

CHALLENGES AND ADJUSTMENTS OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER-MOTHERS MANAGING YOUNG CHILDREN WHILE WORKING FROM HOME

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic brought great changes to teaching practices, particularly for secondary school teacher-mothers balancing online instruction and childcare. This study explores the lived experiences of teacher-mothers in the Philippines during the pandemic, denoting the challenges of managing their dual roles. The central focus is on how these women coped with the tension between professional duties and motherhood, especially when both roles demand attention simultaneously. Using narrative analysis of interviews with 16 teacher-mothers of young children, the research identifies four key themes: professional and parental challenges, coping strategies, personal well-being, and the need for support. These themes reveal the complexity of their experiences, including the emotional and logistical strain of fulfilling both roles during a crisis. The study's findings suggest that policymakers and educational institutions must prioritize the well-being of teacher-mothers by implementing supportive measures such as reasonable work arrangements and access to childcare. While limited to one Philippine province, this research offers critical insights into the unique pressures faced by teacher-mothers and notes the importance of addressing their needs for a more equitable educational system. Future research should investigate the long-term effects of the pandemic on teacher-mothers and evaluate the effectiveness of support systems introduced during this time.

Keywords: Teacher-mothers, mother-educators, pandemic mothers, online teachers

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic era has brought massive changes to teaching and learning practices. Teachers and students were introduced to online and blended learning modalities as the new educational system. While these transitions required additional instructional materials and teaching strategies, the teacher, as the primary force driving student learning, needed to compensate and advance the learning process while performing other tasks, particularly at home. This study examined the lived experiences of secondary school teacher-mothers who managed online work and childcare during the pandemic, to offer a nuanced depiction of the challenges they faced and the adjustments experienced during this time.

The central inquiry of this research is to explain how secondary school teacher-mothers in the Philippines managed the competing demands of their work and home life during the COVID-19 pandemic. These teacher-mothers faced the difficult challenge of teaching students

via online platforms while tending to young children. The tension between professional obligations and the demands of motherhood often overlaps which creates considerable stress that makes it extremely difficult for teachers to effectively fulfill either role. Looking closely at this dual role, the study hopes to offer a feminist context of the unique needs of teachers who are mothers of young children.

Despite the literature discussing the impact of online teaching on educators during the pandemic [1] [2], the scarcity of literature explaining how teachers who are mothers of young children balance their teaching careers while performing their maternal duties remains evident. This gap is particularly notable when considering the duality of their roles as both mothers and teachers [3]. This study hopes to provide a link that examines the burdens associated with teaching while fulfilling motherhood roles, the relationship between these responsibilities, and the Filipino context that shapes these experiences.

This study about teacher-mothers is an important inquiry because it supports the imperative action to improve their work-life balance. By specific illustration of the challenges and adjustments they are experiencing, the schools, policymakers, and communities can serve as baseline information to lessen the burdens they face while balancing their dual roles. As teachers serve as the primary leaders in creating a conducive teaching and learning environment for students, their well-being must be at the forefront of priorities for an equal educational system [4]. This is because, when educators are overwhelmed and overworked, their ability to teach effectively is compromised, which can lead to negative consequences for student competencies [5].

To analyze the intersectionality issue of teacher-mothers, this study applied a narrative analysis of 16 secondary school teachers from a province in the Philippines, all of whom have children aged six or younger. The data was analyzed with the aid of QDA Miner software, which facilitated the identification of key themes about challenges and adjustments that teacher-mothers experienced. The thematic analysis revealed four primary areas of focus: professional and parental challenges, strategies for managing teaching and home, challenges to personal well-being, and the need for assistance. Each of these areas described the nature of the difficulties faced by teacher-mothers while managing their teaching and mothering roles.

The scope of this study is limited to secondary school teacher-mothers with young children, as their challenges are distinct from those faced by teachers with older children or without children. Concentrating on this group, the research provided a detailed examination of the Filipino ways on how teacher-mothers managed their dual roles. Excluding other groups limited the study to focus on the unique intersection of teaching and motherhood during a time of crisis for meaningful and specific insights.

