

Discrimination Experienced by Biracial Children in Angeles City, Philippines

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Abstract

There is a lack of study on the nature and scope of discrimination experienced by biracial children in the Philippines. Aiming to contribute to filling the gap, this article draws from a doctoral thesis that used an indigenous Filipino research approach to investigate Filipino biracial children's view of their dignity. Biracial children from poor neighborhoods in Angeles City participated in the study. Their caregivers and some community members were also interviewed. The research found that colonial beliefs and practices led to formation of biases which triggered the discrimination experienced by the biracial child participants and negatively affected their dignity. The biases were manifested during incidences of bullying and name-calling, cultural/racial stereotyping, social stigma, not being consulted, and corporal punishment. Recommended measures to address discrimination include access to education and promotion of pakikipagkapwa (treating others as fellow human being).

Keywords: biracial, children, dignity, dangal, discrimination, kapwa

Abstrak

Penelitian mengenai sifat dan ruang lingkup diskriminasi yang dialami oleh anak-anak biracial di Filipina masih kurang. Bertujuan untuk berkontribusi mengisi kesenjangan tersebut, artikel ini diambil dari tesis doctoral yang menggunakan pendekatan penelitian masyarakat adat Filipina untuk menyelidiki pandangan anak-anak biracial Filipina tentang martabat mereka. Anak-anak biracial dari lingkungan miskin di Angeles City berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Pengasuh mereka dan beberapa anggota masyarakat juga diwawancarai. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa keyakinan dan praktik kolonial mengarah pada pembentukan bias yang memicu diskriminasi yang dialami oleh peserta anak biracial dan berdampak negatif pada martabat mereka. Bias-bias tersebut terlihat dalam insiden-insiden intimidasi dan penghinaan, stereotip budaya/ras, stigma sosial, tidak diajak berkonsultasi, dan hukuman fisik. Langkah-langkah yang direkomendasikan untuk mengatasi diskriminasi termasuk akses terhadap pendidikan dan promosi pakikipagkapwa (memperlakukan orang lain sebagai sesama manusia).

Kata Kunci: biracial, anak, martabat, dangal, diskriminasi, kapwa

INTRODUCTION

There is limited research on the new generation of *haphap* or half-Filipino, half-foreigner children in Angeles City, Philippines. Existing studies on this biracial group are mainly about the earlier generation of biracial children called Amerasians. According to Lapinig (2013), writer-activist Pearl S. Buck used the term Amerasian to identify the offspring of Asian women and American military men. A former site of the US Air Base, Angeles City became a birth place of Amerasian children who were discriminated due to their family background and physical attributes (Gastardo-Conaco & Israel-Sobritchea, 1999).

From a place that used to cater to American servicemen, Angeles City, especially its entertainment industry, turned its attention to foreign tourists (Abiera & Lalusis, 2018). This research investigated Angeles City's "new" population of biracial children whose mothers were Filipina (Filipino women) but

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whose fathers were of different nationalities and occupations. While not all biracial children are products of prostitution, there were reports that some biracial children in Angeles City were a result of sex tourism in the locality and had to live in impoverished areas, as well as engage in dishonest activities in order to meet their needs (Russia Today's, 2016). However, there is limited literature on biracial children's experiences of bullying, name-calling, cultural/racial stereotyping, social stigma, not being consulted, and corporal punishment. Addressing this gap is imperative considering that the Philippine Government approved the ratification of the UNCRC or the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 (Rocamora, 2022). The authorities likewise lacked initiatives to investigate child groups' varying circumstances (Civil Society Coalition on the Convention on the Rights of the Child Inc. [CSC-CRC], 2017), including the situation of the biracial children in Angeles City whose conditions demand specific interventions.

The purpose of this paper is to present the biracial children's experiences of discrimination and the underlying colonially-influenced biases which perpetuate such situations. This work aims to increase social awareness of the conditions of some biracial children in Angeles City as well as discuss the importance of regarding children as *kapwa* or fellow human beings, in order to effectively counter discrimination and promote the biracial children's dignity. However, considering the resource constraints and limited number of participants, the findings of this research are restricted with regard to generalizability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Suppressing the Egalitarian Beliefs

The Philippines transformed from a largely egalitarian to a predominantly patriarchal society. In precolonial Filipino communities, Filipino women held an equivalent social status to men (Abenes, 2015). According to Mananzan (2016), this belief on equality between ancient Filipino men and women was evident in Filipinos' popular myth that from a large bamboo, the first man and woman came into being at the same time.

