces. Activity spaces constitute the "locations and spaces an individual interacts with as a result of their activities" (Gesler & Albert, 2000). While Smith et al. (2019) employ the

concept of activity spaces in that it is "organized around key anchor points" such as home and work locations and recreational spaces—all of which are limited geospatial considerations—we extend the concept of activity spaces from physical communities to virtual communities (i.e., the digital landscape). Both communities are circumscribed by discernible boundaries, in that physical communities are restricted by lines of demarcation and virtual communities are restricted by algorithms and echo chambers. Such circumscriptions shape a drag queen's subject position or "vantage point" to understanding, addressing, and influencing social reality (Torronen, 2001). That is, the physical or virtual communities navigated by a drag queen directly influence their experiences, opportunities, and access to various forms of capital.

Methodology

The study privileges the narratives of Rebel Heart, Lady Gagita, and Odessa Jones— Filipino drag queens who identify as gay, and who had been involved in the local drag scene prior to the pandemic. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to construct their narratives, from which situated knowledge on their experience of marginalization can be drawn. The narratives were bolstered by input from key informant interviews with industry and academic sources: Ramon Busa, the current president of the Home for the Golden Gays, Inc., and Brain Barretto, the Safe Spaces Coordinator and SOGIE Specialist of the Ateneo de Manila University Gender Hub.
The participants were encouraged to opt for aliases or pseudonyms, and were allowed to withhold any other identifying details to protect their privacy and dignity. Due to the restrictions brought about by the pandemic, data collection was done remotely. Access to recordings of communication with all research participants was restricted to the researchers, and the contents were treated with utmost confidentiality.

In examining intersectionality in the experiences of Filipino drag queens, the study gives primacy to the research subjects' interpretations of their own experiences. Specifically, it employs feminist objectivity, or what feminist scholar Donna Haraway propounds as situated knowledge. Situated knowledge is knowledge that is shaped by the cultural and historical context of its epistemic agent. It abides in a "doctrine of embodied objectivity," in that it argues that only subjugated standpoints can promise an "adequate, sustained, objective, [and] transforming account of the world"—in this case, the subjugated standpoint of a Filipino drag queen (Haraway, 1988, p. 584). Their narratives, whether of common or unique quality, were then categorized into themes of analysis that constitute the findings of the study.

Meet the Queens

This section will briefly narrate the accounts of the three drag queens who were interviewed, each of whom identified as bakla. The first segment opens with Rebel Heart, a budding drag queen during the pandemic, followed by Lady Gagita, a 28-year-old veteran drag queen. The section ends with Odessa Jones, an older veteran drag queen. All three drag queens prefer using the pronouns she/her for their drag personas. Meanwhile, Rebel Heart prefers using they/them for her lived identity, Lady Gagita prefers using he/him for her lived identity, and Odessa Jones does not have any specific pronoun preference for her lived identity.

All three drag queens expressed similar delight and passion for performing in front of live audiences before the pandemic. Each one's activity spaces may have differed from the others, but

they all actively participated in and enjoyed a robust and lively local drag scene. When the pandemic started, we unraveled stark differences in their experiences. While all had continued to pursue drag as their source of livelihood, Rebel Heart and Odessa Jones did not experience the same financial stability as Lady Gagita, due to factors such as their social location and accumulation of capital. Both Lady Gagita and Rebel Heart would undergo aesthetic transfigurations that were oriented towards the current drag trends, which only served to diversify and maintain their celebrification and performance variability. Meanwhile, due to her lack of technological affordances and activity spaces, Odessa Jones did not have the same access to the social and financial capital other drag queens such as Rebel Heart and Lady Gagita have.

Rebel Heart. Rebel Heart's interest in the art of drag was piqued through the art of makeup in the year 2014. Upon accidentally sculpting her face with black contour makeup, Rebel was told that she resembled a drag queen, which prompted her to take a deep dive into the internet where she first came across RuPaul's Drag Race. She had since then pursued her journey as a drag queen through makeup looks, song covers, and bar auditions and performances. *"Isa rin akong aktibista,"* Rebel proudly declares. *"Hindi lang kami maganda, matalino rin kami, at alam namin ang karapatan ng bawat isa."* Rebel claims that the confidence that she gains from her drag persona is what empowers her to be at the forefront in the fight for LGBTQIA+ rights. Her political participation is grounded on a deep understanding of the drag queen community's long history of resistance and collective struggle since the birth of the gay liberation movement.

Outside drag, Rebel carries the responsibility of being the breadwinner, as they are the only child in the family. And while Rebel considers drag to be more of an avenue of self-expression rather than a career, the imperative to support their family's needs can oblige them to make sure that drag remains a lucrative endeavor. *"Bakla ka na nga, maliit pa kita mo? Pa'no ba yan?* Keep up!" Rebel mimics intolerant "baby boomers." The gradual acceptance of drag as an indispensable part of their lives has also allowed for her family to be more acquainted with drag as a performance art.

During a rocky time in Rebel's life, disputes with veteran drag queens in Nectar Nightclub cost them bookings, and they had to resort to other income sources like a sari-sari store and a small fish ball vending business. The first wave of COVID-19 cases was especially difficult for Rebel due to the complete shutdown of bars and clubs, forcing Rebel to once again return to their other income streams, going as far as selling their drag costumes. They eventually found themselves back in the drag industry, putting on online drag shows on various social media platforms, where earning a total of PhP1,500 every day was considered lucky. This did, however, expand her audience to international viewers. While such online shows were available, drag queens like Rebel Heart still did not see online shows as a satisfactory alternative relative to in-house shows. "*Hindi pa rin* back to normal for me," Rebel Heart explains. Even though drag household names are being booked for physical shows, there is still something missing when other drag queens are not surrounding them for performances and events.

"For me, *'yung pangarap ko lang is matanggap ang* LGBTQIA+ community dito sa Philippines." For many drag queens like Rebel Heart, the drag scene in the Philippines continues to be an avenue for wider acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community. As such, they continue to hope for a more prominent, known, and well-loved drag scene that is able to entertain and enliven its audience, from whom they receive love, acceptance, and solidarity.

Lady Gagita. Outside of drag, there is Vinzon. "The toned-down version of Lady Gagita," Vinzon is, as Gagita describes, no less than "the man behind Lady Gagita," in the sense that he edits and produces her content, as well as designs and crafts her costumes.

To successfully perform drag, however, Lady Gagita must temporarily abandon Vinzon. *"Kasi kung nasa* Vinzon *pa rin akong katauhan, may takot, mayroong* intimidation." Vinzon carries the weight of his responsibilities outside drag; and therefore, he likewise carries the weight of his fears, worries, and inhibitions. To fly as high as she can, Lady Gagita must be weightless—free. This is perhaps why the art of drag feels so cathartic for drag queens like Lady Gagita.

Lady Gagita claims to lend her confidence to Vinzon when he needs it. When she enters a room full of big names as Vinzon—sans makeup, hair, and costume—for instance, she feels as if her confidence is at her lowest. However, once she undergoes the full drag transformation, she finds that it empowers her to even initiate conversations, and command the room. The confidence, however, comes to her only when she is in full drag. *"Kapag feeling ko may kulang sa akin, hindi niya nabibigay yung 100%* personality *na meron ako."* For instance, if she lacks so much as a hip pad, she feels she lacks the power and confidence to face a crowd. For her to fully feel confident, she says, "It has to be perfect."

The biggest similarity between Lady Gagita and Vinzon is their indiscriminate attitude to any opportunity that comes their way. She finds that no stage is too big or too small, and reminds herself to always keep her feet on the ground—keeping in mind her responsibilities outside the stage makes this ultimately possible.

Both in and out of drag, Lady Gagita and Vinzon are both breadwinners. She finds herself providing for two households; her home in Davao and her home in Manila, where she resides with her long-time partner. When she was only starting her drag career, "*Naiimbyerna sila sa'kin kasi siyempre* I'm the eldest in the family, *wala masyadong bakla sa pamilya.*" However, once she started gaining recognition as Lady Gagita, her family let her be, as her drag career became increasingly lucrative.

In February 2020, Lady Gagita was introduced as one of the newest Shopee Live Streamers. Due to the serendipitous timing of this live-streaming gig, Lady Gagita had no need to look for other sources of income at the dawn of the lockdowns. While the COVID-19 cases were steadily increasing, so was Lady Gagita's platform and following. Stuck at home, Lady Gagita pushed her creative capacities, such that she became proficient in editing and producing. A year into the pandemic, Gagita's career experienced substantial growth, as multifarious parties contacted her upon the resumption of physical events. Two years into the pandemic, Lady Gagita returned to physical performances, supplemented with her technical skills enhanced during the first months of the pandemic.

Still, "*Nakakatuwa na nagbago na* treatment *ng* drag queens after *ng* pandemic." Gagita admits that drag was given a spotlight of its own, such that more people realized its significance. *"Naturuan yung mga tao na ganito dapat i-treat yung mga* drag queens. *Parang* it's the same art like k*ung ano yung mga* mainstream media." Concomitant with drag's perceptibility was the increase in baby drag queens, a development which deeply heartens Lady Gagita. "*Nung* pandemic, *tinuruan 'yung mga bakla ng mga bagong bagay. 'Yung 'di nila nagagawa* pre-pandemic *nagagawa nila nung*

pandemic," Lady Gagita explains, emphasizing the pandemic's positive impact on drag and the drag community.

Odessa Jones. "Well, *sa akin pong palagay, ang solusyon po sa lumalaking populasyon sa ating bansa ay bigyan natin ng edukasyon ang bawat pamilya, ang bawat mag-asawa!*" Clad in a floor-length, midnight blue gown wreathed in a dramatic petticoat reminiscent of fairy tale princesses, Odessa Jones confidently sashays across the stage. A contestant of the 1st season of Miss Q and A (2018), a segment of the popular Filipino noontime variety show It's Showtime, Odessa Jones exhibited her quick wit and pageantry prowess. She landed in the top 10 and received the Best in Introduction Number special award. Odessa's skills and confidence came as no surprise, as her experience in bar shows, fiestas, and pageants began at the age of 16. After competing in Miss Q and A and gaining exposure, Odessa's experiences of discrimination have significantly decreased. Insults yelled at her on the streets have been replaced by strangers asking for pictures with her.

Outside of drag, Odessa is Robert, an uncle who helps provide financial assistance to his nieces and nephews. While Robert prefers the tranquility of staying in his room all day, Odessa prefers a rowdy and noisy environment. Conversely, Robert and Odessa are similar in their desires: *"Yung kaibigang masayahin."* Friends are crucial support systems in both Robert and Odessa's lives—fellow members of the LGBTQIA community who share the same struggles and jubilations.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, Odessa's days were filled with movement, and in her words, *"Masaya. Araw araw kami umaalis."* She would travel from province to province, together with her fellow queens, meeting and interacting with different people every day. Aside from fiestas and pageants in provinces, Odessa would also book shows in metropolitan bars hosting drag shows.

However, due to the aesthetic burdens carried by drag queens who perform in gay bars and clubs, Odessa has long preferred performing at fiestas and pageants. "Pangkalawakan na ako. *Mas marami kita doon eh, mas* 'in.' '*Yung mga* drag queens *kumonti nga, gaya gaya na ngayon eh.*" Odessa asserts that *"masaya kasi 'yung pangkalawakan.* Miss Gay, *pangkalawakan, ganyan. 'Yung mga pangit na bakla, nagpapatawa-patawa."*

On stage, Odessa does not hold back—her songs and dances are fast. *"Nagwawala ako sa stage eh,"* she says, fervently differentiating herself from other kinds of drag queens who do not dance on stage. Wearing a full face of makeup formidably paired with her stage costume, passionately dancing and singing, Odessa's heart beats to the rhythm of the crowd's cheers.

As COVID-19 spread, Odessa's life was transformed from a life of congenial company, cheers, and movement to a life of solitude. Odessa struggled to stay afloat and was left with no choice but to stay at home and borrow money from friends as her savings depleted. Odessa recalls, *"Lahat halos ng kaibigan ko nautangan ko na nga eh,"* as no institution or organization was providing her the money she terribly needed. In Manila, Odessa's place of residence, sacks and boxes of aid were given monthly by the local government. She received this aid not as an informal worker out of work, but as a resident of the city. Wealthy members of the LGBTQIA community as well as LGBTQIA organizations were also actively handing out aid to LGBTQIA community members in need, and Odessa was one of their recipients. Despite financial difficulty, Odessa chose not to seek other employment, as she considers drag to be a job above all its other functions. *"Kung marunong lang nga ako, may puhunan akong ganun, nag-ganun* [online drag shows] *na ako. Kaso lang wala,"*

she says, instead relying only on friends to support her during such difficult times.

In September 2020, Odessa joined Enkangchaka, a group of drag queens who performed online three days a week for over a year through Facebook Live. At present, Odessa has returned to performing in fiestas and beauty contests. Physical or virtual, Odessa dreams of a drag community with less conflict and more respect, much like her experience during the pandemic. *"Isa lang naman gusto ko. Magkaisa kami sa isang* community. *'Wag kami maghilaan pababa, ganon lang. Kailangan respetuhan lang."*

Findings and Discussion

On Drag as a Transfigurative and Transformative Practice

Rebel Heart, Lady Gagita, and Odessa Jones have expressed that, as they don their drag look and embody their persona, they are consequently transformed into a more power-laden entity—an entity that masks their flaws and otherwise marginalized identities, i.e., their social reality. Lady Gagita found that her transfiguration remarkably elevates her status. Through drag, Gagita gains self-confidence and is approached with higher regard. For instance, most of the time, people line up to take pictures with her. Rebel Heart and Odessa Jones reported similar experiences. The participants recount how even those who have poked fun at their queerness indeed undergo a "suspension of disbelief." *"Minsan sisigawan pa kami, 'Ayan bakla! Papangit ng mga bakla, ang lalaki ng katawan ng mga bakla!' [...] Pero 'pag gabi naman makikita namin papalakpak naman sila sa amin. Sa umaga, lalaitin ka. Pero subukan mo sa gabi, panonoorin ka rin nila, papalakpakan ka rin nila,"* shares Odessa.

The celebrified status, however, provides both a protective and discriminatory function for the drag queens, a contradictory pattern prominent in the narratives. When drag queens have the capital to either conform to trends, or break through the existing mold of performance, they are somewhat protected from out-group discrimination—due largely to their celebrification. However, it has been observed that mainstreaming a certain style of drag, such as captured in RuPaul's Drag Race, may have led to the homogenization of the art form as Mimi Imfurst, RuPaul's Drag Race Season 3 alumna, said in her interview with Owens (2016). This becomes a concern when such mainstream drag is not as receptive or inclusive of its other shapes and forms. This could explain Odessa Jones' sentiment: *"Nahihirapan kami kasi maraming magagaling ngayon. Maraming magagaling na bata ngayon pasibol. ['Yung mga beteranong drag queen] tatayo lang sa entablado, 'di na papansinin. Papansinin [nila] 'yung baguhan. Mas marami silang pakulo sa katawan, mga wig nila ang gaganda. Mga* costume *nila."* It is possible that the feelings of neglect as a veteran drag queen that Odessa Jones shared are due to her drag persona and performances not conforming to the current trend of "highbrow" drag culture. So, while the transformative potential of drag lends a degree of protection to the transfigured identities of the drag queens through celebrification, it seems to simultaneously be discriminatory to drag queens who do not take on current trends.

Lady Gagita explained that the liminal phase, or the phase where the ephemeral transformation of their gender and social status occurs, is only breached as her aesthetic transfiguration is completed. However, due to drag queens' varied access to capital, not all transfigurations are created equally. Increased financial capital may mean an increased capacity to invest in higher quality wigs, makeup, contact lenses, and shapewear, as well as an increased opportunity to work with more

renowned costume designers. Some drag queens even undergo aesthetic enhancement procedures to enhance their drag. Odessa Jones, who claims to be in a precarious financial situation, has long preferred drag performances that are not tied to trendy and "highbrow" aesthetic value. Apart from providing her financial relief, Odessa Jones' preferred variety of drag is better received in spaces occupied by the masses, who subsequently constitute and provide her social capital. Without the network and connections that can broaden her financial capital, Odessa Jones claims her aesthetic transfiguration to be discordant with emerging drag trends.

As the stability of drag as a source of income can vary, the extent of a drag queen's celebrification can also be remarkably different, and its permanence as they enter reintegration consequently varies as well. While Rebel Heart and Odessa Jones find no significant changes as they regress from their transfigured state, Lady Gagita reportedly experiences elevation from her status of origin as she enters the reintegration phase. She observes that, following her social media breakthrough during the pandemic, she has been treated similarly to traditional artists and celebrities both before and after her transfiguration, and has been recently cast in acting gigs even as her lived identity, Vinzon. On the other hand, Odessa claims that her financial situation and lack of digital literacy to sustain online shows hindered her from transitioning online, which—as observed by the authors—have ultimately kept her from maintaining and diversifying her celebrification.

It can then be argued that a drag queen's identity and her transfigurative practice can expand or constrict activity spaces. Their access to various forms of capital, such as social and financial capital, affords them the necessary tools for transfiguration, such as makeup, wigs, and costumes, and technological affordances for the construction of a social media platform. The manner in which their celebrification manifests is contingent on their aesthetic or comedic value. Access and ownership of these apparatuses can result in transfigurations with higher aesthetic value, and in turn, more varied performativity. That is, their opportunities are not limited to comedy and entertainment. The opportune expansion of drag as a professional venture results in higher degrees or diversified forms of celebrification for Filipino drag queens, such that the transformation of their social status allows for enhanced participation in both broadcast and social media.

For drag queens like Rebel Heart and Lady Gagita who have the technological affordances and are digitally literate millennials, their drag personas allow for opportunities to build a career beyond performance—hosting events or serving as front acts, representatives, and spokespersons within and beyond their own communities. Drag abstracts class in that it detaches it from conventional socioeconomic distinctions and affixes it to the concept of "celebrity," especially seen as they secure influential positions in various forms of media. As drag queens ephemerally achieve celebrity status through professionalized, marketable forms of performance, they ritualistically become or feign as "agents of the power that was previously denied them" (Feldman & Hakim, 2020, p. 27).

"Celebrified" drag queens sanction greater visibility and diversity in representation. This allows them to further their involvement in matters of political significance. Consequently, they enjoy the privilege of viewing their drag career as a politicized experience. Drag queens' reiterative performance of "celebrity" highlights how they depend on the obfuscation of existing social categories (such as race, gender, sexuality, and class) during performances to bolster the "illusion" of their own prestige (Horowitz, 2012). The novel status they gain in their transfiguration allows them to see drag as both a subversive political activity and a conduit of access to the mainstream. Simply

put, their status renders it possible for them to challenge and subvert power whilst simultaneously demanding access to it (Feldman & Hakim, 2020). The broadening of their performance landscape places them in more varied activity spaces. Here, we see how socioeconomic class (marked by technological affordances) intersects with gender (marked by aesthetic transfiguration) and age (marked by level of digital literacy) in order to engender a unique experience of a degree of celebrification—or alternatively, marginalization.

On Activity Spaces for Drag Queens

Activity spaces, or the physical or virtual communities navigated by drag queens, directly influence their experiences, opportunities, and access to various forms of capital. Hence, drag queens' social and financial capital is contingent upon their activity spaces, which can in turn constrict or expand a their transfigurative practice. Such activity spaces are governed by influencing factors that determine the success of a drag queen.

Physical communities, particularly gay bars and clubs, are governed by ethical codes, specifically by traditional Filipino values like *utang na loob* (i.e., debt of gratitude) and pakikipagpalagayang-loob (i.e., being in-rapport, understanding, or acceptance with), a form of pakikipagkapwa or "human concern and interaction as one with others" (Enriquez, 1977; Enriquez, 1977, p.4). *Pakikipagpalagayang-loob,* a level and mode of interpersonal relations among Filipinos inextricable from the Filipino concept of *kapwa* (fellow human being), is expected in interactions where the individual is categorized as *Hindi-Ibang-Tao* or One-Of-Us.

