



Empowering Student-Mothers at Higher Education Institutions: A Call for On-Campus Childcare, Financial Help, Flexible Learning Options, and Mental Health Support

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ABSTRACT

Around the world, student-mothers face challenges when trying to start and finish their education. These women, who are trying to improve their lives through education, often struggle with problems that make it hard for them to succeed. The challenges they face include a lack of affordable childcare, financial challenges, rigid class schedules, and high stress levels. These issues also resonate in our country's higher education institutions (HEIs), where many determined student-mothers are unable to graduate because of these barriers. This policy brief calls for on-campus childcare, financial help designed for student-mothers, more flexible learning options, and mental health support, so these women can succeed in a more supportive university environment.

KEYWORDS

empowerment, policy review, student-mothers

ABSTRAK (CEBUANO)

Sa tibuok kalibutan, ang mga inahan nga estudyante nakasinati ug mga hagit sa pagsugod ug pagtapos sa ilang edukasyon. Kini nga mga kababayan-an, nga naningkamot aron mapalambo ang ilang kinabuhi pinaagi sa edukasyon, kasagaran maglisod sa pag-atubang sa mga problema nga makababag sa ilang kalampanan.

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Ang mga hagit nga ilang giatubang naglakip sa kakulang sa baratong pag-atiman sa mga bata, mga problema sa pinansyal, istrikto nga iskedyul sa klase, ug taas nga lebel sa tensiyon. Kini nga mga isyu makita usab sa mga institusyon sa taas nga edukasyon (HEIs) sa atong nasud, diin daghan nga masinabtanon nga inahan nga estudyante dili makahuman sa ilang kurso tungod niini nga mga babag. Kini nga policy brief nag-awhag alang sa paghatag ug serbisyo sa pag-atiman sa bata sulod sa campus, pinansyal nga tabang alang sa mga inahan nga estudyante, mas flexible nga mga kapilian sa pagtuon, ug suporta sa mental health, aron kini nga mga kababayan-an magmalampuson diha sa mas masinati ug masinabtanon nga palibot sa unibersidad.

KEYWORDS:

pagpalig-on, Pagsusi sa Palisiya, mga inahan nga estudyante

Highlights of the Research

The challenges of student-mothers in higher education are very real. Trying to balance schoolwork with parenting is an oppressive amount of stress and fatigue. Smith et al. (2023) add that this could mean lower grades and increased dropouts. Not to mention the fact that most of them are without any campus childcare, financial aid, or even flexible class schedules, so it is no wonder that many fail.

Johnson and Martinez (2022) state that the number of women with children attending higher education has increased since they need to provide for their families. But they have it worse than the men and the childless students. Many student moms are poor because they cannot afford childcare, and they have less time to work (Taylor, 2021). Also, fixed academic schedules do not really accommodate mothers. This short requires answers such as on-campus childcare, financial aid, and flexible hours for classes.

Another critical issue is mental health. Student-moms carry an extraordinary quantity of tension and anxiety because of their dual roles, according to Williams et al. (2020). Access to mental health services should be available. This policy brief is policies promoting the success of student mothers in school and life.

In alignment with the Magna Carta of Women (Republic Act No. 9710, 2009), which is the direct translation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) into Philippine law (United Nations, 1979), the provision of daycare centers within workplaces or educational institutions is a critical support system. This law demands that state institutions offer necessary facilities and aid to women, especially those who are multi-rollers, students, and at the same time mothers. On the other hand, Senator Hontiveros filed a bill that was calling directly for the adolescent mothers and the student-parents as a way of appreciating the rise in the number of student-mothers at the tertiary level and their differences (Senate of the Philippines, 2022). These legal provisions offer a local context that justifies the need for institutional reforms—such as on-campus childcare, flexible academic schedules, and mental health services—to support student-mothers in their academic journey. This policy brief, therefore, advocates for measures that uphold the rights of women, especially those enshrined in the Magna Carta of Women, promoting their success both in education and in life.

