

# COVID-19 Pandemic Parental Burnout and the Lived Experiences of Selected Parents with School Aged Children: Basis for an Intervention Program

Monica Q. Caponpon<sup>1</sup>, Dorothea C. Dela Cruz<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:-** The novel coronavirus in the Philippines was first identified in January 2020, causing notable changes in Filipino parents' life. Parenting in the pandemic increased the chances of developing parental burnout syndrome due to different parental roles and other responsibilities, which was a unique experience since the pandemic is something new to all of us. The respondents of the study are 189 Filipino parents with school aged children who were recruited using different social media platforms. The random sampling method was used for the quantitative and purposive sampling for the qualitative part of the study. A mixed method sequential explanatory design was applied. The result showed that the selected Filipino parents of this study experienced parental burnout. Concerning the three dimensions of parental burnout, it was reported that majority of the respondents experienced exhaustion; The profile variables that affect the development of parental burnout include parenting status, work arrangement, and time for leisure. The overall model of regression analysis such as monthly household income, iii parenting status, number of children, work arrangement, and time for leisure may significantly predict the parental burnout. It was found in the study that a significant difference existed between the level of parental burnout among Filipino parents during the COVID-19 Pandemic and parenting status, work arrangement, and time for leisure. There was no significant difference between the level of parental burnout and monthly household income and the total number of children. A qualitative study was also conducted on 15 Filipino parents who scored high, average, and low on the Parental Burnout Inventory (PBI). Twelve of them are mothers while three are fathers. Three major themes were derived from the qualitative interview. These were bonding and connectedness, distance learning struggles, and adjustment with two sub-themes which are stress and challenge.

**Keywords:-** COVID-19, Parental Burnout, Lived Experiences Of Parents, Balance Between Risk And Resources Theory Of Parental Burnout, Family Stress Model.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Parental Burnout, is an exhaustion syndrome characterized by a feeling of an overwhelming role as a parent physically and mentally [9]. Their demands are too high, and they do not have the resources to meet them [3]. It was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) that they acknowledge the fact that the concept of burnout is an occupational phenomenon that can be diagnosed. However, this phenomenon is not limited to the workplace because this is not only an occupational-related complaint by many adults. The present research will explore burnout in the parental domain. As we all know, parenting is one of the most challenging jobs a person can experience. Nevertheless, burnout is not exclusively found in the workforce because everyone is vulnerable [8].

A study conducted in Malaysia found that the parental burnout level during the Covid-19 pandemic was between average to high, which means that parental burnout level is not very good for parents and can be chronic if left untreated [4]. Parents are affected negatively by the pandemic. In their study, one of the participants mentioned that his mental health had worsened during this time of the pandemic [6]. It is also noted that psychological exhaustion is a syndrome associated with energy depletion [13]. Parenting burnout can occur when there is emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue, and cognitive difficulties, as well as the result of chronic parenting stress [5]. Since parents have to do more duties during the pandemic like children rearing, house chores, and work, it is undeniable that every parent is vulnerable to burnout. Therefore, both working and staying-at-home parents are not exempted. Working parents

<sup>1</sup>Manuscript received on \_\_\_\_\_, review completed on \_\_\_\_\_ and revised on \_\_\_\_\_.  
MQ. Caponpon is with Centro Escolar University, Manila, Philippines.  
DC. Dela Cruz is with Centro Escolar University, Manila, Philippines.

<sup>2</sup>Manuscript received on \_\_\_\_\_, review completed on \_\_\_\_\_ and revised on \_\_\_\_\_.  
MQ. Caponpon is with Centro Escolar University, Manila, Philippines  
DC. Dela Cruz is with Centro Escolar University, Manila, Philippines.

need to work from home and adapt to a new normal home situation [4].

#### ➤ *Dimensions of Parental Burnout*

According to other researchers, it is substantial to consider the relationships that are particular to the dimensions, such as (1) exhaustion, (2) emotional distancing, and (3) contrast to the parental self. However, it is not a prerequisite to get a very high score on the mentioned dimensions to manifest parental burnout [8]. In addition, if some dimensions are highly affected by other factors, parental burnout comes about [8].

Exhaustion (EX). Being emotionally and physically drained in terms of energy among parents may subjectively experience exhaustion and strike by their role as parents. We have to note that feelings of emotional exhaustion are one of the primary stress dimensions of burnout. Generally, women are reported to have slightly higher emotional exhaustion levels than men [7].