While having a good relationship with their superiors serves a protective function, that protection vanishes when a drag queen gets into disputes with their seniors. A Filipino drag queen's chance of success in a gay bar or club is dependent on the extent to which they espouse or abandon *utang na loob* and *pakikipagpalagayang-loob* in their relationships with the mamamamahans (i.e., senior or tenured drag queens). Considered as subordinates yet regarded as family, or *Hindi-Ibang-Tao*, younger drag queens are expected to show gratitude towards and accept their *mamamamahans*' tutelage. As the *mamamamahans* closely coordinate with bar and club owners, espousal or abandonment of such cultural traits can either result in an increased regularity in being booked for performances or slackened interest as a sought-after drag artist. For instance, if a rookie drag queen exhibits rude behavior, whether intentionally or unintentionally, it may affect their seniors' regard for them. Regular booking or slackened interest can consequently determine a drag queen's access to social and financial capital. Hence, younger drag queens of ill-repute among senior or tenured drag queens are at risk of compromising drag performances as a lucrative endeavor.

Such is true for Rebel Heart's previous drag persona, Joux the Rose, who was no longer sought after as a consequence of her disputes with veteran drag queens who were bridled at her defiant demeanor. As the ones who oversee bookings and closely communicate with bar owners and patrons, senior drag queens expect a certain level of gratitude and deference from younger drag queens. In Rebel's interview, she recounts her *"maldita"* behavior, stating *"…alam mo 'yung minamalditahan ko kahit 'yung mga mamamamahan sa drag? 'Yung nakakatanda sa* drag *minamaldatihan ko 'yan!"* Eventually, Rebel had to resort to alternative sources of income, eventually abandoning her previous drag persona out of respect for her seniors, as well as out of concern over her tainted reputation and her craft's low profitability. Rebel explicitly states during her interview, *"Di ba nga nagmamaldita ako. So dumating sa point na walang tumanggap [sa akin*

sa mga gig]." The stronger the rapport and gratitude of a drag queen with and to her seniors, the greater her chances of success and therefore, increased access to social and financial capital.

Meanwhile, virtual communities are governed by equalizing forces brought about by the digital revolution. The emergence of the digital sphere has narrowed the divide among content creators of different backgrounds, as social media has granted its users "vehicles for unbridled public expression" (Hrynyshyn, 2017). The accessibility, convenience, and usability of social media bring in "new and less well-represented voices" into the public sphere, and everyone is granted the liberty to engage those within it (Koc-Michalska et al., 2014, as cited in Samuel-Azran et al., 2015). These equalizing forces challenge social inequities within the drag community, in that more drag queens of different backgrounds and creative strengths are now allowed to prosper. Greater diversity in representation in opened-up spaces of visibility can also mean that more drag queens are capable of attaining a microcelebrity status. Celebrification then leads to increased access to social and financial capital.

However, the seemingly equalizing forces can also serve discriminatory functions, as they may increase the vulnerability of the already vulnerable. In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, people had turned to the internet in order to cope with the crisis; what was once perceived as a luxury had become an essential. But the transition to the digital sphere would expose a digital divide among people—that is, stark differences in their "technical and financial ability to utilize available technology and access the internet" (Rasure, 2022). Factors such as location, income, household size, age, gender, physical ability, and education resulted in a digital divide (Ibrahim, 2022).

This seems to be true in the case of drag queens as well. In an interview, Drag Queen Aries shared how she believes that online drag is only for those who can afford it (Cruz & Galang, 2020). Rebel Heart shared the same sentiment, saying, "Imagine, *gastos din eh. Bibili ka ng ilaw,* backdrop *mo,* costume. *Gastos pa rin siya, sobrang hirap ng* transition." As earlier mentioned, Odessa Jones claimed she was not able to transition online during the lockdown due to lack of finances and technological affordances to utilize and access available technology.

Activity spaces then serve as differentiating factors in the social realities of Filipino drag queens. For Lady Gagita and Rebel Heart, technological affordances and financial capital made them feel that they had fared much better in comparison to how they were doing prior to their transition to virtual communities. As Lady Gagita expressed, "Actually, *mas* nag-bloom *ako noong* pandemic *kasi marami akong mga nalaman na noong* pandemic *ko lang siya magagawa* [...] Way before nag-lockdown, *kinuha na ako ng* Shoppee as an official livestreamer. Before pandemic *pa, noong nag*-launch *sila ng* live streaming, *kumuha sila ng iba't ibang influencers at isa ako sa mga influencer na kinuha nila*." Rebel Heart also had similar sentiments, saying, "*Totoo naisantabi pansamantala si* Rebel Heart, but *nung nauso 'yung* online show, *doon mas nag*-boom *ulit si* Rebel Heart."

Odessa Jones did not experience performing online. She recounted that she did not consider shifting online to either find an alternative livelihood or perform drag in different social media platforms. She said, *"Kung marunong lang nga ako, may puhunan akong ganun, nag-ganun* [online selling] *na ako. Kaso lang talagang wala."* Instead, Odessa Jones hoped that more bars would open so that other drag queens like her could perform again.

Since virtual communities offer more leeway for performance variability, Lady Gagita and Rebel Heart were in the position to capitalize on developments in the art of drag and consequently conform to ever-changing drag trends. Conformity to drag trends keeps their performances marketable, and allows them to maintain their status as micro-celebrities.

It is important to note, however, that there are nuances in the degree of success that Lady Gagita and Rebel Heart were both able to achieve in virtual communities. That is, their success could also be ascribed to their activity spaces prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the case of Lady Gagita, it was observed that enabling conditions in her previous activity spaces allowed her to better preserve her status as a microcelebrity.

Odessa Jones felt that she did not fare as well during the pandemic due to her lack of technological affordances. *"Sila nag-oonline-online. Ako hindi,"* she says. Odessa Jones mostly navigated physical communities, performing and competing in fiestas, pageants, and noontime shows. These spaces are often occupied by the masses, more receptive to drag performances of higher comedic value or of segments containing "middlebrow compromise." Dwight Macdonald (1960) coined the term middlebrow compromise to refer to performances which merely pretend to respect the standards of High Culture, while in fact, watering down and vulgarizing them for perceived shock value. Audiences in fiestas and gigs in bars, according to Odessa, are more receptive to *"chaka"* (comedically ugly) drag queens who do not exude the same sartorial splendor as drag queens who perform in the trendy gay bars and clubs in the metro. In narrating the difference between her versions of Odessa Jones, she says,

> *"Ah, sa bar naman iba. 'Yung pagsho-show namin iba naman 'yun. Iba atake namin. Kailangan sosyal ka doon. Sa Enkangchaka pwede bara bara, kahit ano lang. Pero 'pag drag queen ka, kailangan sosyal, maganda damit mo, maganda bihis mo, maganda itsura mo kailangan. Eh sa Enkangchaka naka two piece ka lang kahit ano itsura mo pwede na eh. 'Pag drag queen ka kailangan maganda itsura mo, maganda costume mo. Iba-iba talaga. Mamumuhunan ka rin talaga, kung gusto mo pera mamumuhunan ka sa mga costume, sa mga wig. May manager kasi ako may humahawak s'akin, kaya hindi ako gumagastos. Pero 'yung budget ko naman hati, 70-30."*

The current drag trend in the country favors drag performances of higher aesthetic value, containing highbrow culture. This has barred Odessa from access to social and financial capital—a manifestation of the digital divide in the drag community. Again, we see how socioeconomic class (marked by technological affordances and access to certain activity spaces) intersects with age (marked by level of digital literacy) to also engender a unique experience of celebrification—or marginalization.

Drag Houses as a Parallel Social Structure

Upon assuming a drag persona, drag queens gain access to two familial structures—their biological family and their drag or built family. During the pandemic, this social capital proved increasingly vital in abating and protecting the drag queens from the negative consequences of the pandemic. Across the three drag queens interviewed, there is a consistent declaration of the precedence of their built families in their well-being.

When Odessa Jones was struggling to stay afloat during the pandemic, it was her built family whom she turned to for financial assistance. While the emergence of the online drag scene has revealed disparities in terms of who possesses enough capital to adapt to an increasingly commercialized drag culture, such revelation has prompted younger drag queens to support senior drag queens who lack the technological affordances to hold online drag shows.

Built families, or drag families, are formally known as *drag houses.* A typical drag house is composed of a mother and an illimitable number of daughters. A hierarchy exists within the houses, wherein the mother is the authority figure, sought for guidance and mentorship by her drag daughters. Similar to biological families, the head of the drag house, the drag mother, holds the most financial, human, and social capital. It is thus a drag mother's responsibility to provide financial and emotional support and pass down industry knowledge and various performative skills to her daughters.

As a drag mother, Lady Gagita would often host online drag shows in her own residence in Manila for her drag sisters and drag daughters experiencing mental health hardships brought by the pandemic. In September 2020, Lady Gagita organized a show to celebrate her birthday entitled *#Cancelledt: The Lady Gagita Birthday Show,* a showcase of the talents of her drag babies, and a fundraising event for the benefit of drag queens who, at the time, had no source of income due to the closure of bars and other establishments.

Regardless of drag house, drag queens refer to one another as "drag sisters." In being called a sister, Passa (2021) observes that "the boundaries of drag houses are much more blurred than in biological families, since everyone can join a drag house and be called "sister." Kinship terms such as *mamamamahan, anak* or *nakshie,* and sister or kapatid, may be indicative of the deficit of and need for supportive familial figures. The drag house as a parallel family reflects the drag queens' experiences of marginalization within their own biological families, and serves to protect the drag queens from the discrimination they experience from their biological families.

While the three drag queens in this study are accepted by their biological families, this acceptance is conditional and discriminates against drag queens whose drag is unprofitable. The profitability of drag influences the degree to which a drag queen's queer identity is accepted by her biological family. Upon witnessing the ability of drag to yield profit and sustain drag queens as well as their other family members, members of the drag queens' families began to support and recognize drag as a valid and legitimate career option. Rebel Heart's biological family, for instance, became more accepting and supportive of her gender and drag as a performance art. As Lady Gagita's drag career gained traction and produced enough income to put food on the table and pay off her parents' debts, her parents were roused to finally support her career wholeheartedly. Similarly, Odessa Jones' family came to accept her drag identity due to the financial support she is able to give to her nieces and nephews.

Conclusion

A Filipino drag queen assumes two identities—her lived identity and her drag persona. Drag queens traverse these two identities by undergoing a process of transfiguration, actualized through the use of aesthetic apparatuses. This transfigurative process enables an ephemeral transformation of drag queens' gender identity and expression, and their social status. Such transformative potential,

especially as they undergo celebrification, allows them access to relations they would otherwise be unable to attain.

The duplex identity of a drag queen is performed in subsequent activity spaces, or their spaces of employment, residence, and recreation—whether physical or virtual. Their ability to perform their identities in these activity spaces is mediated by factors such as their access to financial capital and the lucrativeness of their drag career (i.e., class), as well as their age—factors that constitute their social location.

There exists a dialectical relationship between their duplex identity and activity spaces. The activity spaces they navigate as they transfigure into their drag personas and regress from this transfigured state can expand or constrict the degree of their transfiguration, and in turn, the transformation of their lived realities and material conditions. On one hand, liberties to unbridled public expression in virtual communities allow for performance variability, which consequently allow for greater conformity to drag trends, greater marketability, greater potential for celebrification, and increased social and financial capital. Since virtual communities offer more leeway for performance variability, drag queens like Lady Gagita and Rebel Heart are in the position to capitalize developments in the art of drag and consequently conform to ever-changing drag trends. Conformity to drag trends keeps their performances marketable, and allows them to maintain their status as microcelebrity practitioners (p. 95). By the same token, the absence of liberties to vibrant public expression in physical communities discourages performance variability, which then leads to limited conformity to drag trends, reduced marketability, lesser potential for celebrification, and decreased social and financial capital. On the other hand, the qualities espoused by a Filipino drag queen's lived and transfigured identities can expand or constrict the activity spaces they are able to traverse. The transfigured identities, or drag personas, of higher aesthetic value, i.e., Filipino drag queens with greater access to capital, are allowed greater performance variability. This results in expansion of their conduits for personal and artistic expression, and in turn, broadens their performance landscape. Such conditions place them in more varied, and reportedly more enabling, professional environments or activity spaces.

Although the transformative function of drag provides some protection to drag queens by way of elevated social status, broadened networks, and access to parallel social structures (i.e., drag houses or parallel families), it can also allow for discrimination as their commercialization—and now mainstream assimilation—leaves behind drag queens without significant social, financial, and technological capital, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This often meant abandoning drag performance for more lucrative sources of income to provide for their families. Ultimately, it is their parallel social structures—their collective efforts and a strong sense of community—that offer them protection and aid in buffering negative effects prevalent in times of crisis.

Exploring the dialectical relationship between their duplex identity and activity spaces—the affordances this enables and disables them to have, the ties this enables or disables them to form, and the experiences this enables or disables them to encounter—knits the fabric of a Filipino drag queen's social reality. The lived experiences of Rebel Heart, Lady Gagita, and Odessa Jones then invites us to augment the planes in which we employ the concept of intersectionality.

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"Bah GAD, it's ...!"
A Gender and Development Analysis of the Philippine Professional Wrestling Industry, 2016-2021

Danielle Erika A. Hill

ABSTRACT

This paper is the first academic research work to be done on the topic of 21st-century Filipino professional wrestling. It documents and analyzes Gender and Development (GAD) issues within the Filipino professional wrestling industry from 2016 to 2021, with a focus on the experiences of women wrestlers from the Manila Wrestling Federation (MWF). By interviewing key informants within the organization and reviewing GAD-related statements and projects by the organization, it analyzes gender dynamics within the company to better understand how inclusivity can be made to work in professional wrestling, a male-dominated industry that has long been perceived as hypermasculine. As literature and situation analyses surface themes of gender diversity, equality, and gender-based violence in the local pro wrestling industry, the paper proposes a kayfabe-based intervention concept that hopes to assist the pro wrestling community become a safer space for people of feminine and/or queer experience.

Keywords: *professional wrestling, gender mainstreaming, gender and sports, empowerment, pleasure*

Introduction

Professional wrestling is a form of theater that has roots in amateur (or Olympic/sport) wrestling and involves the performance of unarmed combat performed in an elevated ring similar to ones used in boxing and mixed martial arts. While pro wrestlers use sports wrestling as a basis for some of their moves and techniques, professional wrestling is not technically considered a sport, unlike its Olympic counterpart (MMA Channel, n.d.). It is, instead, defined as "scripted entertainment performed live in front of an audience by actors portraying characters" (Laine, 2017, p. 39).

Pro wrestling has a long and storied history as a form of sports entertainment, but in 21st-century Philippines, it is a fairly young scene with only a few performing groups, or "promotions," to its name. The Manila Wrestling Federation (MWF), a Metro Manila-based professional wrestling promotion that debuted in 2016, is the oldest of three extant (as of writing) wrestling promotions in the Philippines, the other two being World Underground Wrestling - Philippines (WUW, est. 2019) and Filipino Professional Wrestling (FPW, est. 2023) (Pro Wrestling Today, n.d.). Other wrestling promotions, since dissolved, were Philippine Wrestling Revolution (PWR, 2013-2022) and Art of War Wrestling (AOWW, 2017-2019). MWF was the second wrestling promotion established in the Philippines in the mid-2010s, the first being PWR. Both groups were founded and run by Filipino pro wrestling enthusiasts who wanted to create a formal wrestling community in the Philippines that did not exist at that time.

The norm in the international pro wrestling industry is to either have women-exclusive promotions (as in Japan's *joshi puroresu* [女子プロレス] organizations), or for promotions to have a separate women's division (as is the case in WWE). However, because of pro wrestling's niche and startup status in the Philippines, there were not enough human resources or Filipino women wrestlers to justify either the creation of women-only promotions or to split wrestling talents into separate men's and women's divisions. This constraint meant that intergender matches were (and still are) common in the upstart Filipino wrestling scene, where women wrestlers "bravely face off against grapplers of both genders" (Bueza, 2018).

MWF styled itself as a progressive company from the get-go, creating kayfabe characters and storylines set in their *"Manilaverse"* inspired by real-life Filipino societal themes, tropes, and issues. The company, co-founded by Filipino pro wrestling enthusiast Veronica Litton—herself a trans woman—prides itself on the diversity of its staff and has spoken up on issues related to gender-based violence, namely sexual harassment in the workplace (MWF, 2020a) and transphobia (MWF, 2020b).

The promotion produces multiple types of wrestling content, including but not limited to the MWF *Askyonovela* (a portmanteau of "action" and "telenovela") series, which serves as the main "plot" of the Manilaverse and shows the narrative arcs of its characters. Each arc of the Aksyonovela leads up to one of MWF's major live shows, which are spread throughout the year: *Republika, Road to Fate, and Noche Buena.* This wrestling content is taped live and posted on MWF's social media accounts, including but not limited to Facebook and YouTube. Those who want to join MWF as talents sign up for the MWF Wrestling Factory, where they undergo formal physical and industry training under professional wrestling coaches. Only trainees who graduate from "Factory" training are allowed to join the roster.

MWF estimates how large its viewership is by measuring attendance in live events, audience engagement in social media and traditional PR campaigns, and the number of social media likes on its pages. While a demographic study of MWF's audience and viewership is beyond the scope of this paper, it is noted that the MWF Facebook page had more than 12,000 likes at the time of data gathering.

By virtue of its status as a pioneer Filipino wrestling promotion, and the only one of its "generation" still extant, it is fair to say that MWF sets the tone for the rest of the professional wrestling industry in the Philippines in its entirety. Because of this, there is a clear value in examining the foundation MWF is laying out for the industry. If MWF is indeed setting a progressive standard in Philippine wrestling (as it purports to do) despite the fact that professional wrestling, in general, is perceived as a male-dominated and hypermasculine industry (Bueza, 2018; Go, 2020), then there is an opportunity for MWF to influence how other promotions treat their women and LGBTQIA+ wrestling talents, thereby developing the Filipino wrestling industry in such a way that it as a whole becomes a space that is inclusive of, equitable to, safe for, and welcoming towards people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

Research Questions and Objectives

The main research question in this paper is "How can we apply feminist and GAD perspectives to the Filipino pro wrestling industry?" Three sub-questions follow from this inquiry:

1. What does the GAD landscape look like in the local pro wrestling industry?
2. What themes and issues related to GAD are extant in the industry?
3. What insights and implications follow from the findings?

To answer this line of questioning, the paper looks to the Manila Wrestling Federation (MWF), the most prominent of the Filipino pro wrestling promotions, as its primary lead in the investigation. Throughout the first five years since it was established, MWF has prided itself on the diversity of its staff and its stance on gender equality. But is MWF truly as feminist as it initially appears to be? What is the actual state of gender diversity and equality in this promotion? MWF has also published official statements condemning gender-based violence, specifically workplace harassment in the professional wrestling industry. What prompted their statements, and how may the issues they were reacting to be resolved?

By answering these questions, this paper aims to provide as objective a knowledge as can be achieved on the modern Filipino pro wrestling industry using a feminist and GAD lens that centers the lived experiences of women and queer talents in the industry, which may then be classified as objective and relevant and used as a starting point for future research on the topic.

Significance of the Study

Any academic discourse around a phenomenon, organization, or industry first necessitates the existence of a peer-reviewed text to critique, validate, or disprove it. No such text has been written thus far on the subject of modern Philippine professional wrestling—or at least, none where active members of the Filipino professional wrestling community have been directly consulted. I know this because I am privileged enough to be acquainted with a few of the community's leaders, and this rapport allows me firsthand access to industry data in a natural, casual way. One of the first things I realized is that while the raw industry data *does* exist, it is *unorganized*—that is, it exists as oral history, as word of mouth, as company/industry culture, as social media posts, as video footage, as interviews in podcasts and documentaries—but these have not yet been compiled in an *organized way*. The industry is new. The scholarly literature for it *does not yet exist*.