Methodology: The study involved a desk review. Articles considered were between 2014 and 2024 for a recent update. Peer-reviewed research was selected along with reports that consider experiences and challenges in higher education for student mothers, such as childcare, financial aid, flexible schedules, and mental health support. Also included were the programs or solutions that succeeded from other similar institutions to encourage practical approaches that work in other places.

Key Messages

Child Care and Financial Challenges

Doorely et al. (2023) said that when facilities for childcare on campus are lacking for students who are mothers, it places them in a very compromising situation dependent on means that are not only unreliable but also unsafe, negatively affecting performance. While the lack of assured financial support for the student mothers makes them unfit to afford to pay both the school fees and the costs of child-rearing, it is likely to hike the skyrocketing rates of dropouts conveyed by Gault et al. (2019).

Inflexible academic schedules and mental stress

Martin and Godonoga (2020) said that the traditional classroom schedule is not flexible for the unforeseeable demands required by motherhood. Hence making it difficult for student-mothers to keep up their study programs. On the other hand, the mental stress that the student-mothers face in the academic undertaking coupled with motherhood activities contributes a great deal to mental health challenges, therefore jeopardizing their success rates in school (Ogunji et al., 2020).

Policy Recommendations

On-Campus Childcare and Financial Support Programs

On-campus childcare could be done through partnerships with local government units or non-governmental organizations to fund and run a daycare center on campus (Miller & Edin, 2014). The student-mothers will have a safe and reliable place for childcare, enabling them to attend classes without worry (Duquaine-Watson, 2007). A recent example in the Philippines is the University of the Philippines' Kalinga Day Care Center (KDCC) at their Diliman campus. It provides a safe, non-formal learning environment for children aged 1.6 to 5.5 years, focusing on developmental needs in a gender-fair, peaceful setting. The center supports student-parents and staff by offering daycare services, proving that on-campus childcare can reduce stress for student-mothers and enhance their academic performance (Tongson, 2021). On the other hand, financial support programs will be achieved by developing scholarships and bursary packages for student-mothers to enable them to cater for childcare, school supplies, and health care (Gault et al., 2019). This reduces financial constraints and will, therefore, bring about the student-mothers focusing solely on their studies (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019).

Offer flexible study approaches and increase counseling and mental health support.

Introduce long online courses, night course timetables, and part-time courses to create time for the student-mothers to comfortably balance education and parenting (Martin and Godonoga, 2020). This will allow the student-mothers a great chance to manage to balance both academic achievement and parenting responsibilities perfectly (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2016). And expand mental health care and groups that help student-mothers (Ogunji et al., 2020). This provides much-needed mental health help and is essential for well-being and academic performance.

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Bionote

Philner P. Salindo, Ph.D., is a distinguished academic based in Guihulngan City, Negros Oriental. He holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Social Science from Silliman University, where he also completed his Master's and Bachelor's degrees in History and Political Science, respectively. Dr. Salindo is currently an Associate Professor III at Negros Oriental State University-Guihulngan Campus (NORSU-G), specializing in Social Sciences. He has held various administrative positions, including Assistant Campus Administrator and Human Resource Officer at NORSU-Guihulngan Campus. Dr. Salindo's research interests focus on local history, disaster risk reduction, education, and community empowerment, with multiple publications and papers presented at national and international conferences. His commitment to education and research has earned him numerous awards and recognitions, including the Outstanding Researcher of NORSU in 2023.

June Keziah B. Salindo is a dedicated Social Science instructor at the College of Arts and Sciences, with a strong commitment to education and community development. She holds a Master of Education in Social Science and is currently advancing her expertise by pursuing a Master of Arts in Guidance and Counseling at St. Paul University Dumaguete. With a passion for shaping young minds, she blends her academic background with practical insights to inspire her students to critically analyze societal issues. Her professional journey reflects her dedication to fostering holistic growth, not just academically but also emotionally, as she equips individuals with the tools needed to navigate life's challenges. Beyond teaching, June Keziah actively participates in initiatives promoting education, well-being, and resilience in local communities. She continues to strive for excellence in her field, embodying the values of compassion, leadership, and service to others.