Emotional Distancing (ED). The interaction is more functional since the parents do not have enough strength to pervade emotional relationships with their children.

Contrast to Parental Self (CO). The feeling of attaining parental accomplishment is substantial to any parent. On the other hand, the sense of accomplishment in one's parental role comes in when parents feel tired of parenting and can no longer stand their role as parents anymore.

#### ➤ *Balance Between Risk and Resources Theory of Parental Burnout (BR2)*

According to, BR2 of Moira Mikolajczak and Isabelle Roskam, parental burnout happens when parental demands are getting high while the parental resources are limited. Parental burnout occurs when one's parental resources are insufficient to meet the demands. This implies that parental burnout is the product of the chronic disproportion of demands which is the risk factor on top of protection factors. Parental burnout threatens any parent who is piled up by too many risks in the absence of compensatory resources.

#### ➤ *Aim*

This study aimed to describe the profile variables that contributes to the occurrence of parental burnout among 189 selected parents with school aged children during the year 2021 and to determine what intervention may be proposed

Specifically, the study sought to answers the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
  - 1.1 Monthly household income,
  - 1.2 Parenting status,
  - 1.3 Total number of children,
  - 1.4 Work arrangement, and
  - 1.5 Time for leisure?
2. What is the total level of parental burnout among selected Filipino parents during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

3. What is the parental burnout of the selected Filipino parents in terms of the following:
  - 3.1 Exhaustion,
  - 3.2 Contrast to parental self, and
  - 3.3 Emotional distancing?

4. What is the difference between the total level of parental burnout among selected Filipino parents and the profile of the respondents?

5. What are the lived experiences of the selected Filipino parents during the pandemic and how do these experiences mean to them as a parent?

6. What intervention can be proposed based on the results of the study?

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### ➤ *Research Design*

The researchers utilized the sequential explanatory mixed method design of qualitative and quantitative studies. This type of design was utilized in order for the qualitative data to elaborate on the quantitative results for a depth understanding of the phenomenon.

#### ➤ *Respondents*

The respondents of this study were one hundred eighty-nine (189) selected Filipino parents. The random sampling technique was used for the quantitative while purposive sampling for the qualitative part of the study. The criteria for the participants in the quantitative study must be a Filipino parent in any gender, 18 to 50 years old, living at least with one or more than one school-age child at home, and working and non-working parents who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. For the qualitative part of the study, the respondents consisted of fifteen (15) Filipino parents, (5) high, (5) average, and (5) low scorers in PBI. The participants were recruited according to the results of the PBI.

#### ➤ *Data Tools and Procedures*

Before conducting the data gathering, the researcher sought first the approval of the CEU Institutional Ethics Review Board (IERB) by complying with all the necessary forms and protocols such as informed consent, study protocol, tools, and data gathering procedures. After securing the approval, the researcher started to publish the call for participation on different social media platforms. Individual interview sessions were directed with an approved guided questionnaire to describe their "lived experiences" of such a phenomenon. Focusing on the subjective experiences and then understanding the structures of those lived experiences and outlining their description as experienced by the study participants (Statistics, 2018). The studies were administered between October to November 2021.

#### ➤ *Data Analysis*

The data gathered was encoded and underwent data cleaning and inspection for any missing or incomplete responses. It was then subjected to descriptive and inferential statistical treatments using Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP). Mean was employed for the descriptive analysis of the data gathered. Regression analysis was used to determine if monthly

household income, parenting status, number of children, work arrangement, and work leisure can significantly predict parental burnout. Regression analysis and analysis of variances were used as the statistical methods to calculate since these tools are used to see if there is a correlation among variables and if there are differences between groups or levels of analysis, respectively [5]. For the Qualitative part of the study, the primary data stem from the transcripts of the interview responses. The thematic analysis would present a conceptual understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic parenting to provide insights into the lived experiences of the selected Filipino school-aged parents. Proper discussion and conclusion were made based on the findings from the data analysis.