This study, however, is limited to the experiences of teacher-mothers in one province of the Philippines, which may not accurately reflect the experiences of teacher-mothers in other regions or countries. Additionally, while the narrative analysis provides valuable perception from the teacher-mothers' experiences, it may not capture all the variations in experience across different school contexts or socioeconomic backgrounds. These limitations form part of the considerations while making sense of the results, although they do not diminish the significance of the study's findings.

This research sheds light on the multifaceted challenges faced by secondary school teacher-mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic. By understanding their experiences, we can develop more effective support strategies to help these women balance their professional and parental responsibilities, ultimately improving their well-being and the quality of education they provide [6]. This is important not only for the well-being of teacher-mothers but also for the broader educational system, as supporting these women is essential for ensuring the success of both teachers and their students.

The intersectionality of various factors, such as socioeconomic status, cultural background, and access to resources, is an essential reference in shaping the experiences of teacher-mothers [7]. Recognizing these diverse influences is important in understanding how teacher-mothers navigate their responsibilities both at home and in the workplace. By taking into account these intersecting factors, we can gain a more complete picture of the unique challenges they face, particularly during unprecedented times like the pandemic.

Insights from the analysis of the interview data also have significant policy implications. It denotes the need for schools and governments to implement supportive measures that cater to the needs of teacher-mothers. Policies such as reasonable work arrangements, access to affordable childcare, and mental health services can provide essential support to help them balance mothering and teaching roles more effectively [8]. Looking closely at these needs can also lead to a more equitable working environment, benefiting both teachers and the education system [9].

Way forward, research can investigate the long-term impacts of the pandemic on teacher-mothers. This would include examining the effectiveness of various support strategies introduced during the pandemic and determining which approaches have the most lasting positive effects. By focusing on the ongoing challenges and potential solutions, future studies can contribute to the development of more robust support systems for teacher-mothers in both educational and policy-making aspects.

Incorporating these insights can provide a nuanced depiction of the challenges experienced by teacher-mothers during the pandemic, denoting the importance of intersectionality, policy support, and continued research in addressing their needs.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Methodology

This research inquiry applied a narrative analysis approach [10] to gain a deep understanding of how secondary school teacher-mothers managed their young children while working from home. Through the analysis of the experiences of these women, the study captured the challenges they faced and the support they required to manage their teaching and parental responsibilities.

Narrative analysis was particularly well-suited for this research because it provides an exploratory setting for deep analysis of individual narratives and the contextual factors that shaped them. By analyzing the narratives of teacher-mothers, the study gained insights into their lived experiences, including their emotions, thoughts, and actions, providing a nuanced understanding of their experiences within the Filipino context.

For data gathering, the study conducted semi-structured interviews with secondary school teacher-mothers who had young children. The interviews focused on uncovering the participants' experiences of online teaching and childcare, including the challenges they faced, the strategies they employed, and the support they received either from their institutions, family members, or other individuals.

Narratives were analyzed through thematic analysis to thematize the experiences of teacher-mothers [11]. This approach enabled the study to explain the time, place, and value of the participants' experiences, providing a rich and detailed understanding of the teacher-mothers' perspectives.

Applying the audit trail method throughout the research procedure was done to uphold transparency and credibility [12]. This included documentation of all research decisions, methods, and procedures, as well as any changes or modifications made during the research process. This inquiry applied a purposive sampling method to recruit participants who could provide valuable perceptions of the experiences of secondary school teacher-mothers during the pandemic. Specifically, the study sought to recruit women with children who were employed as secondary school teachers and were willing to share their experiences voluntarily.

Potential participants were identified through a combination of snowball sampling and direct outreach [13]. Individuals meeting the inclusion criteria were contacted via email or social media and invited to participate in the study. Those who agreed to participate were provided with an informed consent document [14], which outlined the purpose of the study, the potential risks and benefits, and the participant's right to withdraw at any time. To uphold the confidentiality of participants, all identifying information was removed from the data and replaced with unique code numbers. The interviews and written data collected were treated as confidential, and audio files of the interviews were deleted after transcription. Only the lead researcher had access to these files, and the transcriber signed a written non-disclosure agreement to protect the confidentiality of the data.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, which allowed for flexibility while ensuring that key themes were addressed. Interviews were conducted individually via Google Meet Recording Application, with an approximate duration of 60-90 minutes. Before the interview, the study's objectives and informed consent were properly secured. A written copy of the informed consent, objectives, and interview questions was also sent to participants via registered email.