The above statement presents both an opportunity and a challenge. Since there is no clear research path for me to follow (or break away from), I find myself in the unique position of being both GAD researcher (my original intent when I started my research) and Philippine pro wrestling historian (to be able to compile enough data for industry background and context). I have attempted to resolve this duality by applying best practices of academic research that fall under similar categories, like John Paul and Sharla Blank's 2015 paper on female roller derby athletes. Roland Barthes' 1972 post-structuralist treatise on the essence of professional wrestling was fundamental reading material for theory crafting, as well as Carol Bacchi and Joan Eveline's 2010 gender mainstreaming approach, "What's the problem represented to be?" or WPR. These three combined make up the scholarly cornerstone of this research. The rest is my own best effort.

Scope and Limitations

This paper documents key GAD issues within the Filipino professional wrestling industry in general, and Manila Wrestling Federation in particular, from its inception in 2016 to its COVID-19

lockdown-enforced hiatus in 2020 and 2021. It focuses on issues of gender diversity, gender equality, and gender-based violence in pro wrestling that surfaced during interviews with participants. Any developments in the Philippine professional wrestling industry beyond January 2021 are beyond the scope of this paper.

The data for this paper were gathered in the latter half of 2020, and initial findings were shared with MWF in January 2021 for their use. Since then, there have been major developments in the industry: Of the three pioneer wrestling promotions established in the mid-2010s, MWF is the only one that remains. The promotion resumed live performances in 2022, both in the form of taped episodes of their Aksyonovela series and their main events—Republika, Road to Fate, and Noche Buena. MWF has also received mainstream attention, including but not limited to being interviewed in news features and talk shows, appearing in a popular game show, and being featured in a popular local documentary series. This paper does not cover these industry shifts, as all of them occurred after January 2021.

Review of Related Literature

The Women Pro Wrestlers of the Philippines

Michael Bueza's 2018 interviews with Filipino women wrestlers revealed that women joined the various local wrestling promotions for roughly similar reasons: a love for wrestling that stems from childhood. Crystal, billed as the first female pro wrestler in the Philippines, traced her backstory to her school days: "A couple of school friends and I loved wrestling. We would talk about WWE during lunch breaks, and try out Figure Four leglocks on each other during PE class" (Bueza, 2018). For Rogue, meanwhile, "Superstars like Trish Stratus, Lita, AJ Lee, and Beth Phoenix inspired me to be a wrestler. I've been watching WWE since I was a kid, and I admire strong women. I told myself I want to be just like them when I grow up." Robynn "started to watch wrestling because I had a crush on Jeff Hardy. Every time I watched him wrestle, it made me curious what it was like to do it in the ring and just be fearless. Then there's Lita and Trish Stratus. They were so empowering for me with how they wrestle, they are why I wanted to become a wrestler."

Women wrestlers recognize that their dreams are considered unconventional. According to Crystal (in Bueza, 2018), being a woman wrestler is "tiring and stressful, but it's also amazing and heartwarming." Starling "was often called 'crazy' for wanting to do stuff that aren't deemed ladylike [...]." Tala Haliya noted that a woman wrestler must be "strong-willed" because of "people who will find you weird and judge you." But still, all of Bueza's interviewees talked about deriving great personal pleasure, satisfaction, and pride from wrestling: For Ashura, seeing "the eyes and smiles" of the audience whenever she made a ring entrance is what makes her happy, and she said that "every moment of [the wrestling fans'] entertainment is my favorite moment." For Rogue, being able to show off her strength by "lifting a 180-pound man up on my shoulders" during her ring debut and throwing him in a Samoan drop[2] "felt amazing," especially since "no woman has done that in the history of wrestling in the Philippines." Crystal aspires "to be the first Filipina to make it to the WWE," Starling gets excited at "talks of getting booked abroad" to wrestle, Tala Haliya dreams of becoming "a wrestler who can be a good role model for kids [and] persons with disabilities," and Robynn wants "someone to tell me that they were able to reach their dream to

[1] The "Samoan Drop" is a maneuver in which a wrestler lifts their opponent over their shoulders in a fireman's carry, and then falls backward onto the mat, throwing their opponent to the ground on their back.

become a wrestler because I inspired them."

GAD Issues in Contemporary Pro Wrestling

The literature review process surfaced GAD issues extant in Filipino pro wrestling and faced by the women wrestlers in the industry. These can be divided into three themes: gender diversity, gender equality, and gender-based violence (GBV).

Gender-based violence (GBV)

According to Solidarity Center (n.d.), "GBV in the world of work takes multiple forms, including:

- Physical abuse, including assault, battery, attempted murder, and murder
- Sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault
- Verbal abuse and threats of violence
- Bullying
- Psychological abuse and intimidation
- Sexual harassment, including quid pro quo
- Threats of violence
- Economic and financial abuse
- Stalking
- Human trafficking
- Forced prostitution" (Solidarity Center, n.d.).

#SpeakingOut Against Sexual Harassment in Pro Wrestling. On June 17, 2020, American wrestler David Starr was accused of sexual assault by his ex-girlfriend. The hashtag #SpeakingOut immediately began trending on Twitter afterwards, turning into what can only be described as the pro wrestling industry's version of #MeToo: an online empowerment movement where people publicized accounts of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse perpetuated by prominent and/or powerful individuals in the international pro wrestling industry (Gartland, 2020).

On June 19, 2020, PWR wrestler Nina became the first Filipina pro wrestler to use the hashtag, posting on Twitter about instances of sexual harassment committed against her by former Singapore Pro Wrestling (SPW) athlete Alex Cuevas (Go, 2020; ABS-CBN News, 2020). On June 20, Crystal posted her own series of #SpeakingOut tweets against both Cuevas and fellow PWR wrestler Peter Versoza (Go, 2020). More allegations of sexual misconduct involving Cuevas came out afterwards, leading to his official firing from SPW, with the promotion releasing a statement underlining how "SPW does not condone matters involving abuse, sexual grooming and sexual assault. Any such behavior by SPW members will be dealt with severely" (SPW, 2020).

Meanwhile, on June 24, 2020, MWF released a statement on its Facebook page detailing three cases of sexual harassment within the MWF promotion: One "involving one of our male talents which resulted in reputational damage to the female talent," one regarding "allegations of sexual misconduct by a visiting wrestler who had visited the promotion in 2019," and a third one about an MWF staff being "embroiled in a separate issue from another organization, which allegedly happened prior to him joining MWF" (MWF, 2020a).

Local Promotions' Responses to GBV Cases. PWR released a statement of support for Nina, Crystal, and other wrestlers with similar experiences that same day: "PWR stands by our wrestlers who courageously spoke out against their abusers. And we will continue to stand by anyone who needs help speaking out" (PWR, 2020a). It also created "a management committee to assist the victims in actions that they want to take against their abusers" (Go, 2020). On June 26, PWR released a follow-up statement announcing that both Alex Cuevas and Peter Versoza (who was no longer on PWR's active roster at the time of Crystal's tweet) were permanently banned from working with the promotion (PWR, 2020b).

MWF, on the other hand, conducted an internal investigation of its own cases, and found the (unnamed) accused party in the first case to be "guilty of reputational damage to the complainant." In response, he was to be "suspended for six (6) months, effective starting the first MWF show after the lifting of the community quarantine. Additionally, he will be stripped of his position in upper management." As for the (once again unnamed) visiting wrestler, MWF decided that "we will no longer be working with this talent," and admitted that "in hindsight, our decision to book him was a business decision that did not consider the welfare and feelings of our roster and staff." Lastly, MWF assured its audience that in the third case (details of which were not released), "internal dialogue is currently underway with the accused staff, for the executive committee to determine how to properly handle the situation" (MWF, 2020a). Apart from the above responses for each of the three cases, MWF's statement included apologies to the victims and MWF personnel for "failing to ensure that they can work in a safe environment where they are empowered to speak in the face of potential abuse," and commitments to both conduct "sensitivity workshops that tackle the prevention of workplace harassment" and develop and implement policies "to set proper workplace behavior and impose corresponding sanctions to various offenses."

Workplace Sexual Harasssment as a Key Issue in Philippine Pro Wrestling. This section of the literature review surfaced sexual harassment as the primary manifestation of GBV in the professional wrestling industry, and will be a major point of discussion in this and later portions of this paper.

Sexual harassment in the workplace, according to a report from the Rutgers Center for Women's Global Leadership, is "an all too common occurrence in many workplace environments. For example, in Asia and the Pacific Island countries, approximately 30-40% of female workers have reported workplace sexual harassment" (Center for Women's Global Leadership, n.d.). Unfortunately, the report added, "there is a scarcity of studies evaluating best practices for mitigating gender-based violence in the labor force, particularly in programs that engage men and boys in the process. *While numerous studies have explored risk factors for GBV in the workplace, relatively little research has been devoted to developing effective agents of change.* It is necessary to actively engage in understanding and implementing appropriate government policies and workplace programs that address gender-based violence in the work place, to invest in research that meets these goals, and to advocate for responsive regulation in the work place against GBV" (Center for Women's Global Leadership, n.d., emphasis mine).

Scott Holmes and Michael Flood's 2013 paper, entitled *Genders at Work: Exploring the role of workplace equality in preventing men's violence against women*, is a rare example of the kind of

research Center for Women's Global Leadership refers to. In it, the authors argued that "If the workplace is to have a real impact on preventing men's violence against women, then efforts in part must address men" (Holmes & Flood, 2013, p. 4). They then propose seven strategies through which this goal can be achieved:

1. Through face-to-face educational programs and social marketing, workplace-based strategies can raise men's awareness of issues of gender inequality in general or men's violence against women in particular.
2. Workplaces can promote a culture of zero tolerance for sexist and disrespectful behaviour.
3. Undermining established masculine norms and cultures is crucial to such efforts, and should include moves away from traditional models of masculine leadership.
4. Men can be involved through their professional roles themselves.
5. Men can be mobilised as advocates for change in workplaces, for example by running White Ribbon and other violence prevention campaigns at work.
6. Men can challenge the structures and systems at work that produce inequality and exclusion, including by countering unconscious bias in recruitment and promotion, conducting gender audits, setting targets for women's representation, and examining gendered interactions at work.
7. Finally, workplaces can encourage men out of the paid workforce, adopting strategies for men to spend less time at work and more time involved in parenting and domestic work. (Holmes & Flood, 2013, p. 4-5)

The authors also noted that "workplace-based efforts to engage men in the prevention of men's violence against women include attention to male leaders. 'Buy-in' by leaders and organisations is crucial in any program of workplace change, but this is particularly difficult when it involves unsettling the established links between management, masculinity, and privilege. Nevertheless, there are powerful examples of both individual men and men's networks in workplaces acting as 'champions' of violence prevention in the workplace" (Holmes & Flood, 2013, p.5).

Gender Diversity and Equality

Gender Diversity in a Workplace Context. In a workplace context, "diversity" is a term connected to workforce representation. A 2018 perspective paper from Gallup defined diversity as "the full spectrum of human demographic differences—race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status or physical disability" (Washington & Patrick, 2018). According to management consulting firm McKinsey & Company, then, gender diversity in the workplace is all about the question "What makes up the composition of men, women, and nonbinary people in a given population?" (McKinsey & Company, 2022).

However, according to leadership development firm uExcelerate, "just hiring women, transgender, or non-binary individuals is not adequate. Gender diversity, in the truest sense of the term, requires these individuals to be empowered to perform at and even exceed their full potential" (uExcelerate, n.d.). To achieve this, the firm adds, an organization must consider the following factors:

- Providing a secure work environment for the women, transgender or binary individuals in the organization.
- Promulgation of robust anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies.
- dentification and elimination of biases in the organization's operating processes and policies.
- Ensuring gender diversity at all levels of the hierarchy—working, managerial, executive, and board levels. (uExcelerate, n.d.)

Gender Equality in a Workplace Context. Whereas gender diversity is related to the representation of individuals of diverse SOGIESC in the workplace, gender equality is related to how these individuals are treated. According to the Australian Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), "workplace gender equality will be achieved when people are able to access and enjoy equal rewards, resources and opportunities regardless of gender" (WGEA, 2018), a goal that would not only positively impact the organizational performance of a particular workplace, but also enhance both its reputation and its ability to attract talent and retain employees.

To achieve workplace gender equality, the WGEA proposes that workplaces should:

- provide equal pay for work of equal or comparable value
- remove barriers to the full and equal participation of women in the workforce
- provide] access to all occupations and industries, including leadership roles, regardless of gender; and
- [eliminate] discrimination on the basis of gender, particularly in relation to family and caring responsibilities. (WGEA, 2018)

MWF as "a Dedicated Ally" of Dender Diversity and Equality Movements. On September 7, 2020, then-President Rodrigo Duterte granted absolute pardon to US Marine Joseph Scott Pemberton for his 2014 murder of Jennifer Laude, a Filipino trans woman (CNN Philippines, 2020). This decision was not well received among the LGBTQIA+ community, gender equality advocates, and human rights groups, with the hashtags #JusticeForJenniferLaude and #TransLivesMatter trending on Filipino social media after the pardon was announced (Vaiana, 2020).

On September 8, MWF released a statement on its official Facebook page condemning Pemberton's pardon and reiterating the promotion's stance on gender diversity and equality. It was the only pro wrestling promotion to have issued an official statement on the issue.

The statement reads:

The Manila Wrestling Federation was co-founded by a transgender woman. And as such, we have always made it a priority to develop a safe-space [sic] for our talent and personnel from the very beginning as an equal opportunity company. Though this, the Manila Wrestling Federation is proud to support a diverse, passionate, and hard working roster. *On screen and backstage, diversity has and will always be at the forefront of the Manilaverse.*

In line with this, we have consistently developed stories and content that we believed best reflected the lived experiences of our transgender and non-binary siblings. We have also developed content such as Out & About, which helps our cisgender KapaFEDS understand the differences in

sexual orientation and gender identity.

That said, we condemn the pardon granted to the murderer of Jennifer Laude. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family and loved ones at this time.

The Manila Wrestling Federation will continue to remain a dedicated ally in the fight for equal rights of all Filipinos, regardless of gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation, inside and outside the squared circle.

#JusticeForJenniferLaude
#TransRightsAreHumanRights
#LGBTRightsAreHumanRights (MWF, 2020b, emphasis mine.)

Summary

The literature in this section introduces the demographic covered by this study (Filipina pro wrestlers), discusses and contextualizes gender issues faced by and responded to by local pro wrestlers and pro wrestling promotions, and paints a picture of the space occupied by the Filipino pro wrestling industry in GAD work and shows how a GAD lens can be applied to it. Literature related to issues in the pro wrestling scene surfaced gender-based violence (GBV), particularly sexual harassment in the workplace, as a key GAD issue in the Filipino pro wrestling industry in general, and gender diversity and equality as a unique GAD focus within MWF. Of particular note are Holmes and Flood's (2013) comment about male leaders' buy-in of workplace GBV prevention methods, and the WGEA's propositions of ways to attain workplace gender equality. Both will be important points in the discussion portion of this paper.

Analytical Framework

Fun and/in Feminist Discourse

The relationship between pleasure, defined in this paper as the "affective positivity of all joy, gladness, liking, and enjoyment – *all our feeling good or happy*" (Katz, 2016; emphasis mine), and power is a key theme in feminist discourse—from Michel Foucault's argument that "pleasure and power do not cancel or turn back against one another; they seek out, overlap, and reinforce one another" (Foucault, 1976, p. 48), to adrienne maree brown's concept of "pleasure activism" which argues that there is a "connection between tuning into what brings aliveness into our systems and being able to access personal, relational and communal power" (Brown, 2017, p. 6). It would not be a stretch to say that fun, defined as "light-hearted pleasure" by the Oxford English Dictionary (n.d.), ought to be a key part of this conversation. However, feminist academic Shilpa Phadke noted that pleasure-based organizing, or engagement in activities seen as "fun," are not seen as a "serious enough" topic within feminist discourse:

> While claims for the economic and political participation of women have gained increasing legitimacy, the demand for fun may often be seen not just as frivolous, but also as undermining the seriousness of the feminist project itself. (Phadke, 2020, p. 1)

Phadke argued that the mere existence of a "fun" activity engaged in by people of marginalized identities normalizes the existence of the subject and the conversations that may stem from it, "thus making the space more comfortable even for those not involved in the project" (Phadke, 2020, p. 9). Nida Kirmani also asserted that the pursuit of fun and enjoyment "can be an important way in which women push against and challenge patriarchal boundaries, even if these acts may not always fall squarely into the category of what is generally thought of as political resistance within academic discourse" (Kirmani, 2020, p. 2).

"Badass"-ness as Empowerment

In the 2015 study *The Power and Joy of Derby: Women's Participation, Empowerment, and Transformation* in a Flat-Track Roller Derby Team, John Paul and Sharla Blank commented on how women use sport to "reject notions of [female] weakness and fragility" (Paul & Blank, 2015, p. 1). By centering the lived experiences of women derby athletes in their research and data gathering and therefore taking a feminist standpoint by putting gender at the center of inquiry, reclaiming the oppressed's value of their own experiences, and recognizing the roles that values and emotions play in their activities, Paul and Blank discovered that not only do "women's sporting experiences expose the patriarchal bias in sport" (p. 53), women also use sport "to create alternatives to traditional masculine power relations" (p. 53), which then become spaces where "participants challenge women's supposed social and physical inferiority" (p. 54), gaining confidence in their bodies and using their athleticism to challenge dated ideals of femininity:

> Time and time again, we heard athletes refer to themselves or to their teammates as badasses. But what is a badass, and what is its significance? [...] Emerging scholarship presents the female badass as a version of femininity that resignifies qualities typically associated with masculinity (Johnson, 2014). This redefinition includes, for example, a woman who is confident in her conception of self, who rarely "backs down" and who gets what she wants (Charlebois, 2011). When we asked the derby athletes what it meant to be a "badass," several responded in terminology that celebrated female assertiveness and self-actualization. [...] Further, a number of derby athletes also used the physical and mental confidence gained through the sport to actively promote feminism and gender fairness and equity broadly. [...] For these interviewees, "being badass" was not about women becoming more masculine, but a realization that femininity could include celebration of women's confidence and forcefulness (Paul & Blank, 2015, p. 58-59).

Like Paul and Blank's derby athletes, women wrestlers operate in a traditionally male-dominated athletic space, perform dangerous bodily feats, and revel in their physical prowess. So while the authors' research revolved around derby, it is easy enough to apply their work—particularly the concept of being a "badass"—to women in any male-dominated athletic activity, up to and including professional wrestling.

Wrestling as a Morality Play

The World of Wrestling, a 1972 treatise by French post-structuralist Roland Barthes, detailed the philosophy and symbolisms in professional wrestling, foremost among them the idea of catharsis: "The baser the actions of the salaud (the 'bastard,' [i.e. the heel])," Barthes writes, "the

more delighted the public is by the blow which he rightly receives in return" (Barthes, 1972, p. 21). Wrestling psychology is rooted in this Barthesian formula, and the tropes he mentioned exist and persist throughout the professional wrestling industry. Within kayfabe, every character is either a "heel"—the antagonist character, who the audience is meant to jeer—or a "babyface" (or simply "face"), the protagonist character who is meant to be cheered (Shoemaker, 2014). Because wrestling dynamics encourage (and even expect) audiences to participate by vocally expressing themselves—to cheer when the face (who is always coded "Good") triumphs and to boo when the heel (always coded "Evil") does, or to be dismayed when a face turns heel (the theme of falling from grace) and celebrate when a heel turns face (the theme of redemption)—wrestling becomes a spectacle that means to portray the concept of Moral Justice, making it akin to a modern-day morality play:

> But what wrestling is above all meant to portray is a purely moral concept: that of justice. [...] Wrestlers know very well how to play up to the capacity for indignation of the public by presenting the very limit of the concept of Justice, this outermost zone of confrontation where it is enough to infringe the rules a little more to open the gates of a world without restraints. (Barthes, 1972, p. 21)

"What's the problem represented to be?"

Roland Barthes' theory of wrestling as a spectacle of Moral Justice plays an important role as an industry anchor to Joan Eveline and Carol Bacchi's What's the problem represented to be? (WPR) (2010) gender mainstreaming (GM) approach to gender and development (GAD).

