
FOREWORD

The launch of the first issue of PRISMA represents progress in our efforts to provide scholarly insights into the role of gender in education. We are fortunate to have five insightful and significant contributions: a research article, a book review, a policy brief, a poem, and visual art. The authors' contributions explore the socio-cultural dynamics of the patriarchal system, highlighting the perpetuation of harmful gender stereotypes that begin in early childhood. These stereotypes reinforce the traditional gendered division of labor, confining women and girls to backbreaking unpaid domestic and caregiving roles, thereby increasing their vulnerability to various forms of abuse and exploitation and unequal access to education and economic opportunities.

Several studies, including my own studies, reveal that in the Philippines, even during the COVID-19 Pandemic, women spend more hours doing unpaid care work compared to men throughout their lifetime (Cabegin and Gaddi, 2019; Tongson, 2019; Oxfam, UNWomen, Philippine Commission on Women, 2021; Tongson, Antonio and Centeno, 2023). Despite decades of unwavering commitment and sustained efforts, valuing women's unpaid care work and elevating the status of women and individuals of diverse SOGIESC remain unfulfilled goals. These persistent challenges are evident even in the articles published in the inaugural volume of PRISMA.

A benefiting cover design encapsulates the multi-faceted struggles women often experience in their journey toward emancipation. *Mga Bukang Liwayway* by Yllang Montenegro, an invited contribution, is a visual and text-based piece of work symbolizing the intricate process of discovering one's voice and attaining freedom from abuse and oppression. It is a transformative experience characterized by both pain and joy. Based on her own experience of abuse and liberation, this journey is made possible through art and the support of a nurturing community of women and her family.

Two articles, *Exploring student-parents' challenges for institutional policies* by Eden Grace V. Tabanao and Mary Mae Agnes V. Regidor and *Empowering student-mothers at higher educational institutions: A call for on-campus childcare, financial help, flexible learning options and mental health support* by Philner P. Salindo and June Keziah B. Salindo shed light on the struggles by student-parents, particularly mothers, in balancing academic and parental responsibilities. The two contributions emphasized the systemic barriers that hinder student-mothers from completing their degrees and proposed concrete solutions such as gender-transformative educational policies and programs fostering inclusive environments for student-parents, including the provision of on-campus childcare facilities, flexible learning arrangements, financial aid, and psychosocial support.

Meanwhile, the third article, *Beyond the genitals: Book reviews of "Ako ay May Titi" and "Ako ay May Kiki,"* by Jess Mendoza, challenges gender stereotypes and binaries and calls for more inclusive representations of family structures, caregiving roles, and gender identities. On a

similar note, scholars across the globe found that the process of gendering begins at birth, with children exhibiting gendered behaviors as early as the preschool years, highlighting that families and schools play crucial roles in shaping restrictive gender norms and beliefs (John, Stoebenau, Ritter, Edmeads, & Balvin, 2017; Kane, 2006; Little, 2016). In the local context, many Filipino young children often conform to notions of femininity and masculinity fashioned by their parents' and teachers' childrearing and teaching practices, which frequently align with the heterosexualized gender system (Sampang, Tongson and Lacsamana, 2021; Tongson, 2024).

Lastly, *Resignation Day* by John Lloyd C. Casoy is a poetic exploration in Filipino that captures the journey as a female educator who liberates herself from an oppressive system that systematically underrates her contributions to the education sector and her family through the undervaluation of her care work.

All five contributions in this maiden issue cannot overemphasize that there is much evidence that the construction and development of gender identities, as well as the narrow and binary gender beliefs, are profoundly shaped by everyday interactions within the family and educational contexts. It is through the same very channels that PRISMA aspires to turn the tide and that the contributions of the authors will serve as a catalyst for fostering transformative collaborations within immediate spheres individuals inhabit - the home and the school, with the end in view of advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

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