Uncovering the Filipino mothers' experiences in teaching young children during uncertain times through reflexive thematic analysis

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Abstract

The present study examined the preparations made by 14 mothers to ensure that their children's education was unhampered during the COVID-19 crisis and ready for face-to-face classes when permitted. The study used a reflexive thematic analysis of the face-to-face interviews with participants belonging to low-income families living in the central Philippines whose children used printed modules as teaching materials provided by the school. The study generated three themes: "realizing the gaps" *(*realizing that in-person campus-based instruction is better because distant learning is not effective); "filling in the gaps" (taking the lead in teaching the child at home and assisted by family and community members) and "getting back on track" (preparing children for face-to-face classes against the COVID-19). The study showed how Filipino parents particularly mothers kept their children in school despite pandemic-induced uncertainties, economic scarcities and social inequalities. The desire driven by the perceived benefits derived from education brought out the pathways to resourcefulness. This study draws attention to equal opportunities for learning across socio-economic statuses and a more inclusive delivery of instruction during a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Contents

Contribution of this paper to the literature
This study reports the preparations made by Filipino mothers to ensure their children are enrolled in formal basic education as well as prepare them for the reopening of face-to-face classes. The said input is on top of the analysis of their experiences with remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Introduction

Filipino parents viewed the formal educational system as a way to move up the social ladder (Maligalig, Caoli-Rodriguez, Martinez, & Cuevas, 2010). This perspective seemed to have not changed even at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic despite the change in instructional modality. This is evident in the surge of enrolment in public schools despite the adoption of distance teaching and learning modalities across all levels of education. For two academic years, distance learning in public schools had three modality types *i.e.* Modular Distance Learning (MDL), Online Distance Learning (ODL), and TV or Radio-Based Instruction (Department of Education, 2021).

Research on parental involvement in children's education during the COVID-19 pandemic was difficult for mothers who had to strike a balance between being parents and becoming teachers to their children (Agaton & Cueto, 2021; Bayucca, 2021; Cahapay, 2021; Dargo & Dimas, 2021; Llames, 2021; Luaña, 2021). Cahapay (2021) described the physical and psychosocial difficulties and the adjustments experienced by mothers involved in the distant learning of their children during a period of uncertainty. The parental support in face-to- face classes are critical for modular distant learning to work (Cabardo, Cabardo, & Cabardo-Mabida, 2022). Distant education was far from ideal as concerns about quality assurance arose. Some parents resorted to "malpractice" in order to manage the overwhelming tasks presented to them.

The previous studies highlighted the experiences of mothers involved in the three distant learning modalities. The present research deals with the experiences of mothers whose children were in public schools and used printed modular distant learning (PMDL) as an instructional modality. Modular Distance Learning (MDL) comprises printed instructional materials delivered to students' houses. It was designed for learners who did not have gadgets and internet connectivity at home (Quinones, 2020). The "right" parenting styles of parents were tested during the period (Apriyanti, 2022).

Hence, this research tried to explore participants' views of distant learning their experiences in teaching their children using printed learning modules and their perspectives about formal basic education.

1.1. Research Question

The current study explored this research question:
How do mothers describe their experience in teaching their young children during the COVID-19 pandemic?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Parental Involvement in Education

The study of Jabar (2021) discovered limited direct parental involvement persisted among poor Filipino families. Parents could excuse their kids from doing household tasks, abstaining from vices and upholding healthy family bonds in order to assist them in succeeding in school. Making ends meet and putting food on the table for the family were viewed as parental participation tactics by some.

These characteristics describe the collectivist nature of Filipino parents' willingness to sacrifice personal goals to prioritize the goals of the family (Triandis, 1995) which also extends to the education of their children (Arnilla, 2017). Parents focused on the success of long-term aspirations would exhibit grit which is comprised of perseverance of effort, consistency of interests and adaptability to situations (Datu, Yuen, & Chen, 2018). Serra-Labrador (2022) documented her personal struggles and those of other mother-teachers during the peak of the pandemic in four emerging themes: the unprecedented time; a mother is born; off the rhythm and a silver lining.