Prior to the Spanish colonization which lasted for more than three centuries, Filipinas served as *babaylan* and had an active and crucial role in the cultural practices in the archipelago. The *babaylan* served as the key figure in ancient Philippine society, playing pivotal roles in culture, religion, medicine, and the understanding of natural phenomena through various theoretical perspectives (Abenes, 2015). This contrasted with the male-controlled Catholic ideology that was introduced by the Spanish colonizers (Abenes, 2015). The Spaniards established a patriarchal social order in the Philippines which led to the degradation of Filipino women (Abenes, 2015). The *babaylans* were taunted as "mangkukulam" or witches [emphasis added] (Santiago, 2007, p. 25) and were "ferreted out mercilessly and publicly humiliated" (Mananzan, 2018, p. 151).

The Catholic colonizers' victory is apparent in modern Philippine society with eight out of ten Filipinos identifying as members of the Roman Catholic Church (Gregorio, 2023), and the country being dubbed the "bastion of the Catholic Church in Asia" (Dinglasan, 2015, p. 1). Despite having a non-sectarian Philippine Constitution of 1987, Catholicism prevails in influencing Filipinos' social behavior (Duerr, 2015). In the digital age, Catholic-based patriarchy dominates the Philippine value system (Mananzan, 2018) which disapproves of brides with prior sexual experience (Bonifacio, 2018), divorce (Inquirer Research, 2018), and gay marriage (Salaverria & Inquirer Research, 2018).

The rise of patriarchal Philippine society led to the debasement of the younger generation of Filipinos especially the female children. During the precolonial period, the raising of children was not determined by gender (Abenes, 2015). The egalitarian approach to child-rearing is continually practiced by selected indigenous Filipino ethnic groups such as the Mangyans who have “no segregation of household tasks, both girls and boys learn to cook and wash dishes, and work on the farm. Child care is a responsibility of both men and women” (Santiago, 2007, pp. 8-9). Unfortunately, the Spaniards imposed the Western approach to education which had a “separate curriculum for men and women” (Vernon as cited in Velayo, 2005, p. 193). Female Filipino children were considered “intellectually inferior” (Velayo, 2005, p. 193). Hence, their education focused on housework and attending to visitors (Velayo, 2005) or skills based on the colonial image of a preferred housewife.

The colonial notion of the adult-child relationship is distinctly “authoritative and hierarchical” (Yacat & Ong as cited in Velayo, 2005, p. 194). Children were vulnerable as they were considered unlearned and therefore dependent on adults’ decisions and preferences. Furthermore, the Catholic teaching of a holy family composed of a child, mother, and father or the Child Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and Saint Joseph (Schmidt & Schmidt, 2014) perpetuated “the narrow way of interpreting what a family is” (Mananzan, 2018, p. 157). It resulted in Filipinos’ colonial notion of an ideal family as married male and female adults and their children which was a representation that merely reinforced the prejudice against children with unmarried or same-sex parents.

Being subjected to colonization trampled Filipino egalitarianism as it instigated racial discrimination among children in the Philippines. Aside from Spain, the US also colonized the country for more than five decades. Having another white-skinned colonizer highlighted the presumed supremacy of White people among Filipinos. Such a colonial idea of beauty led to low self-esteem among Filipinos and incited unfair treatment on ethnic tribes including the Aetas who are “dark-skinned, short mountain people, of small frame, with kinky hair, broad noses, and large black eyes” (p. 19). Aside from physical attractiveness, Filipinos also relate white skin with a superior social status (Laforteza, 2022) or having a high level of intellect, financial capability, and good hygiene (Rondilla, 2012).

The influence of colonization is exemplified in the discrimination experienced by Filipino Amerasians. They became outcasts due to being children of women prostitutes and were not acknowledged or supported by their American fathers (Gastardo-Conaco and Israel-Sobritchea, 1999). Black Filipino Amerasians were bullied due to their skin color (Gastardo-Conaco and Israel-Sobritchea, 1999). The Amerasians were degraded as their circumstances were perceived as deviations from the Filipinos’ colonial notion of family and beauty.