**III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Table 1:-** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents When Grouped According to Monthly Household Income

Monthly Household Income	F	0	PB* Mean	Interpretation
Low-income class	94	49.8	64	High
Middle-income class	71	37.6	61	Average
Upper middle-income class	19	10.0	67	High
Upper-income class to rich	5	2.6	62	Average
TOTAL	189	100	64	High

Data reveal that 94 or 49.8 percent of the respondents are in the low-income class (less than PHP 41, 924), and their level of parental burnout is high, with a mean score of 64. It is followed by 71 or 37.6 percent who are in the middle-income class (between Php 41,924 and Php 73, 367) with a mean score of 61 or experiencing an average level of parental burnout, while 19 or 10.0 percent are in the upper-income class to rich (More than Php 125, 772) with a mean score of six (6) or high level of parental burnout, and that five (5) or 2.6 percent belong to the upper-middle-income class (between Php 73, 367 and Php 125-772) with a mean score of 62 or average level of parental burnout.

**Table 2:-** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents When Grouped According to Parenting Status

Parenting Status	F	0	PB* Mean	Interpretation
Single	36	19.0	61	Average
Joint	145	76.8	63	High
Other (With Nannies/Relatives)	8	4.2	71	High
TOTAL	189	100	65	High

As shown in table 2, parents who are single parents experience the average level of parental burnout. In comparison, both joint and parents who have nannies or relatives in parenting experience a high level of parental burnout. The overall mean score in this area is 65, with the verbal interpretation of a high level of parental burnout.

**Table 3:-** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents When Grouped According to Total Number of Children

Total Number of Children	F	0	PB* Mean	Interpretation
One	71	37.6	64	High
Two	66	34.9	61	Average
Three	33	17.5	64	High
Four	12	6.3	59	Average
Five	7	3.7	60	Average
TOTAL	189	100	62	Average

Findings show that 71 or 37.6 percent of the respondents have one child with a mean score of 64 or a high level of parental burnout. It is followed by 66 or 34.9 percent who have two children with a mean score of 61 or an average level of parental burnout. 33 or 17.5 percent have three children with a mean score of 64 or high level of parental burnout, 12 or 6.3 percent have four children with a mean score of 59 or an average level of parental burnout and that there are seven (7) or 3.7 percent have five (5) children with 60 or an average level of parental burnout.

**Table 4:-** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents When Grouped According to Work Arrangement

Work Arrangement	F	0	PB* Mean	Interpretation
Mandatory face-to-face	50	26.4	60	Average
Work from home	139	73.6	64	High
TOTAL	189	100	62	Average

The table shows that parents who are in the work-from-home arrangement experience a high level of parental burnout, while those who are in a mandatory face-to-face work arrangement have an average level of parental burnout. The overall mean score is 62, with a verbal interpretation of the average level of parental burnout. On the other hand, 50 or 26.4 percent of the respondents belong to mandatory face-to-face work arrangements, followed by 139 or 73.6 percent in a work-from-home arrangement. Working during the quarantine brought burnout because parents had to adapt to the new norms, such as working from home and at the same time having to manage the children at home [4].

**Table 5:-** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents When Grouped According to Time for Leisure

Time for Leisure	F	0	PB* Mean	Interpretation
Yes	137	72.4	62	Average
No	52	27.6	65	High
Total	189	100	64	High

As shown in Table 5, parents who have time for leisure experience the average level of burnout. In comparison, parents who do not have time for leisure experience high parental burnout. It was found that there are 137 or 72.4 percent who have answered yes which means they have time for leisure with a mean score of 62. It is followed by 52 or 27.6 percent who have

no time for leisure with a mean score of 65. Lastly, out of 189 respondents, this study shows that the majority of the respondents get a mean score of 64 with a verbal interpretation of high levels of parental burnout.

**Table 6:-** Total level of Parental Burnout among Selected Filipino Parents

Level of Parental Burnout	f	%
High	103	54.5
Average	68	36.0
Low	18	9.5
TOTAL	189	100

Data show that 103 or 54.5 percent of the respondents scored high levels of parental burnout in PBI, followed by 68 or 36.0 percent who are at an average level of parental burnout, and 18 or 9.5 percent are at a low level of parental burnout. Parenting during the Covid-19 pandemic is a stress-inducing experience because many parents juggle parental duties, personal life, and work simultaneously [11]. The current situation of many parents may increase the chances of developing distress, especially when left alone in taking care of their children. It also includes other responsibilities associated with parenting and lacking the resources needed or protective factors to combat stress and parental burnout.