On the other hand, Radey, Lowe, Langenderfer-Magruder, and Posada (2022) reported that during COVID-19, low-income mothers turned to their networks for assistance. Although, emotionally valuable, networks could not increase economic or childcare needs. A report from India revealed that spouses assisted in doing household chores (Mazumdar, Sen, & Parekh, 2022). The pandemic has had economic impacts that have ultimately tested the network of relationships. These relationships may have been strengthened or dissolved due to network members' COVID-19 responses (Hilliard et al., 2020; Radey et al., 2022).

2.2. The Significance of Distant Education

During the pandemic, the boundaries between the home and tasks generally relegated to the outside world such as their children's education (Jung, Yim, & Jang, 2022). The unexpected role as *de facto* teachers increased their domestic workload on childcare and homeschooling and added additional workload to working parents (Dargo & Dimas, 2021; Luaña, 2021; Zolondek, 2022). These countless changes took a toll on the physical and mental health of mothers (Clark et al., 2021; Gibbons, Fernández-Morales, Maegli, & Poelker, 2021; Mazumdar et al., 2022). Zolondek (2022) described them as "overworked, overstressed and overwhelmed."

In the Philippines, mothers have responded to the new challenges in parenting (Cahapay, 2021) while Guatemalan mothers showed resilience and commitment to convey the importance of family, gratitude and faith (Gibbons et al., 2021). Parents believed that like students when they also learn the lessons, strategizing how they would be able to motivate their children to learn the lesson on the learning modules and using different techniques in order to maximize the learning of their children (Llames, 2021).

The psychosocial significance of distant learning is vast because of the opportunities it provided to spend more time and discover new things to bond over with members of their family (Agaton & Cueto, 2021; Cahapay, 2021; Dargo & Dimas, 2021; Mazumdar et al., 2022) which led parents to know and understand the strengths and weaknesses of their children (Llames, 2021). In terms of instruction, the printed modular distance learning modality provided learners with equitable access to quality and relevant education during the COVID-19 pandemic (Talimodao & Madrigal, 2021). Distant learning strengthened independent learning and was cost-effective (Dargo & Dimas, 2021).

2.3. Challenges of Distant Learning

Home-based learning for children who used to attend classes in school was not hopeful. In Indonesia, for instance, parents believed that school-based learning was better than home-based learning (Ikhsan, Maulida, Azzahra, & Wijayanti, 2022). Children did not focus on lessons during homeschooling (Apriyanti, 2022; Bayucca, 2021; Dargo & Dimas, 2021), had an inadequate understanding of the learning material (Apriyanti, 2022), limited teacher-learner interaction, lack of socialization with other children (Dargo & Dimas, 2021) and received limited guidance from parents and teachers (Bayucca, 2021).

Parents, who are *de facto* teachers at home were reported to have limited knowledge of the content of their children's lessons (Bayucca, 2021; Llames, 2021; Olivo, 2021), the use and availability of technology (Agaton & Cueto, 2021) and difficulty in understanding English (Bayucca, 2021). Research indicates that mothers with a greater sense of teaching self-efficacy reported fewer conflicts. Mothers who reported less stress and more support from school had higher self-efficacy. Self-efficacy was also higher in mothers from structured and organized households. Extra help with schoolwork led to an increase in mother-child conflict (De Jong, Schreurs, & Zee, 2022).

Several parents criticized home-based education. It includes insufficient time allotted to complete many tough activities in the learning modules (Llames, 2021; Luaña, 2021; Olivo, 2021); a lack of reference materials, insufficient mobile data to do online research (Bayucca, 2021); the delivery of instruction, unsatisfactory learning outcomes, use and availability of technology, personal problems with health, stress and the learning style of their child as well as financial difficulties while working for the family during the lockdown (Agaton & Cueto, 2021).

The impact of these difficulties manifested itself in the complaints of some teachers about incomplete module submission, perceived inadequate parental support (Cabardo et al., 2022) and parents answering their children's modules to comply with school requirements. The latter is the result of the poor reading and writing skills of their children (Luaña, 2021).