The semi-structured interviews explored the following key questions:

- "How do secondary school teachers who are mothers manage their children while teaching at home?"
- "What are persistent challenges they experience while teaching and managing children at home?"
- "What are the support they need to better manage their children and work at home?"

To facilitate communication and accurate understanding, the interviews were conducted in Filipino. The responses were subsequently translated into English for analysis. The participants' verbal responses were audio-recorded and transcribed precisely. Before subjecting

the transcribed data to thematic analysis, a copy was sent to the respective participants for contextual review and approval, ensuring the accuracy and validity of the data.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, a widely used method for identifying and interpreting patterns within qualitative data [15] was applied to analyze the collected data. This approach involved several interrelated phases. Initially, the researcher immersed oneself in the data by repeatedly reviewing the transcripts to get a comprehensive overview of the content. This familiarization phase allowed for the identification of key themes and concepts that emerged from the participants' narratives. Subsequently, initial codes were generated to capture the themes and concepts from the narratives of teacher-mothers. These codes were applied to relevant sections of the transcripts, creating a preliminary framework for analysis. The codes were then grouped to form more abstract emergent themes that represented the overarching patterns within the narratives. These themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they were coherent, meaningful, and representative of the teacher-mothers' experiences. Once the themes were defined and named, the researcher presented the themes and their associated data in a clear and concise manner. This thematic analysis provided a systematic and rigorous approach to examining the data, enabling the researcher to identify key themes related to the challenges faced by teacher-mothers, the strategies they employed, and the support they required.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

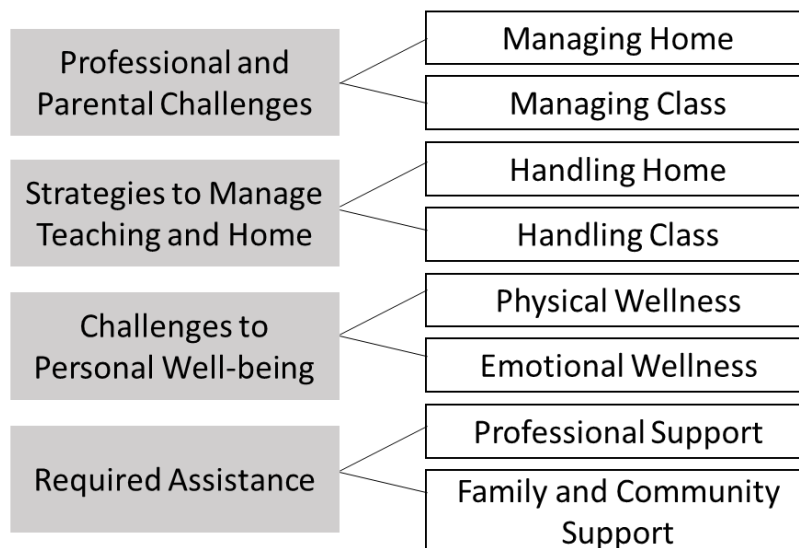


Figure 1. Thematic Map of Teacher-mothers experiences during the pandemic

Professional and Parental Challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic altered the teaching-learning environment which pushed teachers to instantly adapt to online teaching. This shift had a massive impact, especially against teacher-mothers, who were juggling with balancing the demands of their profession with the responsibilities of childcare [16]. In the Philippines, cultural expectations of mothers

are already high, hence are expected to fulfill their mothering and teaching roles perfectly, these professional and parental challenges therefore amplify these pressures.

