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Women vs. Pandemic Stress



A year into the pandemic, many are struggling not only to avoid the lingering threat of the virus but also to deal with the stress that comes with it.

However, with schools nationwide shifted to online learning, and working from home (WFH) becoming the new normal, women are hit harder with today's pandemic-induced stress.

As the country observes the National Women's Month Celebration (NWMC), we look into the experiences of two women personnel from the DILG Central Office who shared with us the stress they are facing amid the pandemic, and how they are coping with them.

Pandemic-Induced Stress

The COVID-19 pandemic gave rise to strict minimum public health standards (MPHS) to avoid the spread of the virus, not only in public but also at home. But with these protocols in place to add as a layer of protection, comes the inevitable stress it brings to one's daily lives.

For **Roxanne Villanueva** of the **Financial Management Service**, the added health and safety protocols outside and before stepping home increase the stress as a working mom with a baby.

"Pag-uwi mo ang dami mo pang kailangang gawin bago ka ulit makagalaw sa bahay, minsan nakakastress lalo sa may baby kasi 'di mo agad maharap sa needs niya," said Roxanne.

The pandemic also amplified the need to juggle multiple jobs at home. Longer hours spent at home means a likely increase in domestic work, on top of supervising the online learning of children. For most households, fulfilling these demands fall in the hands of women.

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), women spend 4 hours and 22 minutes per day in unpaid labor, compared to only 2 hours and 15 minutes for men, on average worldwide. With the onset of COVID-19, this gap has further widened with women now spending 15 hours more in unpaid labor each week than men.

Women now shoulder the 'triple burden' of paid work, unpaid domestic work, and care work at home, with all three greatly contributing to the stress of women today.

This is evident for Roxanne, who shares that balancing time while working from home has been stressful with having to attend not only to responsibilities at work but also to her baby.

Roxanne's typical WFH day starts with preparing her baby's food by pumping breast milk. Afterward, she bathes and puts her baby to sleep. As her baby sleeps, Roxanne then proceeds to work on her tasks for the day. "After lunch multi-tasking na ako, karga si baby while doing work until hapon na 'yon," she said.

Much like Roxanne, young professionals like **Marvee Zapata** of the **Public Assistance and Complaint Center** experience pandemic-

induced stress but in different ways.

For Marvee whose family resides in the province, living alone and working from home can feel more stressful than working in the office.

"Kapag naka WFH, mas nakakaburnout, lalo pa at puro reklamo iyong binabasa sa buong araw, compared kasi sa office na makakapag break ka, may konting kuwentuhan, konting biruan ng mga officemates, nakakatulong iyon para 'di mo maramdaman iyong stress sa trabaho," she said.

Although living alone comes with fewer responsibilities to other people, stress manifests itself with having to shoulder all the domestic work at home such as cooking and cleaning, all while accomplishing tasks for the office.

Self-care

Today's challenges can be overwhelming if not managed properly, which is why it's important to take a break once in a while and practice self-care.

According to Dr. Melisa Robichaud, psychologist, and co-founder of the Vancouver Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Centre, self-care is "basically any activity that you find pleasant or relaxing, and it can mean very different things for different people."

For Roxanne, self-care comes in the form of simply spending time with her family. She shares that making sure to have some 'kulitan time' with her kids to lighten up the mood at home is one of her stress relievers.

Marvee, on the other hand, finds relief in plants and started her journey as 'plantita' at the beginning of the pandemic. According to her, looking at her plants and staring at their beauty help her during stressful days.

Indeed, being a woman amid a pandemic can be greatly challenging, but women like Roxanne and Marvee show that Juanas all over the country can triumph over pandemic stress in their unique ways. Juana Laban sa Pandemya? Kayang kaya! ■

Natasha Batlangao

DILG-CO Quality Policy

We, the DILG-Central Office, imbued with the core values of Integrity, Commitment, Teamwork and Responsiveness, commit to formulate sound policies on strengthening local government capacities, performing oversight function over LGUs, and providing rewards and incentives. We pledge to provide effective technical and administrative services to promote excellence in local governance and enhance the service delivery of our Regional and Field Offices for the LGUs to become transparent, resilient, socially-protective and competitive, where people in the community live happily.

We commit to continually improve the effectiveness of our Quality Management System compliant with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements and international standards gearing towards organizational efficiency in pursuing our mandate and achieving our client's satisfaction.

We commit to consistently demonstrate a "Matino, Mahusay at Maasahang Kagawaran Para sa Mapagkalinga at Maunlad na Pamahalaang Lokal".