Home-based instruction during the pandemic redefined family dynamics as working mothers assumed an added and uneven care burden (Clark et al., 2021). It exacerbated existing stressors like housework and introduced new ones like virtual schooling (Gibbons et al., 2021). Working mothers were reported to have experienced negative emotions (Clark et al., 2021) brought about by multifaceted difficulties in the process (Cahapay, 2021). Home learning support for homework (Bartolome & Mamat, 2020) had become a daily struggle for parents particularly mothers.

Generally, the education of children during COVID-19 was full of uncertainties and difficulties for teachers, parents and learners. Some thought that home-based education was an opportunity to be directly involved in children's learning. It uncovered social inequalities and technological disadvantages among poor families.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design

This qualitative research used the reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) given by Braun and Clarke (2019). The six-phase reflexive thematic analysis process was implemented in the recent studies of Byrne (2022); Campbell et al. (2021); Trainor and Bundon (2021).

3.2. Participants

There were 14 mothers recruited from a rural community in the central Philippines through purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria were the following: (a) *a mother of a child or children who are enrolled in daycare, kindergarten or 3rd grade*; (b) *the child or children should be enrolled in a public school* and (c) *the distant teaching and learning modality adopted by the school should be print-based modular learning.*

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the participants who were mostly married women (13 or 93%) with a median age of 35 years old. Eleven (79%) had reached tertiary education. Only one participant (7%) had a regular job as a public school teacher while others were engaged in small businesses (5 or 36%), farming (1 or 7%) or were unemployed altogether (7 or 50%). The grade levels of their children were as follows: *daycare* (5 or 36%), *kindergarten* (3 or 21%) and *grades 1 - 3* (6 or 43%).

Table 1. Description of participants.

Pseudonym	Age	Civil status	Educational attainments	Occupation	Grade level of child
Geena	45	Married	College graduate	Vendor	Day care
Maria	41	Married	High school graduate	Unemployed	Day care
Sofia	28	Married	College graduate	Vendor	Kindergarten
Delia	43	Married	College graduate	Unemployed	Grade 2
Lisa	29	Married	College graduate	Vendor	Kindergarten
Amalia	26	Married	College graduate	Unemployed	Kindergarten
Monica	30	Married	College graduate	Vendor	Grade 2
Celina	37	Married	College graduate	Vendor	Grade 1
Julita	35	Married	College graduate	Unemployed	Day Care
Dita	50	Married	College graduate	Teacher	Grade 3
Melissa	41	Married	College graduate	Unemployed	Day Care
Jacinta	34	Married	College graduate	Unemployed	Grade 3
Lucia	35	Married	High school graduate	Unemployed	Day care
Kristina	33	Separated	High school graduate	Farmer	Grade 1

3.3. Instrument

In gathering the data, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted in Akeanon, the mother tongue of the researchers and participants spoken in the central Philippines (Filipino Language Commission, 2016). The first author who did all the interviews has a doctorate in education and interviewing experience. An interview guide was used to obtain more in-depth information about their experiences. Efforts were also taken by the first author as an interviewer to build rapport with the participants. All interviews conducted in participants' homes from February 2022 to March 2022 were audio-recorded with consent using a smartphone. Sample guiding questions asked during the interviews are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Sample guiding questions.

Guiding questions
1. How do you describe your present involvement in the studies of your child?
2. How do you describe the typical teaching-learning situation at home?
3. How do you describe the benefits of print-based modular distance learning?
4. How do you describe the drawbacks of print-based modular distance learning?
5. How do you describe your role as a mother in the current learning modality of your child?
6. How do you describe the role of the teacher in the current learning modality of your child?
7. How do you prepare for the upcoming in-person classes?

3.4. Data Collection

Three research assistants (RAs) invited potential participants based on the inclusion criteria set by the research team. The research assistants (RAs) also arranged the face-to-face interviews and initially discussed the objectives of the interview with the potential participants. The first author conducted all the face-to-face interviews at the residences of the participants.

3.5. Analysis

This section outlines how the research team engaged in the reflective thematic analytic process to construct the meaning of an existing dataset as informed by Byrne (2022) and Campbell et al. (2021).