Table 1. Professional and Parental Challenges of Teacher-mothers

Sub-themes	Codes	Responses
Online class management	Online Classes	Because when we distribute learning modules, for example, on a Friday, they can ask questions about the instructions or how to complete their modules. Sometimes they don't ask questions at all (F5).
	Students' behaviour	It's really difficult to adjust and to deliver quickly since everything is supposed to be handled through just one group chat. But we need to send private messages, and it's really hard to deal with all the different issues (M4).
	Administering of Assessment	That's why, Ma'am, sometimes I'm late in checking papers. I've added extra time to check the papers early in the morning, and when the baby is in a good mood, I can give the baby to the nanny (E3).
	Ancillary school tasks	I'm concerned that it will be even more stressful because now I have two things to take care of. They're considerate of pregnant women, senior citizens, and those living far away. But with this move to an apartment closer to school, I'm the one being called. They are considerate in other ways, but for paperwork, narratives, SBM, and Brigada Eskwela, it's usually us who end up handling them.
Home management	Focusing on Family Obligations	Because I'm exhausted from working all night on household chores and taking care of the baby, I don't have much time for work. My performance has greatly changed compared to before (S6).
	Boundless Work Hours	Before, work-related tasks would end when I went home. Now, with working from home, our time has become more reasonable to accommodate all the questions from the kids, so even late at night, I'm still replying to them because I sometimes give instructions at odd hours due to household chores (PE4).
	Work Adjusted According to Kids' Sleep	Usually, at night, when the baby is asleep, I can start working. But with the current setup of working from home, I'm more often sleep-deprived compared to before when I wasn't working from home (E2).

	Breastfeeding	I'm still breastfeeding my child, so I wait for him to fall asleep before I can work on tasks such as creating summative exams, performance tasks, and checking papers. When he wakes up, I breastfeed him first. The difficult part for me is that the baby is always with me, so sometimes I make PowerPoint presentations while holding him. It's quite challenging for us mothers with a two-year-old who is still breastfeeding (E1).

Teacher-mothers are caught in the constant struggle between the demands of their profession and the needs of their young children [17]. Online teaching required long hours and a high level of skills in managing online classes, simultaneously wearing the mother's hat, childcare responsibilities were often time-consuming and emotionally demanding [18]. This mingling pressure to be available for both students and children often raises overwhelming and exhausting emotions.

Furthermore, teachers maximize the use of group chats for communication with students for clarification and explanation of lessons, which is often inefficient and time-consuming. Addressing specific needs and questions to answer each student's question needs careful attention from teachers. Constant communication with colleagues and administrators is another challenge they experience when working online, often leading to delays in communication and difficulties in resolving issues whether with students or amongst faculty.

The constant stress and pressure of balancing work and family responsibilities took a toll on the mental and physical health of teacher-mothers. The majority of them reported experiencing high levels of stress, anxiety, and fatigue. The difficulty of prioritizing tasks when constantly pulled in different directions could lead to feelings of overwhelm and burnout.

Moreover, teacher-mothers may have faced societal expectations that they are primarily responsible for childcare, even when they are also employed. This could lead to increased workload and stress. Discrimination or bias in the workplace, particularly in terms of workload and career advancement, could also be a challenge for teacher-mothers.

Schools and communities should nurture greater support and resources to help teacher-mothers balance their professional and parental responsibilities [19]. This should incorporate reasonable work arrangements, access to childcare services, and mental health support [20]. Addressing these challenges can help safeguard the well-being of teacher-mothers and the quality of education teacher-mothers provide to their students.

Challenges to Personal Well-being

The constant pressure of balancing online teaching with childcare responsibilities took a significant toll on the personal well-being of teacher-mothers. Many reported experiencing physical health problems, such as low blood pressure, which could affect their energy levels and ability to perform their duties. The demands of their roles often made it difficult for them to prioritize their health and well-being, leading to neglect of basic self-care activities like exercise and adequate sleep.

Table 2. Challenges to Personal Well-being of Teacher-mothers

Sub-themes	Codes	
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Physical Wellness	Lack of Sleep	I can't keep up with everything because I'm constantly feeling weak due to low blood pressure. So, the laundry ends up piling up while my husband handles the cooking and I take care of ironing. I can't go to bed at night without cleaning the floor. I don't know why, even when I feel dizzy, I still need to clean. My eldest child knows I have a problem and often says, "Mommy, I can handle it, Mommy, I'll do it." I'm trying to teach the younger one as best as I can (M7).
	Disrupted Eating	Challenges in teaching are compounded by being at home because I need to focus on the kids. Especially during online classes, it's hard to give them my full attention. Sometimes I cannot even eat well or eat fully because when I have a break from online classes, I need to attend to my child. That's how it is during online classes (PE 5).
	Limited Exercise	Everything falls on me. I'm the only one doing it all, so I dedicate almost the entire day to household chores without stopping. I'm constantly cleaning because my kids are still very young and there's always a mess to clean. There is no time to take care of myself or even to do some exercise (S1).
	Physical Fatigue	Reports and clerical work are piling up. Instead of focusing solely on teaching, we must find ways to manage everything simultaneously because of the online class. We handle everything ourselves, so it's challenging to keep up with teaching and administrative tasks, which often take a toll on our body (S7).
Mental Wellness	Mother's Guilt	I feel guilty, especially when I end up working late into the night, sometimes until midnight. My husband has scolded me before for working late when the baby should be asleep. I used to tell him that work should stay outside the bedroom to keep it a place for rest. But I've had to break that rule because of work (S5).
	Wife's Guilt	My life feels so full. Even when I try to be affectionate with my husband and meet his needs, there's always something to think about or do. Even when lying in bed, my mind is still racing. It feels like a continuous cycle (SS2).
	Mental Strain	Requesting reports at midnight is tough. We don't have weekends; they can chat at any time, and it feels toxic because they blame us for delays (S3).
	Falling short of societal expectations	When you are a mother, you have to be like a super human, I feel like I am not enough, or what I do is not enough of what is expected of a mother and at the same as a teacher (S7).

