

# Rationalizing Men's Domestic Behavior During the Pandemic: A Gendered Perspective

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Dear Editor,

Simpson et al. (2022) claim that "men's external work and recreational activities outside domestic space constitute primary social connectors" that positively impact men's mental health as their social connectedness increases. While the study was conducted among men from Canada, I argue that its findings could contribute to rationalizing the result of the 2021 National Household Care Survey, commissioned by Oxfam Philippines and partner agencies that shows Filipino men spending lesser time for unpaid domestic work compared to Filipino women despite work-from-home arrangements and mobility restrictions due to the pandemic (Sobritchea et al., 2021). In that study, Filipino men only spent 8 hr daily for house care and chores while Filipino women logged in up to 13 hr a day for the same tasks. Men are expected, at least, to have shared the household task with women more equitably since most of the former's work has migrated from workplaces to house spaces.

My intention is not to justify or make an excuse for the disproportionate amount of caregiving burden on women that may harm their health and wellness. I merely want to background this result to rationalize men's behavior within domestic spaces. While women are more affected than men by stress and anxiety related to the pandemic (Tee et al., 2020) and that men are more resilient than women (Parvar et al., 2022), a gendered approach to coping mechanisms must be considered. Increasing ways to allow men to connect, not only socially or virtually but physically and personally, with their friends and colleagues at work and in recreation is beneficial for them as it establishes and engenders social networks. The past several months have seen a gradual easing of COVID-19 restrictions in the Philippines and while many welcome such development, some are still cautious but optimistic. "I'm excited to see and talk to people in real life, not on screen but I'm still anxious to be in a closed space. I might need more time to get used to it but we'll get there," said Aliver Cedillo, a multimedia designer and nightlife photographer (Nicole, 2022).

I advocate for an equitable distribution of gender roles in domestic and care work inasmuch as I believe that a

differentiated and gendered approach is crucial in providing interventions for coping mechanisms and mental health wellness across gender identities and preferences.

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