3.5.1. Phase 1: Familiarizing with the Data

Under this phase, a trained research assistant manually transcribed all the interviews orthographically. While the transcription was being conducted, the first author reviewed the audio recording to understand the context of the data. When the transcription was finished, all transcripts were re-read by the second and third authors. An example familiarization of data is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Example of familiarization of data during Phase 1.

English translation of responses by selected participants
From social media, sir. I let her watch YouTube videos about preschool learning materials on basic shapes, and charts; I teach her about charts and how to write on paper.
Of course, especially reading. There were times when I asked him to read an English word and he would pronounce it in Bisaya (the vernacular). When I say, "fish," he would say, "pish," "fish," "pish."
I encourage her to write with a pencil and crayon; sometimes, when she will not do it, I scold her because it is important and she will be left out if she is not taught how.

3.5.2. Phase 2: Generating the Initial Codes

The preliminary coding process was conducted using *QDAMax*, a software package for qualitative and mixed methods research (University of California Irvine, 2022) which allowed coding with ease by highlighting initial codes. A code book was produced (Table 3). Examples of initial codes include *"teaching techniques," "behavior management techniques," "schedule of sessions," "mothers as learners," "resource person for teacher-mothers" and "low regard for modular learning"* among others. These codes were subsequently renamed, redefined or removed in later iterations of coding. Table 4 shows an example of the stages of reflexive thematic analysis performed on all 14 transcripts. The underlined lines within the narrative were originally highlighted and led to code development. The corresponding code is found in the second column.

Table 4. Examples of preliminary coding.

Transcript passage	Initial code(s)
Interviewer: Can you tell me the benefits of modular instruction? Delia: (1) Engaging with the module is difficult on my part. My child would not answer it because according to her I'm not a teacher. She wants a teacher to assist her.	1) Difficulty in teaching
Interviewer: What usually happens when you and your child have a session with the module? Jacinta: It's okay, sir. Of course, (1, 2) when there are lessons that we do not understand, I'd ask her to seek help from her older sister who may have an idea. That's it. We're helping each other. There was an instance when her older sister taught her the lesson of the previous week that I didn't know. The present week's lesson would require an understanding of the previous week's lesson. I would recommend her to her older sister.	1) Teacher-mother 2) Older sibling assists
Interviewer: What makes you excited about thinking that in the next few months, your kindergarten child will attend face-to-face class? Amalia: I'm happy, sir, (1) that our expenses will be reduced. (2) She would learn more if she was in school because a teacher would teach her, sir. (3) I'm also excited for her to meet other children, (4) experience different lessons and learn them faster than she would from me being her teacher.	1) Less expensive 2) Teachers are better 3) School is much better 4) Learning is better in school 5) Teacher-mother

3.5.3. Phase 3: Generating the Initial Themes

A thematic map was made based on initially five candidate themes: (1) "Home-room approaches" *(ways adopted by parents during the tutorial sessions with the printed learning modules)*; (2) "collectivism in distant learning" *(distance learning during the pandemic as a family affair)*; (3) "redefining the role of teachers" *(activities undertaken by teachers during the print-based teaching-learning)*; (4) "renewed views of formal basic education" *(insights gained by parents on the significance of formal basic education)* and (5) "embracing the new normal in education" *(strategies adopted by parents to prepare their children for eventual face-to-face classes)*. Figure 1 shows the initial 5 candidate themes.

1 Home-classroom approach
    1.1 Teaching techniques
    1.2 Behavior management techniques
    1.3 Schedule of sessions
2 Collectivism in remote learning
    2.1 Mothers as learners
    2.2 Mothers as primary teachers
    2.3 Family members as co-teachers
3 Redefining the role of teachers
    3.1 Resource person for teacher-moms
    3.2 Module distributors-checkers
4 Renewed views on formal basic education
    4.1 High regard for on-campus learning
    4.2 Low regard of modular learning
5. Embracing the new normal in education
    5.1 Protection against the virus
    5.2 Academic support to children
    5.3 Fear of catching COVID-19

Figure 1. Initial themes from the codebook during Phase 3.