**Table 7:-** Level of Parental Burnout among Selected Filipino Parents in terms of Exhaustion, Contrast to Parental Self and Emotional Distancing

Parental Burnout Dimensions	F (high)	%
Exhaustion (EX)	82	43.4
Contrast to Parental Self (CS)	71	37.6
Emotional Distancing (ED)	75	39.7

Out of 189 respondents, 82 or 43.4% experience exhaustion (EX), while 71 or 37.6 are reported to experience contrast to parental self (CO). Lastly, emotional distancing (ED) among parents is 75 or 39.7%. According to the study by Roskam & Mikolajczak (2021) high levels of parental exhaustion can be a predictor of increased emotional distancing and contrast to the parental self. In addition, exhaustion is the first symptom of parental burnout, and the manifestations can be at the emotional, cognitive, and physical levels.

**Table 8:-** Difference between the Total Level of Parental and the Profile of the Respondents

Overall Model Test					
Model	R	F	df1	df2	p
H4	0.38	2.48	12	176	0.005

This means that when the five independent variables were integrated, they contributed to 38% of the variance of Parental Burnout. These profile variables are the factors that are relevant to parental burnout during the pandemic [2]. Previous researcher

suggested that these factors contributed to the increased risk of parental burnout [10].

**Table 9:-** The Lived Experiences of the Selected Filipino Parents with School Aged Children during the Pandemic

Statement of the Problem	Main Themes	Subthemes	f
What are the lived experiences of the selected parents during the pandemic and how do these experiences mean to them?	1. Bonding and Connectedness		6
	2.Distance Learning Struggles		6
	3. Adjustment		5
		3.1 Stress	9
		3.2 Challenging	8

Since the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, parents and children have been forced to stay at home. Families spend more time together than during the pre-pandemic days, thus, strengthening the bonds between parents and children. Parents are given the opportunity to know their children deeply. Moreover, most parents have viewed this as an opportunity to foster positive, healthy, and loving relationships. Covid-19 pandemic led to a crisis in academic sectors, and learning online was implemented to secure continuity of education. Hence, Filipino parents became study buddies of their child(ren) at home. The pandemic made parents more involved in their child's education. According to Griffith (2020), one of the parents' concerns is the educational difficulties in this pandemic. Parents face many difficulties when they assume to be teachers to their children. The effects of the COVID-19 have caused big changes to the daily lives of many parents. Adjustments usually come with different experiences, and this process varies for many parents. Some parents have gone through the stages of adjustment and find comfort in the new normal, while others are struggling. During a worldwide pandemic, many parents face challenges that can be stressful. Massive lockdown restrictions in private and government establishments contributed to many families' stress and isolation. In addition, parental stress increased during the pandemic (Adams, et al., 2021). Juggling work, parental tasks, and childcare and being present at the moment as a parent were not an easy duty. Many parents worldwide are now going through a health crisis that they have never experienced for a long time. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is naturally causing many challenges, especially in balancing family and work-life, which is often considered a difficult one.

➤ *Proposed Intervention Program*

Based on the quantitative results of the study, the burnout level of selected parents ranges between low to high levels. Therefore, it is suggested to consider the prevention program that will help the respondents develop protective factors against burnout and attain desirable results. The prevention programs are highly substantial to the parents since the results of the study have shown that exhaustion (the first phase of burnout) is the

highest dimension experienced by the selected parents of this study.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Parenting status, work arrangement, and time for leisure are the profile variables that affect the level of parental burnout among parents of school-age children.
2. The parents of school-age children experience parental burnout ranging from low to high levels of parental burnout.
3. Significant difference exists between the level of parental burnout among selected Filipino parents of school-age children during the COVID-19 Pandemic and parenting status, work arrangement, and time for leisure. However, there is no difference in monthly household income and the total number of children
4. Based on the results of this study, an intervention program helps the parents lessen the burnout during COVID-19 pandemic and in other situations causing parental burnout.

Based on the summary of findings and conclusions presented, the following recommendations are offered by the researchers:

1. Future research may explore other family dynamics such as the age of children, family type, number of hours spent at work and child care, and number of people in the household that may affect parental burnout.
2. For the employers to include the assessment of the job and parental burnout to mitigate the impact of the Pandemic on the mental health of the selected parents in this study.
3. To strengthen areas such as monthly household income and the number of children as there is no significant difference between the level of parental burnout among selected Filipino parents during the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Design approaches to monitor and address the lived experiences of the Filipino parents during the Pandemic.
5. Consider implementing the intervention program developed to lessen the level of burnout of parents during the Pandemic.

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