RESEARCH METHOD

This paper sought to gain an in-depth understanding of Filipino biracial children’s perspective of their dignity. The study’s epistemology was based on SP or sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino psychology). SP-related initiatives started in the 1970’s through the efforts of its founder Virgilio Enriquez (Porcadas, 2019). It was a reaction against a Western explanation of Filipinos’ thinking and behavior (Enriquez, 1992). SP’s goal is to emancipate the Filipinos from the impact of colonial ideologies (Enriquez, 1992).

Maka-Pilipinong pananaliksik or the Filipino research approach was the methodology employed by the study. Based on its five (5) core principles, *maka-Pilipinong pananaliksik* requires: (a) the participants’ trust as a precondition to ensure the acquisition of dependable information; (b) the participants are regarded as *kapwa* or co-equal; (c) the safety of participants as top priority during the entirety of the research procedure; (d) research methods that align with the specific situations of participants; and (e)

the use of language that aids participants in expressing themselves more effectively (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000).

Primary data collection predominantly relied on interviews, supplemented by the Filipino indigenous method of *pagpapakuwento*, a blend of interviewing and storytelling, integrated into drawing activities. The biracial child participants were interviewed in their homes. They were asked about what they liked and did not like about their houses, schools, and communities. The interviews with adult participants were conducted in their offices except in the case of caregivers who were also interviewed in their homes. The adult participants were asked about what they knew about the needs of the biracial children in the locality. During *pagpapakuwento*, the children were asked to draw their ideal house, classroom, library, toilet, and playground. Afterwards, the children were requested to talk about their drawings. There were 10 biracial children and 16 adults (including 10 caregivers, 6 teachers, 5 government officials, 2 priests, 1 nun, 1 NGO worker, and 1 police officer) who took part in the research. All children and caregivers were from indigent communities in Angeles City while the rest of the adult participants may or may not have been residents though their employer organizations were based in Angeles City.

This work involved the application of *dangal* (dignity) - *kapwa* (fellow human being) as ontological lens. *Kapwa* is a theory about how Filipinos interact with others (Caruz, 2023) or the manner through which they exhibit *pakikipagkapwa* (regarding others as fellow human being). According to Enriquez (1992), *kapwa* is the core value from which all other Filipino values emerge while *dangal* is “the intrinsic quality of a person or sector that allows him/them to shine despite the grime of their appearance, environment or status in life” (p. 46). *Dangal* and *kapwa* are both centered on the idea of equality. They are related concepts as, based on Enriquez’s (1992) *kapwa* model value structure, *dangal* is a component of *kapwa*. Adopting the ontological stance of *dangal-kapwa* in this study entailed seeing participants as co-equals as well as recognizing their dignity or basic humanity, which should be upheld, safeguarded, and advanced.

The author personally transcribed all the interview data. The transcripts were analyzed using the thematic method or the exploring through a collection of data, such as interviews, focus groups, or texts, to identify recurring themes or patterns of significance (Byrne, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of data revealed that *pakikipagkapwa* or treating children as *kapwa* was a significant enabler of biracial children’s positive *dangal* experiences. However, the study also showed that the spirit of *pakikipagkapwa* was negated by colonially influenced biases. Based on interviews with the biracial children and the adult participants, indicators of such biases were bullying and name-calling, cultural/racial stereotyping, social stigma, not being consulted, and corporal punishment.

Biases based on physical features

The experience of discrimination primarily based on complexion has brought emotional stress not only to the biracial children but also to their caregivers. A mother of a seven-year-old child reported that his son was labeled “Amerikanong fake” (fake American) because, although he had Caucasian features, he could not communicate using the English language. A 12-year-old half-Black American was called “baluga” and “negro.” *Baluga* is a racist term used to refer to the Aetas as people who have “short stature, kinky hair and a primitive way of life; and this ethnic association creates a status of subordination” (Mallari, 2017 p.