3.5.4. Phase 4: Reviewing Potential Themes

In the review of potential themes, Braun & Clarke (2012) proposed a series of key questions that the researcher should address: *(a) Is this a theme (it could be just a code)? (b) If it is a theme, what is the quality of this theme (does it tell me something useful about the data set and my research question)? (c) What are the boundaries of this theme (what does it include*

and exclude)? (d) Are there enough (meaningful) data points to support this theme (is the theme thin or thick)? And (e) Are the data too diverse and wide-ranging (does the theme lack coherence)? In this study, the dual criteria given by Patton (1990) (*i.e.* internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity) were observed in the recursive review of candidate themes. As regards internal homogeneity, the initial code *"behavior management techniques"* was renamed *"difficulty in teaching"* under the category *"mothers as primary teachers."* The initial theme, *"home-room approaches"* was renamed *"realizing the gaps"* to cover all the inadequacies in the implementation of printed modular learning affecting its efficiency and effectiveness. The second author proposed "redefining classroom learning" as the third theme. Thorough discussion by the team resulted in finally adopting "getting back on track" because the codes could be interpreted as preparing themselves and their children for an eventual back-to-school experience. On external heterogeneity, the initial theme *"transformation of teachers in asynchronous teaching"* was first renamed *"redefining the role of teachers"* to encapsulate the various activities performed by teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic but that were unheard of prior to the pandemic. The theme was eventually removed because it did not support the overall analytical framework after the recursive review in relation to the coded data items and entire data sets (see Figure 2).
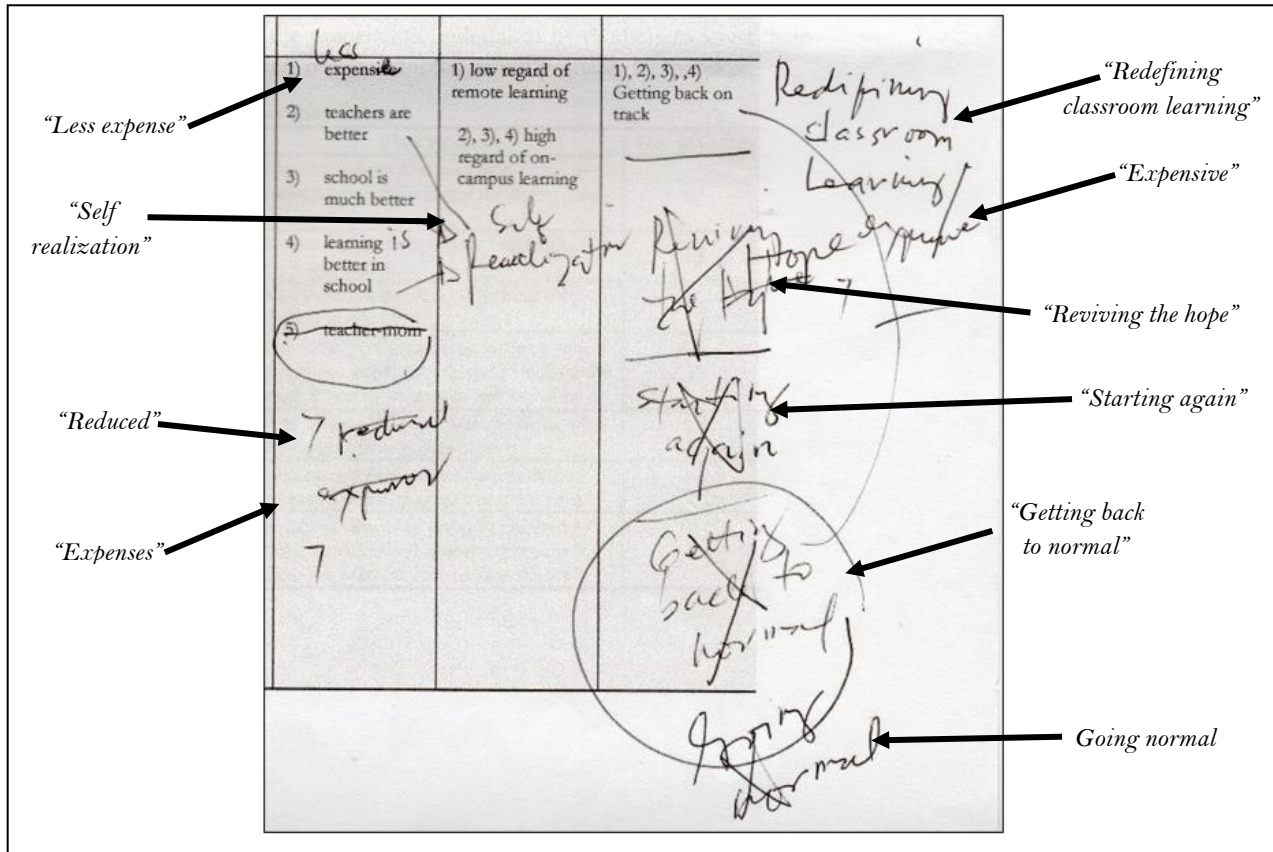