The pandemic-era confluence of online teaching and childcare responsibilities imposed a significant strain on the mental and emotional well-being of secondary school teacher-mothers [21]. The constant stress and anxiety, coupled with feelings of guilt and shame for

neglecting either their professional or parental duties, could lead to a downward spiral of emotional distress.

The excessive workload and lack of time for relaxation could contribute to feelings of burnout, making it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance [22]. The constant tension could also put a strain on relationships with partners, leading to conflicts and resentment [23]. Furthermore, the stress and fatigue experienced by teacher-mothers could negatively impact their interactions with their children, potentially leading to adverse consequences for the children's emotional development.

To address these multifaceted challenges, schools and communities must provide comprehensive support and resources to help teacher-mothers balance their professional and parental responsibilities. This could include reasonable work arrangements, access to affordable childcare, and readily available mental health services [24]. Additionally, it is imperative for teacher-mothers to prioritize their self-care and seek support from family and friends to help them cope with the emotional challenges they face [25].

To mitigate these negative consequences, schools and communities must prioritize providing comprehensive support and resources to teacher-mothers. This includes reasonable work arrangements, access to childcare, and mental health services. By addressing these needs, we can help ensure the well-being of teacher-mothers and the quality of education they provide to their students.

Strategies to Manage Teaching and Home Responsibilities

The COVID-19 pandemic forced many professionals to adapt to remote work arrangements, negatively affecting their work-life balance. For secondary school teacher-mothers, this shift posed unique challenges as they balanced the demands of their profession while simultaneously fulfilling their parental responsibilities [26]. To accommodate their family commitments, many teacher-mothers adjusted their work schedules. Some opted to work during the night or when their children were napping, making sure they could still contribute to their professional duties without neglecting their childcare responsibilities. However, this often led to disrupted sleep patterns and increased fatigue.

Managing time effectively was important for teacher-mothers working from home. They had to balance their family responsibilities with their teaching duties, often multitasking to handle household chores, childcare, and lesson preparation simultaneously. The home, once a sanctuary, transformed into a makeshift classroom, blurring the lines between work and personal life.

Table 3. Strategies to Manage Teaching and Home Responsibilities of Teacher-mothers

Sub-themes	Codes	Responses
Coping Strategies to Manage Work	Recording video lectures	Usually, since I have small children, I do video calls or work on school tasks at night or when they're napping in the afternoon (E5).
	Working at night	At night, when the baby is asleep, I start working again so I don't get overwhelmed with tasks. I only get a bit of rest because the baby wakes up early in