GAD and GM. Gender and Development (GAD) is a perspective on development with an explicit goal of "gaining organisation-wide commitment to gender equality" (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010, p. 42). Bacchi and Eveline called the development of GAD policies "fields of contestation, shaped by on-the-ground political deliberations and practices, including the discursive practices that produce specific ways of understanding the 'problem' of 'gender inequality'" (Bachi & Eveline, 2010, Introduction section). This focus on shaping the discourse that in turn shapes the knowledge that inform GAD policymakers' decision-making is what powers "gender mainstreaming" (GM) as a GAD strategy: Organizations that apply GM make initiatives to ensure that "every part of that organisation becomes gender-inclusive and gender-sensitive" (p. 2), resulting in what Bacchi and Eveline called "movement through engagement and interaction" (p. 338) and enabling "a politics of movement – a non-linear and unpredictable shifting of hearts and minds [...]" (p. 5).

WPR and Kayfabe. *What's the problem represented to be?* (WPR) is a gender mainstreaming approach discussed by Bacchi and Eveline (2010) which argues that "how 'problems' are represented has important effects for what can be seen as problematic, for what is silenced, and for how people think about these issues and about their place in the world" (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010, p. 112). WPR is what bridges the realms of the symbolic (kayfabe and wrestling philosophy) and the material (experiences of women and queer Filipino talents) in this paper: The philosophical themes underpinning professional wrestling are primarily symbolic, but because kayfabe (in which a symbolic world is passed off and accepted as real) is a cornerstone of pro wrestling, storytelling within kayfabe can serve as "a political intervention 'in the real', affecting how people are treated and how they live their lives" (p. 119). The implication is that kayfabe storytelling is and would be a viable mechanism/venue for gender mainstreaming in the world of pro wrestling. With MWF's Manilaverse, from its storylines to its characters, serving as both fictional representations of and

reactions to contemporary Filipino cultural tropes and issues, and therefore "reflections of the discourses and social practices [...] in which we are embedded" (p. 118), kayfabe-as-WPR becomes even more relevant in this paper, especially considering that MWF has already used kayfabe storytelling as a gender mainstreaming program/activity/project, or PAP, in a storyline (MWF, 2018a, 2018b) that will be discussed and analyzed further on in this paper.

Summary

As a whole, this analysis shows pro wrestling's potential as a creative avenue to address real-world social and gender issues. Phadke and Kirmani's work showed that there is an overlap between pleasurable activities and feminist activism, and that these are not mutually exclusive values. Paul and Blank provided insight into how athletic activities become avenues for women's empowerment. Barthes laid out how professional wrestling tells moral stories through the storytelling inherent in the art form, and Bacchi and Eveline's WPR is used to explain where Barthes theory of wrestling as a spectacle of Moral Justice fits into GAD. Combined, these works support the notion that pro wrestling is a unique social phenomenon with academic relevance, and explain how a GAD lens is applicable to it.

Methodology

Feminist Standpoint Theory (FST) asserts that those who face oppression based on their identities have epistemic privilege when it comes to immediate knowledge of everyday life under oppression (Narayan, 2004). The standpoint system does not reflect "every detail of what members of the [oppressed] group actually believe;" rather, it "presents issues of concern to them in ways that allow their objective interests to be revealed" (Jaggar, 2016, p. 305). Taking a qualitative approach to this research and using FST as a lens a la Paul and Blank (2015) allowed me to take the collected experiences and insights of women wrestlers and use them to highlight the ways in which men and women worked together (and among each other) within the community, as well as zoom in on the impact of gender issues (i.e. gender diversity, gender equality, and gender-based violence) on women wrestling talents and what roles these issues play in their recruitment, retention, and attrition. Because of this, I was able to:

1. gain a better understanding of the gender dynamics in Filipino pro wrestling from the point of view of Filipina pro wrestlers,
2. have a conversation about areas of opportunity from interview participants' perspectives, leading to the development of a bespoke intervention concept for MWF that could be efficient, effective, easy to implement, and easily-replicable by other Filipino pro wrestling promotions, to make their communities safer for women and queer talents, and
3. produce "objective knowledge" for a subject, industry, and community that has not yet been written about in a way that centers the lived experiences of "women and others who have been traditionally outside of the institutions in which knowledge about social life is generated and classified" (Naples & Gurr, 2014, p. 33).

Feminist research practice demands self-reflexivity and that "knowledge production should involve a collective process, rather than the individualistic, top-down, and distanced approach that typifies the traditional scientific method" (Naples & Gurr, 2014, p. 37). In this spirit, analysis

and critique throughout this paper have been framed in such a way that they would be useful to MWF, and potentially other professional wrestling promotions, to aid in their efforts for diversity, inclusion, and social relevance in their promotions.

Data Gathering Methods

From December 2020 to January 2021, I conducted interview sessions regarding gender issues with wrestling talents and executives from MWF. The initial findings from these sessions provide the backbone of the investigatory part of my research. Primary qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured online video and chat interviews with MWF talents, concurrent with secondary data collection. Interview participants were as follows:

1. Veronica Litton (transgender woman), co-founder, President, former Commissioner, and current Head of Creatives for MWF. Ring name[3] Veronica Shannon, known as "Mike Shannon" prior to her transition in 2018;
2. Fabio Makisig (cisgender man), MWF Head Coach[4] and COO;
3. Rogue (cisgender woman), a trainee under the 2019 cohort of the MWF Wrestling Factory, who initially wrestled for a different local promotion before its dissolution, and
4. Chelsea Marie (transgender woman), the first trans woman to join the MWF Wrestling Factory, also part of the 2019 cohort.

All interviewees were approached personally through online chat, with the research objectives and potential for publication explained to each one in turn. Gaining consent and conducting the interviews in this way required a level of trust and rapport with the participants—values that I have been able to cultivate over my years of friendship with each of them as individuals and my participation in the community.

All participants apart from Veronica requested to be referred to by their ring names for this paper. Veronica agreed to the use of her real name, with the condition that her in-ring surname "Shannon" be noted.

To support the discussion and analysis in this paper, I gathered data from articles in the MWF blog, posts from the MWF Facebook page, the official MWF podcast, third-party podcast interviews and related news articles, and visual segments featured in both the MWF Insider Blog and on the MWF YouTube channel. Finally, I reviewed a gender-focused MWF *Aksyonovela* storyline, *Out and About*.

Findings and Discussion

Gender Diversity and Equality in the "Fed"

In terms of numbers, men outnumbered women in MWF in 2021. While the promotion has a culture that celebrates gender diversity and attempts to enforce equality in the team, it still faces challenges in terms of recruiting and retaining women wrestling talents.

[2]A note on naming conventions in wrestling: Professional wrestlers are known to use stage names, or "ring names," in order to differentiate their kayfabe personas from their real-life ones.
[3]Fabio described this role as "I'm head coach, which also involves 'roster management' during shows […]. As head coach, I train and condition everyone and also make sure they're not trying to pull of [sic] suicidal shit," and defined "roster management" as "making sure nobody does something stupid, both in and out of the ring."

Diversity in Numbers. At the beginning of 2021, Fabio noted that the official MWF roster listed seven active wrestlers (all cisgender men), a total of three referees (two men and one woman, all cisgender), and four coaches (all cisgender men). Among the 2019 cohort of trainees in the MWF Factory, Chelsea counted 13 cisgender men, one cisgender gay man, two cisgender women, and one trans woman—herself. Meanwhile, the management team was made up of a small team of four: two cisgender men, one trans woman (Veronica), and one cisgender woman.

Table 1: *Count of MWF Talents Aggregated by Sex and Roles*

MWF talents as of January 2021			
	Total	Men	Women
Talent	29	25	4
Wrestlers in main roster	7	7	0
MWF Factory trainees	17	14	3
Referees	3	2	1
Coaches	4	4	0
Management	**4**	**2**	**2**

Despite the low number of women and LGBTQIA+ individuals in the organization, MWF prides itself on the diversity of its talents and staff. In a 2020 podcast interview, Veronica claimed that "in MWF it doesn't matter if you're a man, woman, straight, gay, transgender. [...] As long as you're passionate about what you're doing, and you're passionate about the promotion, and you put in the hard work, you're accepted" (De Mesa, 2020). Chelsea and Rogue affirmed this statement in their respective interviews. Most importantly, Chelsea said in our interview that the existence of local promotions like MWF allowed her to pursue her childhood dream of being a pro wrestler like WWE's Paige and AJ Lee—a dream she had all but given up on because she did not think that there would be any pro wrestling opportunities for her, being a) Filipino, and b) a Filipino trans woman.

Equality in the Locker Room: Mixing Up Gendered Expectations. In the MWF training room, Rogue averred, women's athletic prowess is recognized as equal to the men's. "*Walang gender.* If you get hit, you get hit." Chelsea, meanwhile, entered training aware of the debate around transgender women in full-contact sports, and fully expecting her gender identity to color the roster's perception of her. She was prepared for backlash, but "it didn't happen at all, which surprised me." She discovered afterwards that shortly before she arrived for her first day of training, Fabio, in his role as Head Coach, called for a roster meeting, announcing that the new addition to their team was a trans woman and saying "*Kung may problema kayo sa trans, umalis na kayo.* (If you have a problem with trans [people], leave now.)" This act—corroborated by Rogue, who was present during the meeting—alleviated Chelsea's anxiety. "It made me feel good that they already knew. Disclosing is not the funnest [sic] thing."

These statements and narratives point to a locker room culture within MWF that not only accepts, but also *enforces and expects* non-conformity to hetero-cisgender norms: The male wrestlers are expected to treat cis and trans women wrestlers the same way, regardless of their gender identity. The woman wrestler, in turn, is expected to be able to go toe-to-toe with her male counterparts, regardless of her gender expression.

Challenges to Gender Diversity and Equality in MWF

Representation and Retention. Fabio explained in our interview that while MWF had no women wrestlers in its main roster in 2021 (see Table 1), this was not always the case: The promotion had three women wrestlers between 2018-2019, but "[Wrestler 1] left for family reasons, [Wrestler 2] left to focus on stunts, and [Wrestler 3] left because of [the] sexual misconduct debacle.[5] " Fabio also made the observation that women wrestling talents "are hard to come by for various reasons. When they do, there's the matter of keeping their morale up to keep them from leaving. If they do persist sa training, the hurdle becomes passing the athletic requirements. Which is preeetty [sic] difficult. 2018 Factory had 30+ applicants but only 8 passed with eventually 4 graduating. 2019 Factory had around 50 applicants but was whittled down."

Challenges Affecting Retention of Women Wrestlers. Interviews with participants suggest that economic, social, and environmental factors play a part in why women wrestlers are "hard to come by." Challenges related to money, family, and sexual harassment were recurring themes throughout the data gathering process. In our interviews, Chelsea and Rogue shared similar experiences they felt kept them from pursuing wrestling full-time: the notion that it is not lucrative employment, the threat of sexual harassment, and unsupportive friends and family members who see wrestling as a dangerous sport for a woman.

Being told that wrestling is "a dangerous sport for a woman" is an experience women wrestlers share with Paul and Blank's women's derby athletes, whose friends and family members "expressed a form of paternalism, arguing that the risk of physical injury and pain was too great for a woman (Paul & Blank, 2015, p. 59)." A running theme in Bueza's 2018 interviews with Filipina wrestlers was discouraging comments related to the intersection of womanhood and pro wrestling: Starling was called "crazy" for her "unladylike" interest in pro wrestling, and also related that "some nobody from another promotion made a sexist comment saying females are the inferior gender" (Bueza, 2018). Tala Haliya shared that "I have people saying I won't make it." Rogue accepted that "there will be a lot of haters." Because of this, women wrestlers place emphasis on having "guts" (Starling and Crystal), "dedication and faith in yourself" (Rogue), "a great deal of heart and willpower" (Ashura), and emotional "toughness" (Robynn).

Unique Challenges Related to Transgender Identity. Chelsea related in our interview that while she felt full acceptance within the MWF roster, her identity as a trans athlete necessarily added another layer of challenges on top of the ones she shares with other women wrestlers. She expressed anxiety about potential fan reaction to her debut, especially considering her desire to vie for a women's championship title, should one ever materialize. She also expressed concerns about what her kayfabe persona would be upon her debut, relating that a male manager once approached her with a gimmick that would portray her as a comedic wrestler—a barangay trans beauty queen, in reference to her real-life participation in the widely-televised *Eat Bulaga Super Sireyna* pageant. Feeling that the trope was much too stereotypical, however, and fearing that it may hinder her from being taken seriously as an athlete, she refused the concept.

[4] Referring to the 2020 sexual harassment incident described in MWF 2020a.

Gender-based Violence in Philippine Pro Wrestling

Gender-based violence (GBV) in the form of sexual harassment of female wrestling talents surfaced as a recurring theme throughout interviews with this study's participants, which they related to a culture of sexual objectification they perceived as persisting throughout the professional wrestling industry. Threats to the safety of women and LGBTQIA+ athletes negatively affect not only the athletes themselves, but also impact the company in terms of talent acquisition, talent retention, and public opinion. As COO and Head Coach, Fabio noted that the well-being of women athletes is crucial in terms of the promotion's bottom line. Despite (or perhaps because of) being a male-dominated industry, he says that "men aren't that lucrative in this game, and the headaches (in) training men and women just make investing in female wrestlers more cost-effective."

Sexual Harassment and Objectification. Sexual harassment negatively affects how women athletes experience their wrestling careers on both a physical and psychological level. The threat of harassment undermines their sense of personal safety and has a negative impact on their psyche as well, in that being seen as "sex objects" makes them feel invalidated as athletes, dampens their enjoyment of the sport, makes them less likely to engage in fan interactions, and could potentially make them quit the industry.

Instances of Harassment among Filipino Women Wrestlers. Women wrestlers outside of MWF have reported instances of online stalking, sexual innuendo, and unwanted touching from men both within their promotions and among their audience (Go, 2020). In 2020, PWR wrestlers Crystal and Nina came forward with stories of sexual harassment within their promotion (ABS-CBN, 2020; Go, 2020; PWR, 2020a). During our interview, Rogue recollected similar instances of sexual harassment as a wrestler in her previous promotion, like having her personal Facebook profile stalked by a fan and encountering real-life instances of wrestling-related sexual comments such as *"Ah,* wrestler *ka? Tara,* wrestling *tayo sa kama* (Oh, you're a wrestler? Come on, let's wrestle in bed)."

Sexual Objectification in Locker Room Talk. In our interview, Fabio shared insights and observations on "locker room talk" and the local wrestling culture that support women's experiences of harassment and objectification:

> There's this concept of 'ring rats,' basically groupies of pro wrestling. When I trained with other companies, boys' locker room talk involved mostly of groupies and which female trainee is hot… It's disgusting and disturbing. [Wrestling promotion] is particularly notorious for having a '*bakod* club' which involves the management 'putting up fences' on female trainees so they can set her up with their male friends. I heard it's very predatory there.

Fabio also mused that "MWF was able to extricate itself from such culture by the [sic] virtue of having less pro wres [sic] fans. Most of the wrestlers, believe it or not, aren't pro wrestling fans. So we're removed from the 'boys locker room' of pro wrestling, and end up being simply individuals who participate in this."

Handling Instances of GBV in Pro Wrestling.

MWF's "Zero-Tolerance" Policy on GBV. MWF is not without its own incidents of GBV. In 2019, MWF fulfilled a talent exchange obligation involving, Veronica says, "one particular [non-Filipino] wrestler who was a bit of an unintentional creep." Fabio mentioned mobilizing the roster to "protect" the women of MWF from this "creep" by "[telling] the boys to always keep an eye out for him, and if he ever approaches a woman, make sure to join the conversation and steer the woman away to 'protect' her." Apart from this incident, both Fabio and Veronica made references in their respective interviews to a 2020 "sexual misconduct debacle" perpetrated by an MWF decision-maker which led to both the perpetrator's removal from the upper management team *and* the resignation of one of the MWF's three female wrestlers.[6]

Interestingly, the interviewees maintained that MWF strictly enforces a zero-tolerance policy for GBV within and outside the promotion despite these incidents. Veronica highlighted in our interview that "the [MWF] boys will go out of their way to protect the girls if they have to." Chelsea and Rogue affirmed that they have never felt unsafe among the male wrestlers of MWF, despite being vastly outnumbered as women. When I asked about sexual harassment within the MWF roster, Rogue pointed out that Fabio takes on the role of locker room enforcer[7] when it comes to MWF's zero-tolerance policy on sexual harassment, so "*kapag nagkaroon ka ng ganoon sa* MWF, *sisipain ka ni* Fabio (If you try to pull something like that in MWF, Fabio will kick[8] you)."

Fabio's actions are examples of what Holmes and Flood (2013) call "individual men and men's networks in workplaces acting as 'champions' of violence prevention in the workplace" (Holmes & Flood, 2013, p. 5). By both mobilizing "the boys" in his capacity as an authority figure as well as using the threat of physical force as a deterrent, Fabio enforces a standard of behavior "undermining established masculine norms and cultures" (Holmes & Flood, 2013, p. 3) of, in this case, so-called "boys' locker room" behavior, in MWF.

Challenges to Handling Incidents of GBV. While MWF itself claims a zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment and other forms of GBV within its ranks, interviewee narratives strongly suggested that there is no guarantee of safety when non-MWF entities are involved. Despite MWF's tight-knit, protective culture, the fact that there are still instances where "the girls" even have to be protected from personalities from outside the promotion suggests that MWF's internal anti-GBV culture is the exception, not the norm, in the Philippine wrestling scene. For example: Rogue accepts Veronica's claims that MWF does "all safety measures possible" to prevent fans from invading wrestlers' personal space during its shows. But what of the spaces beyond shows? After all, Rogue has experienced online stalking and sexual harassment from audience members of her previous promotion, so, as she says in our interview, she would feel much safer, and would enjoy interacting with fans more, if the sexualization and harassment of women athletes was less of an occupational hazard overall.

[5] See MWF 2020a for the promotion's full statement on workplace harassment and the actions it took regarding incidents of sexual harassment in the promotion.

[6] In a pro wrestling context, an "enforcer" is defined as "a wrestler who keeps order [...] in the locker room by threat of physical force" (Shoemaker, 2014).

[7] Asked whether she meant "sisipain" (lit. "will kick") figuratively, as in firing the perpetrator, or literally, Rogue quipped: "Literally. Malakas siya manipa (He kicks hard)."

MWF has shown a willingness to address GBV in the wrestling community (see MWF, 2020a), but there is, according to Fabio, "a limited capacity to enforce." Since the pro wrestling industry in the Philippines is still in its infancy, there is neither a formal sector-wide authority yet that can hold promotions accountable for sexual harassment cases, nor enough funding or even HR personnel for a promotion to be able to pursue formal/dedicated anti-sexual harassment measures. The result is reactive company policies (MWF, 2020a; PWR, 2020b) that can deal with sexual harassment incidents only as they happen. "At the very least we can try to control our own ranks," Fabio says in our interview, "but there isn't much in space *[sic]* for punishments really."

Intervention Concept: Exploring and Mainstreaming Gender through Kayfabe Storytelling

"Out and About" for Gender Diversity and Equality. MWF is no stranger to bringing gender issues to the fore in its storytelling. In September 2018, it became the first wrestling promotion in the Philippines to explicitly include a storyline about gender sensitivity: *Out and About*.

Out and About is a story arc within the MWF's *Manilaverse* that serves as an example of how kayfabe storytelling can work as a gender mainstreaming initiative grounded in WPR. The precipitating incident occurred in the 2018 live show *MWF 3: Republika*, in which Rex Lawin (a heel character from MWF) faced off against Martivo (a visiting face from PWR) in a match that deliberately pitted diametrically-opposed representations of Filipino manhood against each other:

> Martivo is the rainbow warrior, a man who is unapologetically himself and a reflection of how far acceptance and tolerance have come in the Philippines; a new wave of strong and eclectic Filipino men. On the other hand, Rex Lawin represents the toughness and aggression of traditional Filipino masculinity. And yet, he accepts and understands these differences without any issues. Here we have two characters that represent the past and future of Filipino men, understanding each other. (Litton, 2018b)

After their match, Rex Lawin took the Pride flag Martivo came in with and wiped his sweat with it, to the sound of booing from the audience. Veronica confirmed in our interview that this action was consistent with Rex Lawin's character as a macho heel, although the specific act itself was not scripted. "It was something he did impromptu. [Rex Lawin] saw the Pride flag and went for it. He apologized to me when he got backstage and I told him that I was both proud of him as a heel and slightly offended by his actions. […] We wanted to do something that built itself off what Rex did, so we decided to do *Out and About* from that" (V. Litton, personal communication, January 6, 2021).