Figure 2. Review of the potential themes discussed by the research team.

3.5.5. Phase 5: Defining and Naming the Themes

The first and second authors presented a revised thematic analysis along with the extracts. A discussion among researchers led to the revision of the initial themes. Three base themes were generated to provide a coherent and internally consistent account of the datasets and were informed by the research objectives. These themes include: (1) realizing the gaps *(realizations of parents on the inefficiencies and ineffectiveness of distant learning through printed learning modules)*, (2) filling in the gaps *(actions implemented by parents to stand in for the lacking)* and (3) getting back on track *(preparations made by parents for the much-awaited opening of in-person classes).*

The codes, categories and emerging themes are shown in Table 5. A total of 274 codes described the mothers' experiences with distant teaching and learning in three themes. The first theme, *"realizing the gaps"*, highlights the importance of educating mothers about the role of schools in their children's learning. The second theme, *"filling in the gaps"*, describes the critical role played by mothers and the assistance afforded by immediate family members and neighbors so children could continue with distant teaching and learning. The final theme, *"getting back on track"*, pertains to the preparation undertaken by mothers to assist their children in attending in-person classes. A summary is given in Table 5.

3.5.6. Phase 6: Writing the Report

The first and second authors presented the finalized themes to the other authors for final inspection. When everyone agreed, the first author proceeded to write the draft of the findings based on the finalized themes of the study. The draft was then given to five other authors for contributions such as improvements on the presentation of extracts to support the themes and the inclusion of related findings from previous research with the findings of the present study. Direct quotations cited in the study were translated to English by the researcher and checked by the third author who is a language teacher proficient in both English and Akeanon.

Table 5. Summary of codes, categories and themes.

Themes	Categories	Description	No. of codes
Realizing the gaps	High regard for on-campus learning.	Mothers believe that in-person campus-based instruction is better for their young children.	87
	Low regard for remote learning.	Mothers appreciate remote learning but it's not effective.	85
Filling in the gaps	Mothers are primary teachers.	Mothers took the lead in teaching the child at home.	57
	Family members as co-teachers.	The father, child's siblings, aunts and neighbors would take turns teaching the child whoever was capable and available.	11
Getting back on track	Fear of the infectious COVID-19.	Fear of being infected with the virus once they attend face-to-face classes.	12
	Protection against the COVID-19 virus.	Medical and non-medical protective measures to avoid contracting the virus.	11
	Academic support for children.	Forms of assistance were given to children to catch up on missed lessons to prepare them for eventual face-to-face classes.	11

3.6. Rigor and Trustworthiness

For the rigor and trustworthiness of the analysis, member checking was performed (Candela, 2019; Creswell, 2014). Two participants were shown the results and both of them agreed with the interpretations made by the researchers.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Throughout recruitment, the three research assistants explained to potential participants the purpose of the study, the manner in which data would be collected, the extent of their participation and the uses of the findings of the study. The first author was accompanied by these research assistants to the participants' homes during the actual interview. Prior to the interview, the first author introduced the study, provided the *information sheet* and obtained signed informed consent forms. Participants were reminded that they could withdraw from the interview without prejudice. They were given snacks and a small amount of money equivalent to USD 3 after the interviews.