		the morning, so I end up sleeping late but waking up early, which makes me very tired (S6).
	Juggling dual tasks	As a teacher and a mother working from home, I have had to make significant adjustments to manage my time. I need to balance my family responsibilities with my duties as a teacher. I must multitask throughout the day to handle both setting up a classroom at home and fulfilling my role as a mother. The home has become the secondary school now, whereas before, the school was the secondary home (F7).
Coping Strategies to Manage Home	Children First Before Work	A typical day for me starts with taking care of the kids. I cook, feed them, and attend to all their needs before I start reaching out to the students. We use a modular approach, so I need to contact the parents via messenger or text to inform them about what needs to be done. While doing this, I also handle household chores and attend to the kids' needs—feeding, changing diapers, etc. After doing all the chores for the kids, then I can work properly (S2).
	Working strictly on schedule	I try, as much as possible, to work only from 8 am to 5 pm or when the kids are sleeping, in this way I can have time for my family (E5).
	Having a separate workspace	Although we have a limited space at home, I dedicate a small and slightly isolated space where I can work. By a little seclusion, my child would understand that Mommy is working and she will not disturb me too much (PE 1)
	Taking a break	I make sure that on Sundays, I don't check the group chat so I can enjoy at least one day off. From Monday to Saturday, my time is dedicated to working from home. Sundays are the only days I can take a break, so I make the most of it, although sometimes urgent matters still arise (F3).
	Working simultaneously	I can't really separate being a mother from being a teacher while at home. Our house is small, and any call or cry from my child interrupts my work. I can't ignore my child or make him wait, so I often have to stop working to attend to him, which sometimes leaves me unable to complete my tasks for school because I'm focused on taking care of my children (SS4).

	Hiring Nanny	My nanny stays with us during online classes. When there are no classes, like during vacation, she goes home, but she returns when classes resume to stay with us again (E3).
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A typical day for a teacher-mother involved a delicate balancing act. They would start by tending to their children's needs, preparing meals, and safeguarding their well-being before turning their attention to their students. Online teaching often requires frequent communication with parents to address their concerns and provide necessary guidance. Despite these demands, teacher-mothers still had to find time for household chores and continue caring for their children throughout the day. To maintain some semblance of a work-life balance, many teacher-mothers established specific work hours, often aligning them with their children's sleep schedules. This allowed them to dedicate time to their families without compromising their professional obligations.

Creating a designated workspace at home was essential for teacher-mothers to establish a sense of separation between work and personal life. By having a dedicated area, they could signal to their children that they were focused on their work and minimize distractions. While Sundays were typically reserved for rest, teacher-mothers often found themselves unable to completely disconnect. Urgent matters or last-minute tasks could arise, encroaching on their time.

The blurred lines between work and home life made it difficult for teacher-mothers to fully separate their roles as educators and caregivers [27]. The constant presence of their children could lead to interruptions during work hours, requiring them to pause their tasks to attend to their needs. This balancing act often resulted in feelings of guilt and frustration, as they struggled to meet the demands of both their professional and personal lives. To lessen some of the challenges faced by teacher-mothers, many relied on the support of their partners or caregivers. In some cases, nannies or relatives would stay with the children during online classes, providing much-needed assistance and allowing the mothers to focus on their work.

Required Assistance

The COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges for secondary school teacher-mothers, who were forced to adapt to the demands of remote teaching while simultaneously fulfilling their parental responsibilities. One of the primary concerns raised by teacher-mothers was the difficulty of maintaining a healthy work-life balance while working from home. Many expressed the need for physical reporting at the school, especially for those with young children, to mitigate the risk of infection and confirm continuity of education.

Another issue was the excessive workload imposed on teacher-mothers. Many felt that they were burdened with tasks that were not directly related to their teaching responsibilities, leading to increased stress and burnout. They advocated for the school to hire additional staff to handle administrative tasks, allowing teachers to focus on their core duties.

The long hours and demanding nature of remote teaching also contributed to the challenges faced by teacher-mothers. Many expressed the need for a reduction in the teaching schedule, particularly on weekends, to allow for some respite and mental health maintenance.