Out and About was written into the Aksyonovela series as an in-universe intervention following the events of *Republika*. The first part of the storyline serves as a prologue and opens in a boardroom, with Rex Lawin being reprimanded for the Pride flag incident by his manager, Gus Queens. Lawin is told that his action was offensive to LGBT+ individuals, and therefore "bad for business." Queens then books a private gender sensitivity training seminar for Lawin, and decides at the last minute to accompany the wrestler (MWF, 2018a). The second part of the storyline focuses on the seminar itself, opening with the fictional CMS gender sensitivity training team preparing for their appointment and following them as they begin to lecture the two heels on the basics of

SOGIESC. Lawin and Queens are shown as attentive students, asking questions that prompt the trainers—Mike Shannon (Veronica's ring name at the time), PWR wrestler Robynn, and Martivo himself—to expound on SOGIESC concepts until the subject becomes clear to both learners. The segment ends with Rex Lawin and Gus Queens thanking the group for educating them, and the trainers pleased with the results of the seminar (MWF, 2018b).

In terms of the Barthesian story arc, *Out and About* demonstrates Rex Lawin using the LGBT+ Pride flag as a rag as the "base action," with the forced attendance in a gender sensitivity training seminar as the corresponding "blow." The problem of toxic masculinity is "resolved" in the world of kayfabe on two levels of Barthes' *salaud*: Rex Lawin, the *salaud* unaware of the impact of his actions; and Gus Queens, the *salaud* who recognizes that there are actions so abhorrent that even heels, who are supposed to be "organically repugnant" (Barthes, 1972, p. 17), cannot get away with them. In using the gender sensitivity seminar storyline as a tool to humble the traditionally macho heel character, not only does MWF present and normalize SOGIESC education among its audience, it also categorically states that the acceptance of gender diversity "in the real" is what is Moral and Just (CMS as the face organization), and that to act otherwise would make one worse than the worst villain (heel manager Gus Queens reprimanding co-heel Rex Lawin).

While Rex Lawin, Gus Queens, the CMS organization, etc. are all fictional characters operating in a symbolic world, their actions matter "in the real": Veronica says that public response was overwhelmingly positive when *Out and About* was aired live later that year, during *MWF 4: Road to Fate*: "Public response was amazing! I actually cried when it aired during the show. It was when I mentioned I had started transitioning, and it got an applause. It was [so] overwhelming that I broke down in tears." Apart from *Out and About* having been an instrumental tool that allowed Veronica to shed her "Mike Shannon" persona and announce her transition in front of a live audience, the video has been used as a teaching tool beyond the world of wrestling. "I found out from my ex-girlfriend's mom that she would use the *Out and About* video during seminars to help people understand SOGIE better," Veronica says.

There is an opportunity to facilitate even greater gender diversity in MWF, according to Chelsea, if the company writes more women-centered storylines and rivalries. If budget allows, she says, it would be helpful to hire more women as storyline writers in order "to balance out the male and female perspectives," and from a marketing standpoint, to reel in more women into the fandom. In embedding gender-related storylines into the *Manilaverse*, MWF can make room for further discourse of gender issues in the industry, turning kayfabe into a tool that not only depicts these issues, but also prescribes feminist courses of action not only for its target audience, but also for those who may come by it through other means (e.g. seeing *Manilaverse* content shared by friends on social media), thus triggering the creation of a "safe space" *a la* Phadke (2020) and proving true Bacchi and Eveline's view of policy as a creative process that has both subjectification *and* lived effects (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010).

Un-silencing the Realities of GBV in Pro Wrestling through Kayfabe.

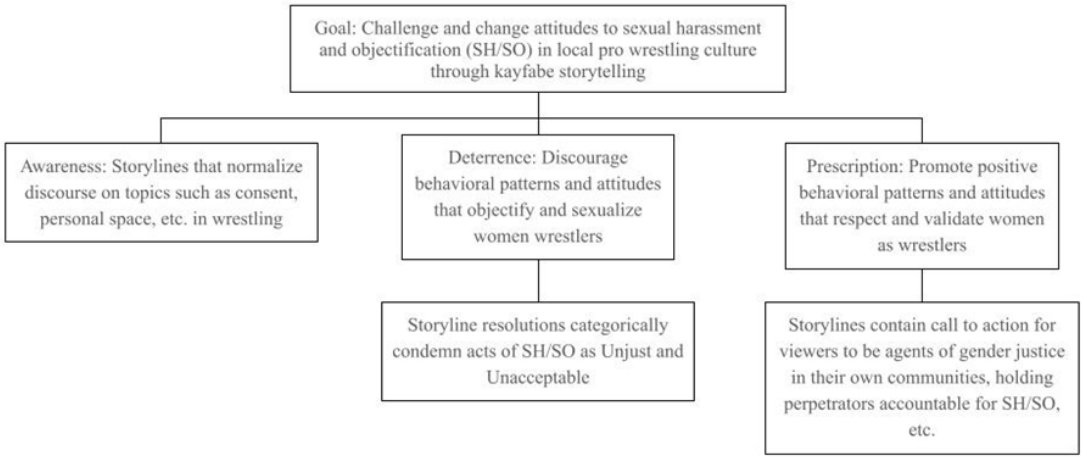
"While numerous studies have explored risk factors for GBV in the workplace, relatively little research has been devoted to developing effective agents of change. It is necessary to actively engage in understanding and implementing appropriate government policies and workplace programs that address gender-based violence in the workplace, to invest in research that meets

these goals, and to advocate for responsive regulation in the workplace against GBV." (Center for Women's Global Leadership, n.d.)

The positive reception of *Out and About* among and outside MWF's audience strongly suggests that wrestling promotions may already have the means to address and raise awareness of GBV in a manner that requires no additional training or funding on their part. Developing storylines that address the issue of sexual harassment within kayfabe as a proactive effort to challenge the "boys-will-be-boys" culture that is perceived to be rife within the local professional wrestling community is a strategy that may have the ability to affect how wrestling fans perceive and approach similar gender issues.

In our interview, Rogue suggested that storylines "can influence how fans perceive their heroes. Having [real-world issues] represented in a storyline and creating a lesson from it can work with fans, especially the younger ones. This can serve as an education for everyone." Just as *Out and About* served as a morality tale for gender diversity, a storyline tackling themes of sexual harassment and objectification (SH/SO) can challenge and change current attitudes to sexual harassment and sexual objectification "in the real."

Figure 2 *Objectives Tree for Kayfabe-Oriented Intervention Concept*



As seen in the case of *Out and About*, pro wrestling's use of heel vs. face storytelling makes it possible to deter and prescribe certain behaviors and attitudes. Applied to issues of GBV, what this means is that it is possible for pro wrestling promotions to not only raise awareness of SH/SO issues by normalizing discussions on consent, personal space, etc. in kayfabe, but also to make a stand against the objectification and sexualization of women wrestlers by developing storylines in which these behavioral patterns and attitudes are tagged as unjust and unacceptable heel behavior (with the perpetrator/s meant to be booed throughout the narrative and punished in-universe by the end of the story arc) and in contrast, promoting behaviors and actions that respect and validate women wrestlers via the actions of heroic face characters who aim to inspire viewers to be agents of gender justice "in the real" in their own communities.

Barthes describes wrestling as a "theater of Moral Justice," a kind of interactive morality play where heels are jeered and faces are cheered live by a captive audience. This dynamic, powered by the kayfabe storytelling that prompts it, can be leveraged to 1) present real-world gender issues like gender diversity, gender equality, and GBV to wrestling audiences, 2) normalize conversations

surrounding these issues, and 3) prescribe ways to resolve gender-based oppressions "in the real." Should the Philippine pro wrestling industry deliberately pursue this course, it would fulfill wrestling's Barthesian purpose as "a mythological fight between Good and Evil [...] based on ethics, not politics" (Barthes, 1972, p. 23).

Conclusion: Philippine Pro Wrestling's Potential as a Feminist Space

> *Focusing on the pursuit of fun and enjoyment can be an important way in which women push against and challenge patriarchal boundaries, even if these acts may not always fall squarely into the category of what is generally thought of as political resistance within academic discourse. (Kirmani, 2020, p. 2)*

Professional wrestling is a niche industry in the Philippines that participants persist in primarily for self-actualization and love of the game. While the scene is male-dominated in terms of numbers, the data is clear on two points. One, there are women who dream of being pro wrestlers. Two, having a local wrestling scene gives these women the opportunity to pursue their dreams. The passion that Filipino women pro wrestlers have for their industry and the value they represent to their promotions is what gives Philippine pro wrestling the potential to be a space for feminist transformation under a GAD perspective. It pushes for gender equality with its intergender nature (Bueza, 2018) that allows women and queer athletes access to a unique combination of physicality and fun. It allows women wrestlers to challenge "paternalism and traditional notions of femininity" (Paul & Blank, 2015, p. 59) by emphasizing their ability to resist pain and their being "badass." The larger-than-life personas they adopt, coupled with the high-octane stunts they perform for the crowd, give them an avenue to discover and express confidence and badass-ness in front of an audience that cheers on their displays of assertiveness. In turn, Filipinos of feminine and/or queer experience within the audience are granted the opportunity to see themselves reflected in the characters they see onstage, to participate in the "theater of Moral Justice" that is kayfabe, and to even be inspired to wrestle themselves.

As for the Manila Wrestling Federation, which prides itself on the diversity of its staff (De Mesa, 2020), its stance on gender equality (Litton 2018a, 2018b; MWF, 2020b), and its strong views against GBV (MWF 2020a, 2020b), the participatory interviews and textual analysis done for this paper support the assertion that as a company, it *does* make deliberate attempts to be as diverse, progressive, and gender-equal as it can be in its storylines and day-to-day operations, to have a company culture that strives to be supportive and welcoming for people of diverse SOGIESC, and to actively reject misogyny, transphobia, and sexual harassment while highlighting the badass-ness of its women and queer talents. There is more that needs to be done, but the promotion has built for itself a foundation that could foster an environment for the Philippine pro wrestling industry, as a whole, to be more inclusive, equitable, safer, and thus more enjoyable for wrestlers and fans of diverse SOGIESC—despite the very real and pressing issues women wrestlers face within the greater community (ABS-CBN News, 2020; Go, 2020; MWF, 2020b; PWR, 2020a, 2020b).

Considering how young the local wrestling scene is and the fact that MWF is one of the industry's pioneers, there is an opportunity here for MWF to use its influence and its storytelling to help develop the up-and-coming local wrestling culture in such a way that it follows MWF's moral compass. Because professional wrestling is a space where people are encouraged to boo a heel's villainous actions as loudly as they cheer for a face's heroic ones (Barthes, 1972), when an

influential promotion like MWF writes kayfabe storylines with resolutions that have a progressive and/or feminist bent like *Out and About* (MWF 2018a, 2018b)—where feminist values like equality, diversity, and inclusivity are coded Good and their opposites are coded Evil—storytelling becomes a powerful memetic tool that creates safe spaces for activism, self-expression, and the empowerment of marginalized identities. Kayfabe becomes a space that provides an opening for viewers and consumers of wrestling content, whether or not they identify as wrestling enthusiasts, to push back against rigid gender codes and oppressions. In doing this, Filipino pro wrestling not only fulfills its symbolic role *a la* Barthes, but also cements what Kirmani calls "the potential that enjoyment holds for the transformation of the structure of gendered power relations" (Kirmani, 2020, p. 11). It becomes a space where fun becomes political, where entertainment becomes activism, and where oppressive, patriarchal norms are confronted head-on, brought over the proverbial top rope, and thrown right out of the ring.

Glossary of Terms

Aksyonovela	a portmanteau of "action" and "telenovela," the Manila Wrestling Federation (MWF)'s Aksyonovela series serves as the main "plot" of MWF's kayfabe
cisgender/cis	a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth (IOM, 2020)
face (or babyface)	refers to a wrestler whose kayfabe persona is a heroic archetype
Gender and Development (GAD)	a perspective on development with the stated goal of attaining "organisation-wide commitment to gender equality" (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010, p. 42)
heel	refers to a wrestler whose kayfabe persona is a villainous archetype
kayfabe	[kei-feyb] the pro wrestling industry's convention of presenting pro wrestling personas, feuds, and storylines as authentic, i.e., not scripted or staged (Shoemaker, 2014)
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and "people with diverse SOGIESC who identify using other terms" (IOM, 2020)
Manilaverse	MWF's term for their kayfabe; the setting in which their kayfabe storylines are set
promotion	in pro wrestling, a company that regularly performs professional wrestling shows (Shoemaker, 2014)
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, Sex Characteristics (IOM, 2020)
transgender/trans	a person whose gender identity differs from the gender identity typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth (IOM, 2020)

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The Case of #HijaAko and What Digital Feminist Activism Means for the Filipina Identity

Francie Kaye B. Sabalza

ABSTRACT

Digital spaces, confronted with digital feminist activism, transform (and are transformed by) the Filipina identity. This is particularly the case for the resistance and reclaiming of being Filipina through #HijaAko. Its emergence is an embodiment of the long history of feminist resistance in the country, signaling its breakthrough into mainstream consciousness. By granting reality to the voices that emerged from #HijaAko, I am rendering visibility to Filipinas, as their narratives and truths transcend the limitations and hesitations of online consumer-capitalist discourses. These discourses often perceive their stories as de-politicized communicative exchanges, disregarding the necessary attention to context and content. I emphasize the necessity of this perspective to supplement the few local studies of digital spaces employing a feminist analysis. Through qualitative content analysis, tweets were categorized and analyzed from a feminist standpoint using Digital Feminist Activism (Keller et al., 2019) as a framework informed by digital anthropology (Brudvig, 2019). #HijaAko weaves thousands of voices of Filipinas in affective solidarity (Hemmings, 2012)—a mobilizing concept that incites movement for social change—while creating affective publics (Papacharissi, 2015) and connected communities of care. More than calling out against victim blaming and debunking rape misconceptions, the hashtag also reveals how social institutions themselves—supposedly safe spaces—become common places where perpetrators lurk, extending the critique of systems of injustice perpetuating unsafe spaces. Lastly, #HijaAko asserts inclusivity as it becomes a declaration (Hija Ako) for resistance and reclamation of what being a Filipina means, recognizing her historical suppression and invisibility while transcending such limitations. This paper hopes to contribute to and expand the documentation of contexts and discourses valuable in positioning identities, communities, and phenomena in the time of digitalization.

Introduction

It was more than two years ago when #HijaAko sparked a digital national campaign against rape culture. Kakie Pangilinan, a Filipina singer-songwriter, publicly criticized Ben Tulfo—a Filipino media personality known for his investigations on crime and corruption—on Twitter for his attempt at justifying Lucban Municipal Police Station's "anti-rape" tips that might have just perpetuated rape itself (Manuel, 2020). A now deleted Facebook post from a police station in Quezon Province includes a snide remark: "… *wag kayo magsuot ng pakaikli-ikling damit at pag naman nabastos ay magsusumbong din sa amin* (do not dress short for if you are harassed, you will resort to us anyway to file for complaints)." Ben Tulfo supported the statement with faulty rhetoric, urging sexy ladies to be careful with how they dress lest they "invite the beast."

Figure 1. *Inviting the Beast*

To this, Kakie Pangilinan responded with convincing points—dismantling patriarchy and rape myths and, interestingly enough, embracing Ben Tulfo's addressing her as "hija" by quoting the tweet itself:

Figure 2. *"Calling Me an Hija will not Belittle my Point"*

As the uproar against Ben Tulfo's justification grew, Kakie Pangilinan amplified the response by starting the hashtag #HijaAko, seeing that the symbolism of its reclamation resonated as a common experience. As the number of tweets increased, more embraced the meaning behind the hashtag and willingly identified with it, recognizing that it symbolized their fight for rights.

Figure 3. *#HijaAko*

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, #HijaAko generated approximately 27,000 tweets on Twitter extending to other social media platforms. Soon, #HijaAko became a national digital campaign against rape culture, with young women on the frontline of social media retelling their narratives—only this time without fear of victim blaming. Drawing from their individual experiences of injustice and misogyny, they reveal their narratives to later be collectively shared.

Figure 4. *From @anikalanc*

> *tw// sexual harassment*
>
> *I was groped and deceived by a person i trusted; a person i even liked.*
>
> *this is my story #HijaAko*

Alongside sharing their stories and finding solidarity, they break the silencezS often associated with the topic of rape and in their collective voice pose a critique of wider systems of injustice and misogyny perpetuated by victim blaming, cultural norms, and institutional failures in the lack of support and protection for victims of sexual harassment.

Figure 5. *From @anikalanc*

> *this movement takes such big strides in showing solidarity with women who have been abused and assaulted. I am so proud of you*
>
> *Speaking up is never easy, but i hope that #HijaAko allows more people to realize the importance of believing victims, and allowing them justice*

Through #HijaAko, we are told not only stories of injustice but of confusion, contradiction, and dissonance that might just be too familiar for most Filipinas. More often than not, survivors of sexual violence are blamed and stigmatized. Instead of receiving support and understanding, they are usually held accountable for the violence perpetrated against them. The blame manifests in interrogating their actions, clothing choices, or even previous relationships (Diniz et al, 2020). But when the dissonance finds a commonality with the experience of others, it fosters what is identified as affective solidarity (Hemmings, 2012), which challenges societal norms perpetuating gender-based violence through their collective voice. Moreover, this dissonance allows solidarity to become heightened when the intensity of such narratives are recognized, and as the emotions and vulnerability of these women are placed at the forefront. The “soft structures" of storytelling that are social media provide a distinctive mode of communication known as *mediality* which, when intertwined with affect—fueled by the driving force of emotions—create and sustain affective publics strengthened by intensity, sensation, and value (Papacharissi, 2015).

I pay particular attention to such sensitivities of affect and solidarity as I document narratives from #HijaAko. Furthermore, I explore #HijaAko's digital feminist activism to supplement the few local studies of digital spaces employing a feminist analysis. Through qualitative content analysis, I document the emergence of #HijaAko's movement guided by the following research questions:

- From a feminist standpoint, what key themes emerge from the narratives documented through the hashtag #HijaAko, and how do these contribute to our knowledge and understanding of women's experiences and challenges in the country?
- How does the #HijaAko movement contributes to shaping the complexities of the Filipina identity with its continued (digital) transformation and feminist consciousness?
- Why is it important to value and acknowledge the narratives of #HijaAko in digital spaces?

Drawing from frameworks of Digital Feminist Activism (Keller et al., 2019) and Brudvig's (2019) Feminist Digital Anthropology, I aim to cull out similar themes in the #HijaAko movement as well as situate its unique form of Philippine feminism in the time of digitalization. By analyzing the voices that emerged from the #HijaAko movement, I am also affirming the visibility and agency of Filipinas as their narratives push past hesitations and censorship of their "value" online as suggested by consumer-capitalist discourses (Dean, 2009; Tolentino, 2021). In the context of communicative capitalism—or capitalist integration of communicative technologies—the "value" of these (online) narratives is limited and critiqued to merely reinforce capitalist systems being basic elements of capitalist production in communicative exchanges. In this paper, I extend the meaning of such "value" through a feminist analysis of digital spaces. In doing so, I render visibility to narratives that represent the real experiences of Filipinas that cannot be dismissed. This further extends to the acknowledgment of the construction, representation, and negotiation of gender, sexuality, and online identities that enables a deeper understanding of the transformative potential of digital spaces in building empowerment, solidarity, and resistance for individuals and communities.