4. Findings

Themes were grouped under headings related to the topic being studied. Analysis of the interviews generated three broad themes: "realizing the gaps," "filling in the gaps," and "getting back on track."

Theme 1: Realizing the Gaps

Mothers realized the difference between face-to-face classes and distant teaching and learning when they engaged with them. They looked at on-campus instruction as a better set-up for their young children. Better teaching is associated with teachers at schools using a variety of instructional strategies so children learn better.

Monica said that her child being in school allows him to "see his classmates and teacher. He would experience how face-to-face classes are conducted. At least when he is in school, he will learn a lot. He would experience different teaching strategies from his teacher."

Another mother shared the same observation that emphasizes the critical role that teachers play in teaching and learning. Julita said that it's completely different when a teacher teaches in a face-to- face class.

Distant teaching and learning have removed in-person socialization. For mothers, socialization is one of the biggest problems for their children during home-based learning. The appreciation for the interactions formed during school is evident in the statements made. In the case of Lisa, she used her own experience as a young student to rationalize the need for socialization in her own daughter.

> I'm used to having classes where I can interact with my classmates. When the parents are busy, the child is with his classmates and teachers. He could express himself and get ideas other than those of the parents. For me, face-to-face is better because they can enjoy it.

For Melissa, socialization with other children provides essential clues on the development and readiness of her child for schoolwork.

> You see him socialize with other children aside from us. During socialization, you'll notice his abilities and his preparation for school.

Mothers were appreciative of emergency distant teaching and learning during the pandemic but found it ineffective. The printed learning modules had quality assurance issues. They opined that the contents of some lessons were not grade-appropriate. Amalia had this to share,

> For instance, my child is in kindergarten. I'm wondering if they are taught fourth-grade stuff. Just like in her 3 weeks module, they are asked to make a diorama of a school. We were told to let my child perform the task and simply assist her. My child could not do the task.

Teaching children at home added to the domestic responsibilities of mothers on top of existing ones. Lucia is straightforward about her experience teaching her child: "It added to my responsibilities at home." Dita, a public school teacher describes her difficulty teaching her own child. She said: "Because parents are busy, they keep on

working, they could not focus on their child. Who will teach their child because they're busy?" Geena, a working mother admitted that she could not focus on her child because of work.

Theme 2: Filling in the Gaps
The closure of schools and the absence of teachers encouraged mothers to take on the role of de facto teachers at home. Geena described her mother's role in these words: "Because she is under modular learning at home, I teach her with the books sent by her teacher.

Mothers are to adopt the role of teachers. Jacinta describes the situation in these words: We are also learning things we have not studied. We are also studying.

Geena agrees with the observation of Jacinta when she says: Actually, the child is studying with her mother as her teacher. Both of them are studying.

While mothers assumed the primary role of being teachers at home, other family members and neighbors would also help the former. Jacinta describes the situation in these words:

> Of course, when there are lessons that we do not understand, I'd ask her to seek help from her older sister. We're helping each other. There was an instance when her older sister taught her the lesson of the previous week that I didn't know. The present week's lesson would require an understanding of the previous week's lesson. I would recommend her to her older sister.

Jacinta agrees with Melissa and Julita. In the case of Melissa, her daughter's aunt taking up teacher education would assist her. As for Julita, it was her husband who would teach their daughter.

Theme 3: Getting Back on Track
Mothers were also concerned about the continuing threat posed by COVID-19. Fear dominated the emotions of parents brought about by the potential harm to young children. In contrast, the desire to send their children to school for face-to-face classes exceeded the damage caused by virus. Mothers prepared their children for the return to school campuses. Preparations are consistent with what health authorities told the public about precautions against COVID-19.

Monica expressed her fear for her child getting the virus while in school. A similar emotion is felt by Lisa. She relates that I am afraid of COVID-19. Celina also believed that the pandemic was far from not over.

Melissa's family was among the first to avail themselves of free anti-virus vaccines in their community. She believed that the full vaccination of people surrounding her child would ensure the latter's safety. So, she made sure that the entire household was vaccinated. She said:

> "We are all fully vaccinated here. We were told that our parents should be vaccinated first. As a child, he could not get the vaccine that is why we all insisted on having the vaccine because he is prone to the virus and if we would not get the vaccine, we could not just leave the house".