Table 4. Required Assistance of Teacher-mothers

Sub-themes	Codes	Responses
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Professional Support	Reasonable Schedule	If there were any, since we are working from home with a skeletal workforce, it would be beneficial to have physical reporting at the school, especially for those with children aged fifteen and below. It's difficult to avoid getting infected outside and then returning home to unvaccinated children. If you're not reporting physically, I mean, missing even just two days can be challenging, so it's really necessary to report in person (M7).
	Minimize ancillary works	I would request that the school remove tasks that are not part of our teaching responsibilities and hire the right people for those tasks. Instead of focusing on teaching and checking outputs, we end up with additional work that falls outside our scope due to a lack of staff. If they focus on hiring staff specifically for those tasks, it would greatly help us, as we could then concentrate more on teaching (E5).
	Restrict work time limits	I hope the Department of Education would consider not including Saturdays and Sundays in the teaching schedule. Reports and tasks could be paused over the weekend for some rest, as the lines are open from Monday to Friday, even until early morning. That would be helpful (F4).
	Provide resources	Financial assistance or gadgets would be appreciated. Since we use modules, we also have to handle printing ourselves. We need supplies and connectivity. Although DepEd provides SIM cards, they don't provide extra phones, so where would we put the SIM card? There are also suggestions for even a small amount to help with internet costs (E7).
Family and Community Support	Community Daycare	Yes. The main issue for parents, which I have also experienced, is finding someone reliable to care for and love their children, just like we do. That's the situation, so I hope that a community daycare becomes available in our area so that I can bring my child there (E7).
	Parenting Trainings	As a new parent working as a teacher, it would be helpful to have parenting training especially since kids today are different because their generation is exposed to gadgets and technologies (S1).
	Health and Wellness Programs	Maybe simple programs to remind us how to take care of ourselves and our overall well-being can also help because sometimes when you are a mother, you tend to forget about self-care (PE3).

	Financial Assistance	I hope that the government provides additional cash assistance for teachers who have young children, below three years old, so that our expenses for house helpers and vaccines can be covered (S6).
	Household Help	Community support like providing cooked meals and house cleaning would be a great help for us teacher-mothers so that we can focus on our most essential tasks (SS 4).

Financial assistance and resources were also identified as critical needs of Filipino teachers. The cost of printing modules, internet connectivity, and supplies posed a financial burden on many teacher-mothers. While the Department of Education provided SIM cards, the lack of additional phones and insufficient internet allowances hindered their ability to effectively teach online.

Balancing parental responsibilities with professional duties was another significant challenge faced by teacher-mothers. Finding reliable childcare was a common concern, as many parents struggled to find trustworthy individuals to care for their children. The establishment of community daycares was suggested as a potential solution to address this issue.

In addition to childcare, teacher-mothers also expressed a need for parenting training and support. The unique challenges posed by the digital age require new parenting strategies to guide children effectively. Moreover, prioritizing self-care was noted as essential for maintaining well-being and preventing burnout. To lessen the financial strain on teacher-mothers with young children, government support, such as additional cash assistance, was advocated for [28]. This assistance could help cover expenses related to childcare and essential supplies. Community support, such as providing cooked meals and house cleaning services, was also suggested as a means of lightening the burden on teacher-mothers, allowing them to focus on their most essential tasks.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic, a global health crisis that upended lives and livelihoods worldwide, posed a particularly arduous challenge for secondary school teacher-mothers in the Philippines. These women, already burdened by the dual roles of educator and caregiver, were forced to navigate the treacherous waters of online teaching while simultaneously steering the ship of their domestic lives. The weight of this immense responsibility has had a devastating impact on their mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

This study, a harrowing exposé of the challenges faced by teacher-mothers, reveals the extent of the toll exacted by the pandemic. The constant stress and anxiety, coupled with feelings of guilt and shame for neglecting either their professional or parental duties, have pushed these women to the brink. The excessive workload and lack of time for rest and relaxation have contributed to feelings of burnout, making it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

The constant strain has also taken a toll on their relationships, both personal and professional. The demands of online teaching and childcare have strained relationships with partners, leading to conflicts and resentment. Furthermore, the stress and fatigue experienced by teacher-mothers have negatively impacted their interactions with their children, potentially leading to adverse consequences for the children's emotional development.

To address these multifaceted challenges, schools, communities, and policymakers must take immediate and decisive action. Reasonable work arrangements, affordable childcare, and readily accessible mental health services are not mere luxuries but essential lifelines for these women. By providing these resources, we can help lessen the immense pressure they face and warrant their continued ability to provide quality education to their students.

Moreover, it is imperative to recognize the resilience and adaptability of teacher-mothers who have faced these challenges with unwavering determination. Their untiring commitment to their students and their families is a testament to their strength and perseverance. By understanding their experiences and providing the necessary support, we can empower them to overcome these challenges and continue to make a lasting impact on the lives of their students.

The time for action is now. We cannot stand idly by as secondary school teacher-mothers continue to struggle under the weight of this crisis. The future of our educational system depends on their well-being and their ability to provide quality education to our children. It is the moral obligation of educational institutions and the government to guarantee that they receive the support and resources needed to thrive.

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