Patriarchy and the Culture of VAW in the Philippines

Patriarchy, as understood by bell hooks, is defined and recognized as a "political-social system" that privileges masculinity as inherently dominating, thus reinforcing unequal power dynamics that perpetuate male domination and control of groups deemed weaker or subordinate , particularly women and femininity (hooks, 2012). In the patriarchal perspective, femininity is stereotypically associated with assumed "weak " qualities such as submissiveness, passivity, and dependency that support oppressive relations of subordination and domination (Cudd, 2006). The association and devaluation of femininity as "weak" render it vulnerable to power imbalances that enable and justify violence against women manifesting in mistreatment, exploitation, and abuse of women.

In recent overviews of VAW (Violence Against Women) in the Philippines, COVID-19 pandemic is noted to have been a time of increased vulnerability for women as they were trapped in their homes, suggesting mobility restrictions for safety and shelter, as the period coincided with an escalation of VAW-related and help-seeking internet searches (Commission on Human Rights, 2021; United Nations Women, 2021). Arevalo et al. (2022) point to socio-political and cultural structures that serve as barriers to seeking support, pointing to the sustained culture of victim blaming as well as state neglect manifested in the ineffective management and response for VAW

victims.

In the Philippines, one in four Filipino women experience gender-based violence, and almost half (41%) do not seek help (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2017). Victim blaming is suggested to be one of the reasons behind the small number of women who seek help. When women are held responsible for the gender-specific crimes committed against them (such as rape and sexual assault), it is often linked to the social acceptance and normalization of sexual violence against women (Diniz et al., 2020). This leads to shifting the attention away from the perpetrator and, to some extent, validates the guilt expressed by the victim.

In the case of the Philippines, violence against women is rooted in patriarchy that can be traced from the long history of colonialism. Under colonial rule, women were subjected to dominance and control of colonizers as influenced by patriarchal values. This is evident in the arrival of Spaniards in the Philippines, wherein the social status of the babaylan—who took the role as a cultural leader and traditional healer commonly associated with women or effeminate males (Salazar, 1994, as cited in Hega et al., 2017)—was perceived as a threat to the establishment of Christian beliefs. Thus, the demonization of their traditional spirituality and with it the weakening of their autonomy and leadership eventually led to the devaluation of women's (and femininity's) esteemed position in pre-colonial society (Hega et al., 2017). Sobritchea (2012) extends male dominance rooted in colonization as a form of fundamentalism; a need to control or regulate a woman's sexuality. Such control of sexuality entails restricting women to traditional gender roles and subjecting them to unequal gender relations. This is reflected in common Filipino sayings, such as, "Ang hindi makuha sa santong dasalan, makukuha sa santong paspasan," which means that if gentle persuasion is not enough for a woman to reciprocate a man's romantic or sexual intentions, then the use of violence or force is acceptable (Santos, 2006, as cited in Baloloy, 2013). This is not so far from traditional Filipino courtship practices, where the woman's consent is considered as "earned" by the man in the process, and therefore his entitlement, rather than the expressed desire of the woman.

A chapter in Amia Srinivasan's book entitled The Right to Sex (2021) details the nuances of rape as influenced by gendered sexual expectations. They draw from the "Yes Means Yes bill" —a legislative measure aimed at addressing sexual consent and preventing sexual violence—that emphasizes affirmative consent, which requires "affirmative, conscious, and voluntary" agreement to engage in sexual activity that should be ensured all throughout. This form of consent shifts the focus from the absence of a "no" to the presence of a clear and enthusiastic "yes" as the standard for sexual consent. Such sensitivity regarding consent ensures that sexual encounters are based on mutual respect, communication, and trust. Therefore, when consent is in any way dismissed and violated, this makes individuals vulnerable to sexual violence such as rape and sexual assault. Unfortunately, consent is often misunderstood and fails to be correctly interpreted due to factors such as gendered and societal attitudes, lack of awareness, and consent communication (Graves & Scott, 2017).

The persistence of rape myths, for one, contributes to misconceptions about consent. Rape myths are widely held false beliefs and attitudes that serve to justify and deny male sexual aggression towards women (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). They reflect perceptions of women shaped by patriarchal norms widely accepted by society, including the notion that women must change their actions, demeanor, or preferences in order to stop sexual assault. Patriarchal norms also manifest

in sexual aggression, wherein males cannot somehow control their "irrational sexual impulses," and that women must instead be "cautious of" and protect themselves against such (Nottinghamshire Sexual Violence Support Services, n.d).

According to Ryan (2011), rapists and sexual offenders are surrounded by beliefs that encourage sexual narcissism, victim blaming, and the denial of rape. Morever, rape scripts, defined more specifically as societal beliefs about what rape should look like (Hockett et al., 2015), revolve around culturally established patterns of behavior that imply sexual desire and behavior. These (stereo)typical assumptions of rape influence people's perceptions and expectations of what a rape should look like, possibly dismissing or invalidating experiences that do not align with these preconceived notions. Baloloy (2014) found that some Filipino male rapists saw female rape victims as "accessible" and therefore responsible for rape. When victim blaming becomes normalized and strengthened through rape scripts, it causes harmful consequences against the victim-survivors such as stigmatization, reinforcement of stereotypes, promotion of aggression, and worse—trivialization and denial of their experience. While each victim-survivor's experience is unique, trauma, shame, and fear of not being believed remain to be the known implications of the prevalence of rape myths that manifest unsafe spaces (Browne & Finkelhor, 1985). These conditions discourage individuals from disclosing their experiences.

COVID-19 and Unreported Narratives

One way we can notice unreported narratives is through the statistical "drops" in VAW reports during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly at its start. According to documented reports from the Philippine National Police, there was a 27.2% decrease in cases of VAW in the Philippines during 2022 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020). However, this decrease does not entirely suggest its direct decrease. Eala et al. (2022) pointed to quarantine lockdowns that confined victims of VAW to their homes with restricted mobility in seeking help.

A big data analysis on women at the time of COVID-19 reported that, in general, violence against women and girls rose with the lockdown measures, and with it internet searches related to physical, sexual, and psychological violence grew by 63% in the Philippines (United Nations Population Fund Asia and the Pacific, 2021). More than its implication of ineffective documentation and surveillance systems during the pandemic is the likelihood that there are numerous cases of VAW that have gone unreported and undocumented.

Khullar's (2021) analyses, as gathered by the IPCS (Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies), delve into the impact of COVID-19 on women. Data gathered show that there is a discrepancy between the steady increase of documented rape cases from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) and the overwhelming number of cases initially brought to the Philippine National Police (PNP). Conflicting data reveal there is a lapse in data collection accounting for unreported cases (Khullar, 2021).

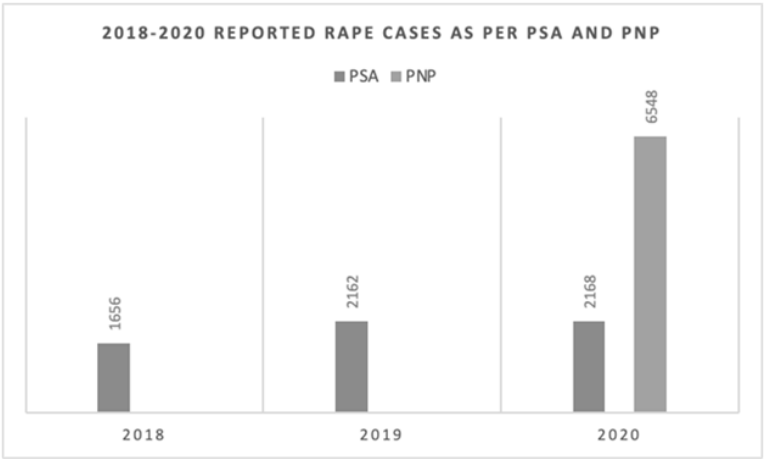


Figure 6. *2018-2020 Reported Rape Cases in the Philippines as Per PSA and PNP by Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (Khullar, 2021).*

As seen in Figure 6, there is seemingly a steady and slow increase in the documented rape cases by the PSA from 2018 to 2020 (from 1,656 to 2,168 reported rape cases) as compared to the astounding number of cases (6,548) reported to the PNP. Ambiguous and incoherent data makes it difficult to judge the prevalence of cases on sexual violence. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) states that a decrease in documented data on rape and sexual assault to authorities suggests that only a few cases were actually reported to criminal justice authorities, as evidenced in some countries that recorded decreases immediately after lockdown implementation but returned to pre-existing upward/increasing trends afterward. Thus, it "highlight(s) the need to ensure proper channels to remain open for women to report violence during lockdowns" (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020, p. 4).

Unreported narratives indicate that the true extent of violence against women and girls during the pandemic is likely underestimated. The actual numbers can be far greater than what is shown in the data. This emphasizes how crucial it is to acknowledge the experiences of survivors who continue to be silenced, unheard, and unsupported.

At this stage of my inquiry, I started searching for spaces, expressions, and representations of these unreported narratives that appeared overlooked, merely labeled as a statistical "gap. " Indeed, I found digital spheres and social media platforms to be one of the many spaces that allowed these stories solace. At the same time, it was also at the peak of the pandemic that I observed the rise of #HijaAko in social media, bringing forth numerous untold stories of Filipinas reclaiming themselves and their experiences. I found this reminiscent of the #MeToo movement when women broke their silence against gender-based violence, as well as its capacity to situate intersectional contexts like #inclusivelockdown that allowed African women to share their concerns (Ali-Ali, 2020; Stone & Vogelstein, 2021). Inspired by #HijaAko's unique emergence and circumstance, I felt compelled to capture and document the essence of this movement at its pulse.

Feminist Activism

As discussed, it now becomes clear that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly affected women due to gendered factors, including an increase in gender-based

violence with limited access to support services. In recognizing these realities, feminist activism can play a vital role in raising awareness and calling urgent attention to address these pressing issues. By utilizing gender as an analytical lens, we can identify and understand ongoing disparities and, in response to such, advocate for social change, economic empowerment, inclusivity, as well as reproductive rights and bodily autonomy.

In the Philippines, we look to the history of women's social movements as a source of inspiration for feminist activism. The Filipina has always been in struggle for visibility despite suppression, control, and victimization (Hega et al., 2017) – as evident in the women's contributions in the realm of literature during the Philippine revolution against Spain, the struggle for women's suffrage in 1937, the resistance to oppressive rule under Marcos from 1972 to 1986, and the organization for working women's rights, among many (Aquino, 2010; Santiago, 2007). Despite political recognition, there is no doubt that the subordinate position of women in many aspects of life continues to prevail. Santiago (2010) claims that up to now the construction of the image of women remains a disturbing phenomenon: a sex symbol. But more resilient amidst this subordination is the Filipina's continuous struggle to transform its reputation while bearing the burden of its history. The social construction of the Filipina need not be static to submission. To Santiago (2010), there is enough reason in our history, our culture, and our life for feminist thought and movement; and it is this movement that is the basis for women's resistance to the concepts of suppression imposed by the conquerors that begets cycles of violence.

Furthermore, Hega et al. (2017) reflects on the persisting challenges in the implementation of laws and their direct improvement in the lives of women. It also emphasizes the necessity of amplifying advocacies like divorce and abortion that are more often than not are absent in debates among other social movements. As the women's movement in the Philippines continues to evolve, Hega et al. (2017) also acknowledges the significance of online campaigns as an effective tool to "spread" feminism, encouraging youth's solidarity and interaction with all women that could gather and provide more political impact.

The feminist movement in the Philippines has also built linkages with similar movements in different countries and regions, largely contributing to the global feminist struggle (Hega et al., 2017). In the context of broader historical developments of feminist activism, consciousness raising has created spaces for women to come together and share personal experiences, reflections, and self-transformation. Here, women gained the strength to challenge patriarchal forces at work and home (hooks, 2000). These consciousness-raising groups were later used by radical feminists who first politicized rape as a feminist issue—revealing the structural roots of its use to maintain men's dominance over women (Bevacqua, 2000, as cited in Rutherford, 2011)—not only as a result of sexism and misogyny but also colonialism, poverty, and imperialism. Early feminists quickly recognized that gender oppression extended beyond national boundaries and became aware of the need for global justice. They expanded consciousness-raising spaces to address these issues on a global scale. Despite facing challenges regarding representation, these networks of women's movements became a potent resource for leveraging globalization in transnational feminist activism (Ferree, 2006).

A notable theme in feminist activism is the act of reclaiming and taking back power and agency in response to VAW issues. One such recent social movement is the SlutWalk—a global movement that emerged from Toronto, Canada as a response to victim-blaming attitudes towards

survivors of sexual assault and violence against women. Women and allies gathered to demonstrate a challenge to rape culture, often dressing provocatively or in ways traditionally stigmatized as "revealing," and literally walked through public streets as a way to take back or reclaim streets (and bodies) as supposed safe space (Mendes, 2015). These themes are not far from what Roces (2012) observes as the "double narrative" of victimization that portrayed Filipinas as both victims and empowered agents. This transformation from "victim" to "activist" celebrated the rejection of passive victimization and the adoption of a collective identity aimed at advocating against VAW and victim blaming.

Feminist activism in the Philippines, as informed and one with the global feminist struggle, persists in contemporary social movements. I noticed parallel themes of reclaiming public spaces during the height of COVID-19 pandemic, as voices of young Filipinas emerged through the digital feminist activism of such movements as #HijaAko. This study focuses on documenting narratives and surfacing themes from the #HijaAko movement. In this paper, I specifically situate the "Hija" as an emerging complexity of the Filipina identity in the context of digital feminist activism.

#HijaAko and Digital Feminist Activism

With social media drawing our recognition of online campaigns in spreading feminism (Hega et al., 2017), this begs us to look closely at how feminist activism takes place within digital spaces (Keller et al., 2019). For instance, as social media becomes a site for storytelling and interactions that form "networked publics" that produce "feelings of community" (Papacharissi, 2014), it does not come as a surprise that social media platforms become capable of influencing social and political movements. Over the years, there has been a significant rise in hashtag feminisms characterized by digital feminist activism, referring to the use of hashtags on social media as means to promote feminist ideas, discussions, and activism (Keller et al., 2019). It was only in 2017 when the #MeToo movement caught our attention. Reported to have been used 19 million times on Twitter, the movement's hashtag provided women the space to share personal stories of sexual violence (Keller et al., 2019). Stone and Vogelstein (2021) detail how hashtags like #MeToo translated into other digital languages, sparking a global reckoning that has become a collective framework for movements across the globe. With hashtags like #ArewaMeToo and China's #MeToo starting from women across the world sharing their stories, their rallying cry expands the agenda beyond sexual harassment into a campaign against wider and entire systems of inequality. This is similar to the Philippines' #BabaeAko movement in 2018, named one out of many in Time magazine's "Most Influential People on the Internet," which arose as a response to Duterte's misogynistic remarks and became a physical social movement by protest (Rappler, 2018). Furthermore, Alingasa and Ofreneo (2020) describe the #BabaeAko movement as a form of discursive activism, both calling out against misogyny and as a call for solidarity/action.

Following the pandemic, the transition to digital spaces allowed the recognition of platforms that women can collectively share as a form of storytelling and resistance. In Africa, advocacy platform FEMNET launched a particular hashtag #inclusivelockdown to share their concerns (Ali-Ali, 2020). In describing the creation of feminist online spaces in the Philippines during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, Laguilles-Timog and Cruz (2021) propose its creation and maintenance as a response to gender issues and mobility restrictions, decreasing boundaries between offline and online spaces. They emphasize the transformative potential of feminism capable of shaping online spaces during and beyond crisis situations (such as the COVID-19 pandemic).

#HijaAko, in particular, rose as a response against rape culture and victim blaming at the height of the pandemic. It presents itself as a medium for which truths and experiences (regardless of timeframe) can be reported and shared through networked publics—simultaneously a space and a collection of people restructured by network technologies (Boyd, 2010, as cited in Papacharissi, 2015). Drawing from Paparacharissi's affective publics, defined as public formations of storytelling structures that are primarily affective (2015), I extend that #HijaAko creates a distinctive feminist online space that challenges traditional notions of physical space with its emergence unfolding online.

Furthermore I attempt to highlight narratives through the digital space #HijaAko has created. I argue that numbers do not capture the intensity of narratives, stories, and experiences of a body reclaiming itself from its own trauma. This strengthens the importance of women who speak up, and more so the spaces we give for these narratives to remain true and existing at a point in time.

While digital spaces and social media provide an avenue for consolidating women's experiences, they remain susceptible to deliberate provocation, invalidation, and even the question and reduction of their truth because of their "online" physicality (Clark-Parsons, 2018). To answer these contradictions would require us to delve into the nature of digitalization, and how such a platform becomes a productive tool for the rise of digital feminist activism in the Philippines.

Digital Media, Identities, and Power

Today's digital social environment transcends the physical boundaries of time and space, reintroducing itself as a form of identity spaces (Khademi-Vidra, 2014) creating new paths for social relations, lifestyles, socialization, communication processes, and identity construction. Khademi-Vidra (2014) asserts that in the late 20th century with new technological advancements, certain spaces have allowed for the performance and construction of identity both being "real" (those derived from real experiences) and "imagined" (as influenced by mass media, or manifested through online personas). This implies that digital spaces transcend limitations of physical space and boundaries, offering new possibilities of social relations, communication, and identity formation.

In confronting humanity with respect to diverse experiences, we turn to anthropology in making sense of the adoption of digital technologies. Digital anthropology, in particular, is defined as how the human and digital can be defined in relation to one another, taking into account new methodological approaches engaging in digital spaces through digital ethnography (Horst & Miller, 2012). It is determined that there is materiality to digital anthitherropology as evident in digital infrastructure and technology, digital content, and context. DeNicola (2012) explores the capabilities of digital anthropology in geographical placemaking, reconceptualizing culture through specialized ways, saying that "… it is no longer sufficient to talk of landscapes being mediated; what we must recognize are those instances where media have become 'landscaped'" (DeNicola, 2012, p. 93). Media technologies have become deeply embedded in our physical and cultural environments, and they actively shape our understanding and interaction with the world. We need to recognize that media itself has transformed and shaped the landscapes we encounter.

Horst and Miller (2012) state that digital worlds are just as real and tangible as the physical world we live in, and their approach to studying them emphasizes considering all aspects together. Pink et al. (2016) extends ethnography by exploring the role of digital technology in challenging traditional concepts of units of analysis, suggesting that experiences, events, and localities can be

reshaped in encounters of digital worlds. More so, Coleman (2010) emphasizes the undeniable cultural matter of digital media in categories like "cultural politics, " "vernacular cultures, ", and the "prosaics" of digital media that feed into, reflect, and shape other kinds of practices. Despite digital media's limits, "… it would be a mistake to overlook how digital media have cultivated new modes of communication and selfhood" (Coleman, 2010, p. 490).

Indeed, as Geertz (1973) would assert, to divorce what happens from its context is to render it vacant. If anthropological interpretation is constructing a reading of what happens, then we ought to see digital happenstance in virtue of its own reality for it would allow its content to move and speak within its contexts. However, some scholars challenge social media initiatives' ability to step outside its virtual reality. Dean (2009) critiques neoliberal and networked democratic participation (communicative capitalism) as paradoxical such that it struggles against capitalist systems whilst reinforcing them in the same platform it contests (Dean, 2014). Dean (2009) defines communicative capitalism as a "materialization of ideals of inclusion and participation in communication technology that capture resistance and intensify global capitalism" (p. 2). Communicative exchanges are seen as basic elements of capitalist production rather than being fundamental to "democratic politics" (Dean, 2005). Social media, then, might not be enough for an egalitarian struggle. Similarly, Tolentino (2021) provides a discussion on intensification of feelings of "individualization" heightened by social media's symptoms of neoliberalism. Recalling communicative capitalism, social media platforms profit from users' engagement and personal data while creating illusions of personalization and connection. In Castillo's (2021) documentation of cyberqueer and alter accounts, archives following specific hashtags may perform as territorial markers of alter accounts to reconstitute familiar public spaces into possible locations of sexual encounters. The Twitter alter community is described as a subculture wherein users maintain separate accounts, distinct from the ones known to their friends and family, where they take on an anonymous alternate persona and freely share thoughts and behaviors without revealing their true identity (Iwayama et al., 2020). Castillo (2021), for example, mentions the hashtag #CRfun on Twitter, a particular archive of tweets followed by alter communities with images depicting possible locations of sexual activities, both past occurrences and potential future encounters. While the "alterverse" is known as a safe space for networked societies to resist heterosexist norms (Iwayama et al., 2020), Castillo (2021) notices how these spaces can be subjected to critical interrogation within the frame of communicative capitalism, wherein perceived liberatory 'technopractices' ought to lend to "…the illusion of sexual liberation for queer subjects while feeding them to the predations of capital" (p. 196).