On the other hand, Jacinta put her trust in the protective gear and appropriate information from authorities. She shares,

> It must be safe that he has physical protection   put on the face mask. I will follow whatever will be agreed upon during meetings with the teacher and parents like the number of days and hours at school.

Despite the fear engulfing parents during the period, mothers provided assistance in many forms to help their children catch up on lessons and competencies once they attend in-person classes.

> Amalia: What we're doing is practicing her. We're preparing her. I'm telling her, *"It's up to you if you're not going to make good yourself. You'll be facing difficulty when face-to-face classes resume."*

Sofia also conducted review sessions with her child through the printed learning module. "I'm reviewing her starting from her first learning module which I took pictures of. Up to the latest learning modules, I still review her from the beginning to the end."

For Lucia, adjustment is a key approach to address the unprecedented changes around her. She said, "Maybe it's about adjustment like waking up early and preparing for her needs.

Dita shared that pressure built up when they had to beat the deadline for submitting the learning modules yet her daughter was still whining. She had to assist her daughter on her learning modules at night.

As for Julita, she admitted that "I'm the one teaching her. Sometimes she's not in the mood. Sometimes I'm the one answering because I couldn't force her."

5. Discussion
The suspension of face-to-face classes has been both a blessing and a curse for many parents particularly mothers. The collective experience of having to stay under one roof during the lockdown and having limited movement provided ample opportunities to bond with children. This was even made obvious when mothers taught children with skills and competencies previously assigned to classroom teachers during the two-year closure of schools as reported in previous studies (Agaton & Cueto, 2021; Cahapay, 2021; Dargo & Dimas, 2021; Mazumdar et al., 2022; Serra-Labrador, 2022). The situation where roles in the household are delineated by gender exacerbated the physical and mental stress of mothers by balancing the household chores as well as adding instructional roles that were not unique to Filipino households (Clark et al., 2021; Gibbons et al., 2021; Mazumdar et al., 2022). This research has also produced evidence that mothers are the *de facto* teachers. The documented roles of fathers, siblings, aunts and other good Samaritans in the community reflect the collectivist nature of Philippine society which is expressed in the educational needs of young children (Arnilla, 2017).

In terms of instruction, mothers complained of the lack of tools and consistently assisted their children in answering their learning modules. For working mothers, time is a precious commodity that dictates when they can teach their children. The lack of knowledge of the contents of their children's lessons requires access to printed, digital or human references to resolve the issue. Yet reliable internet connectivity and gadgets as reported by Bayucca (2021) confronted the mothers who participated in this study. Generally, the mothers belonging to the low-income groups included in this study are appreciative of modular distant learning because it addressed the educational needs of children and gave their children the opportunity to learn academic skills by studying in public schools. This result is reminiscent of Talimodao and Madrigal (2021). The implementation of modular distant learning fermented discontent over the quality of instruction which reinforced the belief that teaching should be left to professional teachers for better learning.

Education is seen as a great social equalizer by most Filipinos. Having this thought in mind, parents' grit to send their children to school no matter the circumstances is on full display even during the pandemic. The story of all mothers pointed to the perseverance of efforts, consistency of interests and adaptability to situations (Datu et al., 2018). The mothers are resolute in their desire to keep their children in schools no matter what the conditions or modalities are. The preparations undertaken by mothers for the eventual gradual reopening of schools are remarkable. Ensuring that their children reconnect with the lessons as well as their peers motivated these parents to review as well as remind their children of the situations they would face at school. Given the findings in this study, it appears that parents in lower income groups prefer face-to-face learning.

6. Conclusion

The study showed the importance Filipino parents place on education against the backdrop of a collectivist Philippine society. The desire to educate their children is pervasive in the stories shared by mothers as a testament to their trust in teachers and schools with regard to the education of their children. They share the burden of educating their children but the bulk of the role rests on the teachers who are trained to perform the tasks. If the education department wants to implement a blended learning approach, the scarcities and inequalities in households have to be addressed on top of changing perceptions to ensure acceptance and support.

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