Beyond Castillo's documentation, I emphasize more on how these spaces perform not only as illusions that "feed" capital but rather (and simply) as a performance of desire and identity. Gender expression performed online should have the agency to negotiate its own significance beyond the scope of "value" in consumer-capitalist discourses. By dominantly problematizing the "value" of communicative exchanges, we risk reducing some narratives to invisibility. A feminist analysis of digital spaces is needed to understand important contexts and discourses valuable in positioning women and other marginalized voices at the time of digitalization. By applying a feminist lens to the study of digital spaces, researchers can examine the ways in which gender, sexuality, and other intersecting identities are constructed, represented, and negotiated online. Most importantly, such performances open the possibility of digital placemaking capable of transcending physical localities.

Sapalo (2023) recognizes affect in digital spaces by looking at the intimacy of Filipino digital mourning practices at the height of the pandemic and COVID-19 deaths, linking emotions and practices of culture-specific mourners in the digital sphere. I describe #HijaAko with a similar emphasis on affect. I utilize Digital Feminist Activism (Keller et al., 2019) as a framework that adopts digital anthropology as they intersect with power and agency giving rise to new forms of social and political resistance (Brudvig, 2019). It is in this way that I approach narratives from #HijaAko as validated and real voices of women rather than negating them as empty exchanges.
The aforementioned challenges and criticisms on digital feminist activism—in lieu of both its "non-physical" nature and effectivity—remain arguably distant from the affective dimensions of its source. To inquire is to be aware of our own social positions that ought to allow us the possibilities of discourse, theory, and observation. This paper employs such reflexivity in the observation, acknowledgment, and validation of narratives and visibilities from digital spheres—particularly by revisiting theories of affect and sensation that are central to digital activist feminism.

Affective Solidarity, Networked Affect, and Embodied Interaction

Drawing from Keller et al.'s (2021) case studies on Digital Feminist Activism are concepts of affect that inform feminist theorizing—particularly affective solidarity (Hemmings, 2012) and public affect (Papacharissi, 2015). Take, for example, the digital feminist activism behind #BabaeAko, which takes a form of hashtag feminism (Sebring, 2019) that presents opportunities for visibility in its platform for participants to engage based on shared (primarily individual) experiences and resistance to oppression. The many participants in the hashtag feminism of #BabaeAko arose from affective dissonance (as a reaction to Duterte's sexist remarks) towards a shared affective solidarity in calling out against oppressive attributions and structural inequalities (Alingasa & Ofreneo, 2020; Baxter, 2021). Affective dissonance is marked by encounters between the (female) individual and genre that is rooted in an ontological-epistemological gap "between an embodied sense of self and the self we are expected to be in social terms" (Probyn, 1993, as cited in Hemmings, 2012, p. 149). When individuals with shared dissonance engage in collective conversations and connect with others facing similar experiences, it can foster affective solidarity. This solidarity, in turn, enables the formation of social movements that challenge de-politicized and individualistic self-help projects. Instead, they offer a broader critique of an unjust system and its failures (Hemmings, 2012; Lakämper, 2017). The desire to rectify the sense of injustice may be stimulated by affect as experienced and understood in relation to others. Hemmings (2012) builds solidarity based on collective dissonance rather than identity politics, going as far as critiquing limited and essentialized forms of empathy.

In its process, affective solidarity is motivated by affective publics. When public networked formations are mobilized and connected (or disconnected) through expressions of sentiment, they are powered by affective statements or stories that amplify visibility for viewpoints that were not as prevalent before (Papacharissi, 2015), such as bringing to light marginalized and underrepresented stories and voices. For Papacharissi (2015), digital technologies presuppose our networking platforms but it is our stories and expressions that connect us with each other. Social media, as "soft structures" of storytelling, are capable of meaning-making practices. Hashtag activism, for example, is arguably a non-empty signifier open to re-definition and re-appropriation that allow crowds to be rendered into networked publics (Papacharissi, 2015). While media alone do not create or dismantle revolutions, they do contribute to the unique ways in which these publics communicate and operate. This distinctive mode of communication, known as mediality, shapes

the nature of these publics, and is fueled by the driving force of emotions (Papacharissi, 2015). Mediality and affect are intertwined in sustaining and driving these emerging publics forward. Thus, it is important we pay attention to intensity, sensation, and value. The experience of sensation is important in digital feminism discourse, centering on the affective dimension of sensations embodied in digital technology that shape how users "experience" feminism (Keller et al., 2019). With stories that connect us with each other, affective solidarity can become recognized in terms of shared dissonances that foster solidarity.

Methodology

I employed qualitative content analysis to capture subjective experiences expressed through narratives, as opposed to quantitative content analysis, which focuses on generalizing quantified patterns (Wildemuth & Zhang, n.d). Since my aim was to document and observe the phenomenon of the hashtag #HijaAko as a form of Digital Feminist Activism and to situate it as a form of Philippine feminism, I combined both deductive and inductive approaches in analyzing data. Conceptual frameworks drawn from Digital Feminist Activism (Keller et al., 2019) that centered on affect and feminism served as a basis and guide for the gathering of tweets and coding. Moreover, since #HijaAko emerged as a hashtag for feminism specific to the context of the Philippines, being open to new perspectives, nuances, and themes allowed me to suggest context-specific themes.

I delineated observing narratives to those on Twitter, seeing that its site offers potential and effective methods of "e-mobilization" (Earl & Kimport, 2011, as cited in Penney & Dadas, 2014, p. 80) and is a platform that invites *affective attunements,* propagating affectively charged expressions (Papacharissi, 2015). Tweets were gathered using Twitter's advanced public search engine specifically using the hashtag #HijaAko. This was limited to tweets posted on June 14, 2020, up to August 30, 2020, as this period coincided with peak trending and engagement in social media. Utilizing the "Latest" feature in Twitter's Advanced Search Engine, I was able to scroll and gather tweets from the latest posted on August 30, 2020, up to the tweets from June 14, 2020. Overall, a total of 144 tweets were gathered. Since the majority of the tweets collected were stories, they usually came in the form of "Twitter threads" that followed one individual's story told through multiple tweets. Considering such, I was able to identify 68 narratives (stories from tweets and Twitter threads). Moreover, other tweets were also collected for the purpose of capturing the variety of engagement with the hashtag. This included multimodal forms of art and statements of organizations. Two tweets from organizations and three tweets supporting #HijaAko through art were included.

Tweets were gathered and pasted into Microsoft Word for initial coding. In vivo and emotion coding was used to manually code the gathered tweets. In vivo coding uses participants' own (verbatim) words and phrases to remain closely aligned with the direct voice of the participants, whereas emotion coding allowed me to label emotions recalled by the participants such as fear, anger, sadness, etc. (Saldaña, 2009). Initial coding was done by first taking note of codes and repeating words and even abstract tones and phrases (e.g., "Rape is rape, " "Not asking for it"). As codes were revisited, they were later organized by combining not just recurring words but dominant tones and patterns notable enough to surface distinct themes. Codes were constantly revisited as I was immersed in the data (as well as directly observing Twitter's #HijaAko exchanges) for a period of five months (April 2022 - September 2022). Codes categorized into themes were compared with those expected from the Digital Feminist Activism framework. Additionally, referring to external sources like news articles and relevant literature as included in the discussion helped situate the

context and reliability of the claims from the themes.

In consideration of the privacy and safety of the authors of narratives, usernames (as well as specific names and locations) were altered and tweet content was paraphrased to avoid de-identification with ethical considerations to its source. In addition, tweets gathered were limited to those only made voluntarily available by users that would publicly appear through Twitter's Search Engine.

I acknowledge that a feminist analysis is committed to understanding and amplifying women's experiences. While these can be a point of strength for my research, I recognize that this also affects how I approach and interpret the data. It should thus be noted that claims made are partial observations following the objectives of the paper, guided by my subjectivity. Nonetheless, I strive to maintain reflexivity through self-reflection and critical awareness as evident in how I detailed the process of my observations and arguments.

Findings

Through qualitative content analysis, four themes surfaced from the tweets including **(a) (Re) telling Truth and Sensation**, which focused on reclaiming personal stories of sexual harassment. These were told from a narration of vivid details with the intensity of emotions that shed light on the impact these experiences had on their lives. With these stories having contexts, the detail of their stories provided **(b) A Revelation of Unsafe Spaces**, which situated how Filipinas become vulnerable to harassers even in spaces that are rightfully expected to be safe. This was drawn from details of young students detailing how some friends and even teachers took advantage of their vulnerability, violating professional and ethical boundaries while subjecting them to harassment and abuse. Along with the influx of overwhelming stories coming to find their voice alongside others was the frustration that came with it. Filipinas are **(c) Sick of Victim Blaming**. Such explains the surfacing of tones of anger and frustration with its perpetuation. With their stories, they dismantled rape myths contribute to victim blaming—such as the victim's clothing, behavior, or actions that purportedly justify or invite sexual assault—by shifting the focus to the harasser's actions rather than on these being motivated by the victim's clothing or behavior. With the continued narratives being shared and enabled by #HijaAko, this further allowed discourses to raise awareness against sexual harassment and, with this collective voice, to critique systems of injustice that perpetuate unsafe spaces. Thus, **(d) #HijaAko Weaves Voices of Support and Solidarity** that does not just aim to become a platform for narratives, but also extends its invitation to all in calling for change, accountability, and inclusivity.

(Re)telling Truth and Sensation

Narratives and stories commonly took the form of a Twitter Thread, which includes multiple tweets following one linear account that would allow further detail and expansion. Majority of the tweets documented as narratives took this format, commonly beginning with statements reiterating ownership of their story ("This is my story ") and finally breaking their silence, pushing past their doubts and hesitations on being believed. Through #HijaAko, they retell their stories, both individually and collectively, in their own voice and truths. The majority of these narratives were their personal stories and experiences of sexual harassment. They were told in a manner of recall—reiterating details such as context, location, identification of harassers, and the sequence of

events that followed:

Figure 7. *@anikalanc*

tw// sexual harassment

i was groped and deceived by a person i trusted; a person i even liked.

this is my story. #HijaAko

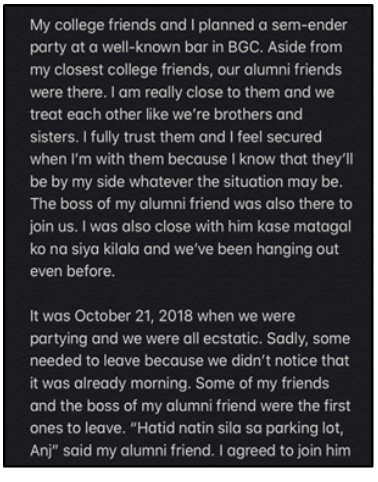
we were watching a movie in class, and the lights were off.

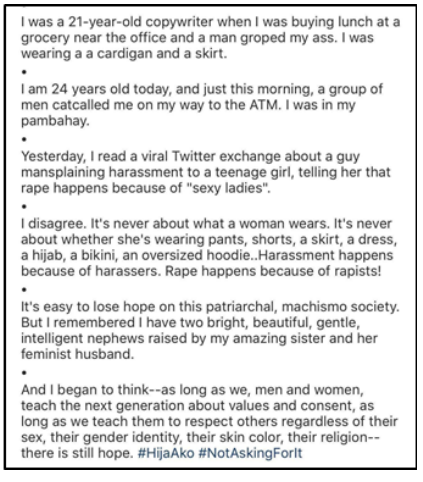
i was sitting on my chair and him on the floor. we were in direct sight of our teacher

it began with him slowly rubbing my shins. i kicked his hand away, and i generally ignored him

While some stories maximized the use of Twitter Threads, narratives were sometimes fit into photos that indicated similar contexts and details:

Figure 8. *From @ChriselAng and @NeriShei*





As details and accounts of their stories were shared, so was the unraveling of emotions that came with the memory of their experiences. Beyond contempt was the exhausting toll they had to go through in making sense of events. Feelings of "panic" and "heaviness" were commonly expressed, with those mentioning how it had left them "numb" and "frozen."

Figure 9. *From @MaxinneLiemur and @EliseCedal*

> *But he did not move and he forcefully entered me. I stared at the white ceiling silently crying while he was fucking me. #HijaAko*

> *I was 5 when my mother's friend would touch my butt and run his fingers through it, sliding his hand between my legs. I was 14, on a bus on my way home from school, when a stranger his hand on my leg and rubbed it. I was 21 when a stranger called out to me and said "patikim." #HijaAko*

How these accounts describe being violated through their own narrative of expectations, disappointment, and physical awareness initiates a sensory feeling of what it must have been like for them. The use of physical descriptions, emotions, and even contextualization told in first person and in real-time expressions ground us to their experiences firsthand.

Figure 10. *From @VenB*

> *Didn't have the courage to tweet about it again before, but I think more men should know how much their horrible actions affect us.*
>
> *I was sexually harassed by a friend, after me telling him about my relationship woes with my ex. It is a horrible weight I always carry. #HijaAko*

> *I still remember how disgusted I felt in his car, with him intentionally missing red lights to have more time with me.*
>
> *I remember freezing and getting anxiety attacks everytime I saw him on campus.*
>
> *We never forget.*

As seen in Figure 11, we can only imagine how heavy this described "weight" is that is always carried. This explains why these narratives resound as a release of suppressed feelings and experiences, with those expressing the extent of their experiences' impact on their lives.

Figure 11. *From @kamillefcx,*

> *isang taon at ilang buwan kong kinimkim tong ginawa mo sakin. sobrang laking impact non, sana alam mo yon. isa to sa mga bagay na nakapag-hold back sakin that time para di i-open up 'to in public (see pic). i won't drop your names girls, but thank u for being my support system.*

Alongside stories that were revealed even years past their encounter, I found a rather shocking aspect of narratives commonly coded with the phrase "I was (age)" that would recall how they had been victims of sexual harassment as minors. Others would detail their stories following a chronology of events of how they grew up consistently experiencing sexual harassment. This is consistent with codes such as phrases "I was just a kid," and accusing harassers as "pedophiles."

Figure 12. *From @PatArc and @LaArni*

> *side boobs ko like sinasangga niya. i just dont know what to do back then kasi nasasangga na and nung nakababa na yung nanghawak sakin everyone was just telling me na nahipuan ako. sinabi nila na dapat sinabi ko.*
>
> *i was 12 when that happened. (2/n)*

> *I was 16 when a known man of high and respected position in society harassed me that could have ended up worst if someone didn't came in.(thank God) You know what I'm wearing that time? A pair of oversized tshirt and pants. There's no excuse for rape. #HijaAko*

As we delve into such accounts, perhaps it becomes clear to us that sexual harassment can happen to anyone and, unfortunately, in places (and with people) that we least expect.

Revelation of Unsafe Spaces

This theme emerged through codes that revealed institutions and harassers that victims least expected to experience harassment from. These included words like "teacher/s, " and "friends" and phrases such as "I trusted .., " or "I thought I was safe. " Through Twitter threads, they detailed the memory of their teachers (oftentimes providing screenshots) presupposing comfort and later taking advances to sexually harass or abuse them:

Figure 13. *From @CardiaSonia*

My former teachers were pedophiles

- a thread
#HijaAko

Shit happened to me after the moving up ceremony but I found out na may kagaguhan na palang nagaganap even before that. He keeps on messaging my friend and it's fucking creepy and inappropriate.

Following these accounts were expressions of disappointment by students left unprotected and dismissed by academic institutions. The overwhelming number of such reports led to campaigns from academic and social organizations calling for their schools and universities to guarantee better protection of their students, as well as echoing the alarm raised by their schoolmates who reported having been sexually harassed within these "safe spaces."

Figure 14. *From @annahmC and @MilkteaLady2*

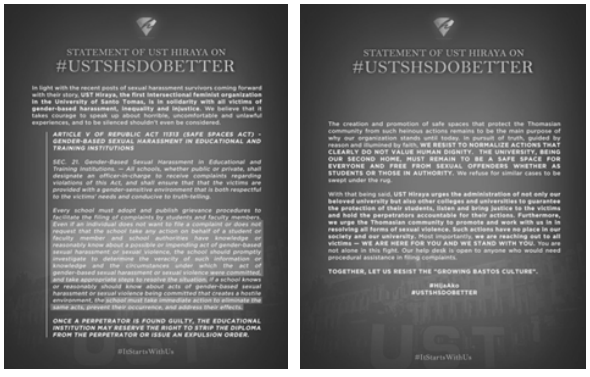
After jhs graduation, I, AS A MINOR, complained to the admin about a teacher for sexual harassment. Guess what they did? I got banned from entering school premises. L O L

#MCHSDOBETTER

MC cannot pride itself on having holistic education and being student-centered while protecting predators for the sake of reputation. We must do better. #HijaAko

As a response, school organizations released statements along with the hashtag #DoBetter while standing in solidarity with victims who voiced their experiences. Among the organizations that followed suit, UST Hiraya (2020) issued a statement, amplifying the Safe Spaces Act or the Bawal Bastos Law, stating that, should the complaints be made about acts of gender-based sexual harassment or sexual violence, the school must then (still) promptly investigate to "eliminate the same acts, prevent their occurrence, and address their effects" (Philippine Commission on Women, 2021).

Figure 15. *UST Hiraya's Statement #USTSHS-DOBETTER*



Moreover, unsafe spaces are not limited to academic institutions. Even in public places like public transport or in "broad daylight. " Commonly coded words that highlight these stories' dominance were those such as "jeepney," "commute," and "bus."

Figure 16. *From @CorneliaMRN and @Gkdrama*

> *i was 15 and was wearing my school uniform in daylight, some guy followed me and kept whistling. i was 18, was wearing a baggy shirt and pants and was inches away from a guy in a jeepney but he came close to me and touched my breasts with his arm. #EndVictimBlaming #HijaAko*

> *During a jeepney ride on the way to school, an old guy repeatedly groped my breasts. I froze. I can't even do anything but stare at other passengers riding that jeep asking for help.*
>
> *My friends just laughed at me, "ikaw? baka nagkamali lang yon"*
>
> *#HijaAko #StopVictimBlaming*

Sexual harassment was detailed to even permeate the spaces of friendship and trust. The victims' narratives recount instances where their "trusted friends" had taken advantage of their vulnerability. They describe this breach of trust from those closest to them to result in feelings of self-doubt, betrayal, and loss of faith in relationships.

Figure 17. *From @AshAshleyNics and @MaxinneLiemur*

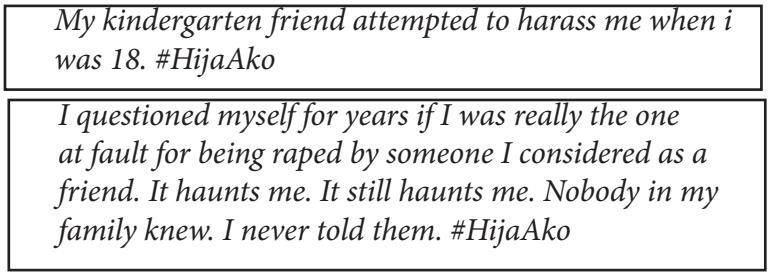
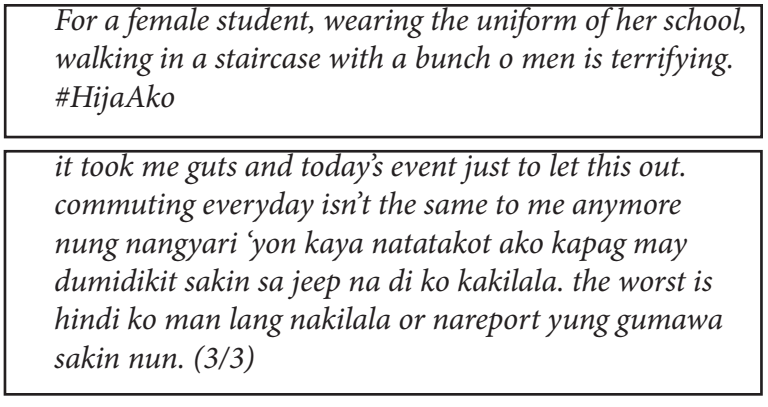


Figure 18. *From @GraceRicka and @PatArc*

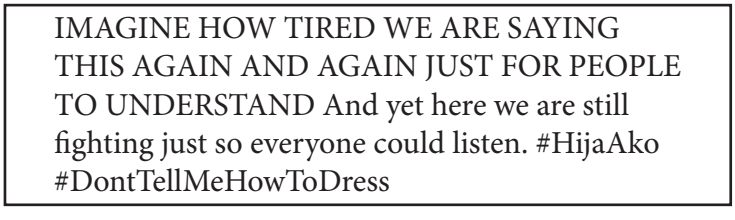


The impact of these violations and betrayals in supposedly safe spaces has left many girls and individuals in a state of fear and heightened vulnerability. Most detail how these events affected their routines, mentioning how afraid they were of walking the streets alone again, or how they "turn silent when faced with a similar situation," sometimes "suddenly crying and becoming numb."

c. Sick of Victim Blaming

As stories (re)emerge and are reclaimed alongside those of others, those who shared their narratives find strength in solidarity and with their shared experiences identify patterns of victim blaming. To break this cycle, they voice out their frustrations by dismantling rape myths such as the notion that clothing choices are responsible for these incidents.

Figure 19. *From @AshleeeeyMay*



To resist such, many of the sharers narrate what they were wearing, not as a means to justify the harassment they experienced, but to shift the focus from blaming victims to holding perpetrators accountable.

Figure 20 *From @Jarleem and @SpectacledOne*

[Thread]

Throughout the years, I've encountered a lot of situations where I was catcalled or sexually harassed NO MATTER WHAT I AM WEARING. But, there's still some kind of stigma going on whenever we try to speak up about it.

#HijaAko

i was thirteen when i was molested while commuting
i was wearing a baggy hoodie and pants
i did not ask for it to happen sexual assault has nothing to do with what you're wearing

in short: putangina mo pnp and ben tulfo
#HijaAko #artph

Because of Twitter's multimodal capacity, some have channeled their frustrations and experiences through art, using creative expressions like poetry, visual art, and animations to forward #HijaAko's advocacy and challenge social norms.

Figure 21. *From @juldanielle's art account*

what we wear will never scream yes for sexual violence.

not an invitation
not an indication
not a provocation

#hijaako #endvictimblaming

As seen in Figure 21, alongside this form of art was a statement from @Juldanielle that explains the phrase "still not asking for it" in visual art. From the image, we can see a woman revealing aspects of her body that are repeatedly labeled with this phrase. Others have chosen to put forward their bodies as both protest and empowerment as a means of reclaiming their bodies for their own expression and not as a subject for objectification.

Figure 22. *From @Zint*

A woman's choice of clothing is never a statement of consent. It also does not determine the amount of respect a woman should get. RAPE is RAPE. Clothes do not, and will never, justify sexual harassment. We're all in this, let's end rape culture! #HijaAko #StopVictimBlaming

As these narratives delve into the vivid details and impact of the victims' experiences, they often conclude with a call to action in support of others who continuously face similar struggles. Their stories become reinforced with deeper levels of resolve as they realize their experiences are not isolated from one another. Thus, they are able to collectively gather strength in solidarity in their resistance against injustice and misogyny.

Weaving Voices of Support and Solidarity

Alongside voices sharing their stories are those uplifting them. They describe these voices as "brave" and "strong,"—realizing the power there is in reclaiming their stories, in breaking the silence and thus ending the cycle of stigma surrounding sexual violence. Being able to read and be affected by the stories of others as well, gives them the strength and validation to find their own voice:

Figure 23. *From @Zint*

> *This #HijaAko made me brave. Brave enough to find my voice and spread awareness about this issue that we have been keeping in the dark for so long and even if 14 years has pased I find peace for knowing that everything that I felt -- and still feeling -- is valid.*
>
> *#HijaAko*

#HijaAko also fostered a caring and empathetic environment that allowed for the narratives to surface. These emerged from the assurance of others who affirmed that they were being listened to with non-judgment and belief, often saying "we hear you" and "i/we stand with you."

Figure 24. *From @steaphbears*

> *i hope that others can take what they can from my story. to all victims of sexual violence. i stand with you and i admire our strength. let us continue to speak up.*

Another important observation is that, while there is recognition of the strength and resilience among those who shared their stories, there remains strong validation for others who (for whatever reason) choose not to. Following these tweets, supportive words and phrases like "you are not alone' or "we support you' were exchanged nonetheless.

Figure 25. *From @nicksudio*

> *I will never force someone to speak forward, you can handle this is anyway you want to. Its up to you.*
>
> *You can fight back. You can win. Find people you trust who will believe you. Draw strength from them and yourself.*
>
> *You are strong.*
>
> *You will survive this.*
>
> *#HijaAko #MeToo*

Figure 26. *From @meiwaspa*

#HijaAko Been really conflicted about speaking up, since its only recent that i have come to terms with my own experience. It's been eleven years now, and I've only began to process my trauma, only began to tell select loved ones, only began getting mad, getting sad.

I think its really fucking brave that women are speaking up more during this controversy. I realize how it comes at the expense of our peace of mind, of our very being.

Lastly, with codes like "fight/laban," "rights," and "justice," the voices from #HijaAko clamor not only for their safety but for social change and the protection of their rights. With the recognition of underlying beliefs, attitudes, and systems that perpetuate harassment, they advocate dismantling such structures to create an inclusive environment for all.

Figure 27. *From @Seabear and @KaraTaggoa*

Ngayon na may edad na ako at namulat sa realidad, I knew that these were traumatic experiences because they kept repeating in my head. I just learned how to live with these since I don't really know how to deal with them properly. But ngayon, I decided to speak up and share my story to let other girls know that they are not alone. I'm here with y'all, it's okay if wala pa kayong lakas na labanan sila. Lalaban kami para sa inyo.

Babae ako, lalaban ako sa inhustisya at abuso! Speak up, stand up, demand justice for every women and people discriminated, violated, and exploited by this system! #HijaAko

Through the simplest yet powerful act of speaking up and listening to others, they recognize that they are contributing to a larger fight that never comes easy, but nonetheless are part of the collective effort towards hopeful change.

Discussion

From stories of sensation to the collective clamor against rape culture that breeds unsafe spaces, #HijaAko became a statement that sparked a movement for challenging such injustices. Yet more than the hashtag's accessibility and collective meaning would be its symbolism upon declaration. Those who entered the discourse bringing with them their stories, sentiments, or support, used the hashtag #HijaAko as a declaration that established their involvement in the movement. Returning to the hashtag's creation provides understanding of why the open declaration of being an *Hija* became striking for a majority of young Filipinas.

The word *hija* means "daughter," and oftentimes refers to someone younger. Ben Tulfo's response to Kakie Pangilinan (calling her an *hija*) conveys a rather patronizing and condescending tone as he lectures her with the ideal representation of females considering the unshakable desire of men to tame "their beast." In the Philippines, respect for elders is considered an important value, manifested in traditions and gestures such as *"pagmamano"* and in saying *"po/opo."* However, this value of respect can be abused by elders when taken to extremes, seeing how it can lead to neglect and dismissal of the valuable experiences of the young.

In the case of #HijaAko, Kakie Pangilinan refuses to accept that the many experiences of young Filipinas be dismissed as merely a matter of age and thereby diminish their significance. With the reclamation and declaration of being an *Hija*, she invites everyone to embrace the history of the Filipina's past oppressions and even wrap it around themselves in the glory of resistance. To declare one as an *Hija* through the hashtag takes the form of feminist activism, one that reinforces the Filipina's resistance and positionality then and now.

#HijaAko as Digital Feminist Activism

Themes emerged from the documented narratives resonated with Keller et al.'s (2019) key conceptual frameworks of Digital Feminist Activism such as affect (Papacharissi, 2015) and affective solidarity (Hemmings, 2012). #HijaAko enabled a space for stories to find solace and for individuals to find their voice guided by the support and encouragement of others. These evocative retellings rely on embodied experience and interaction, wherein meaningful interactions with physical bodies and technology can be influenced by storytelling (Giannakos & Lee-Cultura, 2020; Carless & Douglas, 2015). The details of these accounts emulate effectively charged expressions rekindled by memory and sensation that heighten the discourse of how one "experiences" feminism (Papacharissi, 2015).

The extent of the stories' heaviness is revealed to us when narratives imply firmer tones of realization. This is because the act of speaking up about events deemed traumatic is already difficult and overwhelming. When traumatic memories associated with an event are formed and remembered, it is more likely that we "re-experience" our traumas (TeBockHorst, 2014). Besides the slow judicial process (Brooks-Hay & Burnman, 2020), it was found that teens do not disclose their experiences of sexual assault for reasons of shame, as well as being associated with a high degree of stigma (Browne & Finkelhor, 1985). Other implications of underreporting and non-disclosure include the fear of not being believed, the fear of being blamed, and the fear that nothing will be done (Browne & Finkelhor, 1985; Alaggia, 2005). Thus, the act of speaking up is powerful for these women in the sense that they embrace and talk about their experiences with firmer versions of their truth.

With numerous narratives creating empathetic environments for others who have experienced the same, the sharers discover a shared dissonance that brings them together, engaging in conversation and later, taking a cohesive form of what Hemmings (2012) described as affective solidarity. In the context of #HijaAko, when one's story resonates with those of others, those involved are able to make sense of their experiences as perpetuated by wider unjust systems that enable victim blaming. Thus, their stories take flight from a retelling of their own stories to pose a collective clamor for justice for themselves and others. Seen in this light, #HijaAko bears the heaviness of these traumatic experiences and wraps it around the narrative of empowerment rather

than sustaining the stigma of being mere victims.

With #HijaAko being contextualized to the experiences of most Filipinas, this allowed themes to emerge from the narratives detailing their realities. Situated in the Philippine context, some attested to having experienced the fear of sexual harassment in the most unexpected places—academic institutions. Through Twitter threads, students detailed the memory of their teachers (oftentimes providing screenshots) presupposing comfort and later making sexual advances to these girls. In the Philippines, 17.1% of children are reported to have experienced sexual violence growing up, with 5.3% of these incidents being committed in schools (UNICEF, 2016). It was also only recently that students started to come forward with allegations of sexual harassment against their teachers, with some being shared by victims through social media platforms. Cleofas (2023) traces the narratives of young women who have experienced sexual abuse in Catholic schools in the Philippines, drawing from these to call for heightened measures for students' safety as a resistance to patriarchy. In September of 2022, a list of schools with sexual abuse allegations was released, among them being some of the top and most respected universities in the country (Mangaluz, 2022). This shows that there needs to be imminent, urgent, and continuous action in creating safe spaces not only through stronger legal implementation but also through intensified awareness campaigns to ensure safe and conducive learning environments for students. Also recurring in the narratives is public transportation being a common place where the sharers expressed to have experienced sexual harassment. A survey among 316 college students commuting in Manila revealed that 43% of them had been harassed in public transit; although 85% of those sexually victimized did not report the incident. The high prevalence of sexual harassment alongside the underreporting of incidents suggests significant institutional barriers to seeking help and reflects the inefficiency in addressing cases of sexual harassment.

The revelation of unsafe spaces within these narratives was made not in the sense that these spaces should be avoided, or for individuals to take greater precautions that begs the necessity for "anti-rape" tips. The point is that sexual harassment happens when there is an abuse of power that presupposes consent based on prevailing rape myths. This further explains the frustration that is expressed alongside stories that dismantle victim blaming. When the narratives detail what the victims were wearing and how they were nonetheless "not asking for it," it drives home the point that clothes do not serve as an invitation for harassment no matter the skin revealed or concealed. Through #HijaAko, stories were exchanged among Filipinas as enabled in digital spheres with the advocacy of dismantling rape culture and amplifying marginalized voices. Drawn from the voices of Filipinas, the hashtag represents a form of digital feminist activism that reflects the unique challenges, contextual details, and social dynamics specific to the Philippines.

The space provided by #HijaAko for individuals to reclaim their stories and regain their power is reminiscent of the historical feminist activism of Filipinas in the country. Much like past movements of the Filipina's struggle for political participation and visibility, #HijaAko calls for the same justice: reclaiming our bodies by retelling our stories. In their own agency, they initially recall their stories—engaging in a powerful retelling from their own voice and memory—that allows them to reclaim their experiences (and with it their bodies), thereby rejecting passive victimization as they identify with the collective identity of #HijaAko. This transformation from victim to activist resonates with that of Roces' (2012) "double narrative" of Filipinas as both victims and empowered agents.

Narratives Beyond Valuation

The stories from #HijaAko detail vivid lived realities recalling how sexual harassment was experienced at its encounter. Thus, when it comes to counseling victims of sexual abuse, *believing the victim* is emphasized as fundamental to active listening (World Health Organization Geneva, 2003). This validation becomes critical to recovery, as emphasized by Dunn and Gilchrist (1993, as cited in World Health Organization, 2003). The act of speaking up alone should be met with sensitivity, recognizing the significant impact these experiences have had on the victims' lives.

I extend such sensitivity to the narratives in digital spaces, particularly those that have emerged from #HijaAko. Through the lens of digital feminist anthropology (Brudvig, 2019), these stories demand to be heard and seen as *real* voices recounting *real* incidents. By granting them validation, we acknowledge the truth of their experiences and affirm their right to be heard. This also means granting them visibility—another crucial aspect of feminist activism. Visibility provides a platform for these narratives to be recognized, shared, and amplified, raising awareness about the prevalence and impact of sexual harassment. Returning to my emphasis on the use of feminist analysis in digital spaces, when we see stories and voices that assert power and agency, we get to see them as a form of resistance that is crucial to be recognized and validated as such, as opposed to limiting and negating them as "empty exchanges" in broader debates of "value" and (capitalist) production (Dean, 2014). Seen in this light, the contextual basis and realities revealed through #HijaAko are regarded as real, while the movement's advocacy and call to dismantle rape culture become urgent.

Furthermore, the presence of #HijaAko and its resonance with Filipinas mark it as an identity space (Khamedi-Vidra, 2014) where identities are negotiated, constructed, and transformed within digital realms (Pink et al., 2016). The Filipina identity undergoes continuous renegotiation in the digital space facilitated by #HijaAko. Consequently, it possesses the capacity to both shape digital spaces, intersecting power and identity, and to be shaped by the opportunities for connection and solidarity offered by the digital world. This implies that #HijaAko not only influences digital spaces through social movements but is also influenced by the potential for connection and solidarity that the digital world provides.

Conclusion

With Philippine feminist activism being historically at the forefront of the struggle for political participation and visibility, I have sought to retrace such activism through the Hija constructed within the digital space of #HijaAko. This particular manifestation pushes back against rape myths that allow rape culture to threaten our supposed safe spaces. With #HijaAko transpiring at the height of the pandemic, it presented itself as an opportunity for unreported narratives and voices for stories to be heard and shared within the digital and networked spaces. The hashtag, therefore, bends conventional meaning/s of space confronted by the *new* physicality of digital realities through its own mediality (Papacharissi, 2015).

In this paper, I documented #HijaAko from a feminist standpoint which seeks to validate the voices and narratives of women through concepts of digital feminist activism (Keller et al., 2019) informing digital feminist anthropology (Brudvig, 2019). Through qualitative content analysis, I identified key themes that contextualize the digital feminist activism of #HijaAko within

the Philippines and as a form of Philippine feminism.

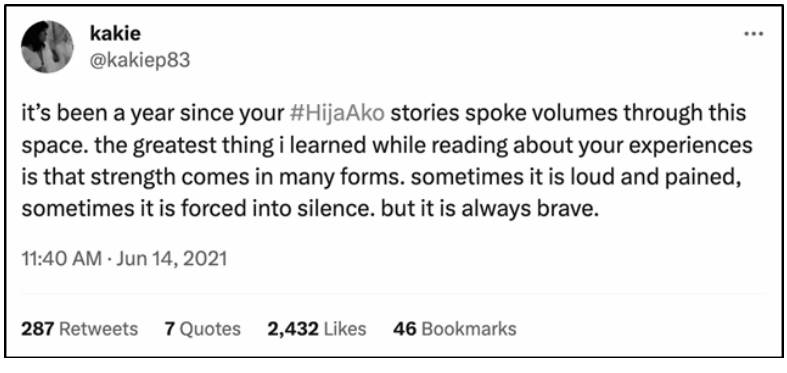
The digital space provided by #HijaAko became a site for the retelling and reclamation of stories. I observed the use of the hashtag as a platform for recounting narratives and sensation. Applying Papacharissi's (2015) affective publics, the details of these accounts emulate affectively charged expressions rekindled by memory and sensation that heighten the discourse of how one "experiences" feminism. More than calling out against victim blaming and debunking rape misconceptions, #HijaAko calls for the accountability of social institutions to *#DoBetter* at ensuring safe spaces for women. Applying Hemming's (2012) affective solidarity, #HijaAko arose from affective dissonance not just from Ben Tulfo's remark but also from the frustrations of what Filipinas have to go through simply due to being a woman in a patriarchal society. This dissonance was later revealed to be shared. Thus, women collectively started retelling their own experiences, calling out their frustrations, and rallying for safe spaces in shared affective solidarity.

I emphasize the sensitivity and validation accorded to narratives among those that emerged from #HijaAko. These stories rightfully deserve visibility that should not be at risk of being overshadowed or rendered invisible within broader and binary debates of (capitalist) value and worth (Dean, 2014). As we map the contextual nuances of the emergence of #HijaAko, it becomes evident that the movement was, and continues to be, driven by a collective desire to challenge and dismantle rape culture, while amplifying the voices and experiences of those affected.

Most important, given its semiotic basis, would be #HijaAko's role as a symbol of resistance embracing being Filipina. #HijaAko is a declaration. The Hija refuses to be weakened by its past oppressions. Instead, the Hija claims the false and condescending language initially made by Ben Tulfo (a symbol of patriarchy) and wraps it around themself in the glory and history of being Filipina. Observing similar "double narratives" that feminist activists in the Philippines reproduced as a resistance (Roces, 2012), #HijaAko reclaims bodies, stories, and spaces as it makes itself visible despite entrenched systems of injustice and invisibility.

A year after the #HijaAko campaign, Kakie Pangilinan tweeted once again on the morning of June 14, 2021:

Figure 28. *A Year Since #HijaAko.*



#HijaAko's resistance is an embodiment of the long history of feminist resistance in the country, signaling the breakthrough of such into mainstream consciousness. It positions itself as a form of digital feminist activism in the Philippines as it uses digital realities as a powerful tool of resistance and activism, a particular complexity of the universal experiences of different hashtag

feminisms throughout the globe.

Through #HijaAko, we are given intensities, truths, and reclamations not only individually but also as a collective resistance as Filipinas push back against rape culture and take up space—whether it be as a statistic, in embodied narratives, in the physicality of digital spaces, in breaking glass ceilings, everywhere else—and rightfully so. It is through such spaces that Filipinas courageously unveil themselves, liberating their identities and dismantling the history of suppression that once silenced their voices. This empowering movement emboldens them to embrace the fullness of their sexuality, reclaiming both their stories and their bodies as vessels of empowerment, liberation, and self-expression.

The influx of narratives at the emergence of #HijaAko reminds us of what goes on largely unnoticed. My documentation of the #HijaAko movement has sought to reveal valuable stories and experiences that are often overlooked as passively contained in digital spaces. I extend such a perspective to further inquiries in documenting digital communities and phenomena.

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