101). *Negro*, as used in the Philippines, is an uncomplimentary description that associates dark skin with low social status, lack of good manners, and immorality. The mother of the half-Black child recounted:

“Sabi, “o, negro!” “ang itim mo!” Siguro dahil nga naiiba sila sa balat. Hindi naman dapat gaganunin; siyempre, tao rin siya, may damdamin. Nasasaktan ako pag naririnig kong ginaganun yung anak ko [umiiyak]. [They said, “negro!”, “your skin is dark!” Maybe because his skin is different. They should not do that; my son is also human, with feelings. I feel very hurt whenever my child is treated that way [cries]]”.

However, caregivers themselves also had biases based on skin color. Like the other adult participants, they associated white complexion with good looks and affluence. Mothers of half-White biracial children were proud of having children with “fine” appearance.

“Hindi ko po ine-expect na sobrang ganda ng anak ko [tumawa]. Natutuwa ako na kahit ganito lang ako, nakapag-anak ako ng magandang anak. Inspirasyon ko po sa buhay yun [I did not expect that I will have a very beautiful daughter [laughs]. I’m happy that even if I’m just like this, I was able to give birth to a beautiful child. That is my inspiration in life]”.

Nonetheless, due to the association of Caucasian features with wealth, biracial children and their caregivers often find themselves in uncomfortable situations, especially when they are unable to exhibit the expected affluent lifestyle. The caregiver participants were either unemployed or minimum wage earners, yet they had to grapple with other people’s expectation that they were well-off simply because they had a biracial child. A mother noted the difficulty dealing with other people’s presumption that her family is moneyed merely because they perceive her biracial daughter to have American heritage. This caregiver found it hard to haggle whenever she was shopping and accompanied by her biracial daughter.

“Dahil siya ay American, expected ng mga Pilipino ay mayaman. Kaya minsan, hindi ko siya sinasama sa mall, sa palengke, kasi pag kasama ko siya, akala nila may pera ako. [Because she is American, Filipinos expect that she is rich. So sometimes, I don’t bring her to the malls, to the markets because when she’s with me, people think I am rich]”.

In a Catholic country like the Philippines where religious leaders are usually given due respect and whose teachings are valued, it was alarming that a priest can also hold such bias determined by one’s physical features. A priest participant shared his reasoning as to why Filipino women had children with White males.

“Ang ganda ng combination. Kaya siguro type na type ng mga Pinay, kasi kahit yung Pinay na kaliit at hindi maganda, pag lumabas yung bata na tatay ay White foreigner, maganda yung lalabas na anak. I was amazed. [They [White men and Filipino women] make a good combination. Probably the reason why Filipinas like it [to be impregnated by White men] is because, even if they are small and not beautiful, when the baby, fathered by a White foreigner, is born, the child is good-looking. I was amazed]”.

Catholic-induced biases

As a result of the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, Filipinas who engaged in prostitution are demeaned due to the fact that they have forfeited their virginity and are deemed to have little or no value (Jugo, 2022). In the case of the biracial child participants, the discrimination they experienced based on their physical appearance is intertwined with biases related to their mothers’ impoverished status and alleged involvement in prostitution.

Adult participants held the bias that impoverished biracial children were a consequence of prostitution - a perception which seemed to be believed by a number of adults in the community. An NGO worker commented:

“Nadi-discriminate ang mga biracial dahil sa color nila, pero mas lalong discriminated yung Black kasi, sa tingin nila, ang black ay mababa. Though medyo mataas ang tingin natin sa White, discriminated din sila kasi alam naman ng society na sila ay mostly galing sa prostitution [The biracial children are being discriminated against because of the color of their skin, but the Blacks are more discriminated against because they are considered of low status. Although we give high regard to the White, they are still discriminated against because the society knows that they are mostly children from prostitution]”.

Nevertheless, this prejudice annoyed caregivers who were not involved in prostitution. A mother expressed her frustration for the discrimination that she experienced due to the preconception that her biracial son resulted from mothers having particular types of employment even if such was not the case.

“Mababa ang tingin nila sa iyo; hindi naman nila alam na hindi mo nga nakuha sa ganun yun. Masyadong mababa yung tingin nila sa mga nagkakaanak sa foreigner. Isip nila kaagad, nagtrabaho sa bar [They look down on you, even if that is not really what happened. They despise women who had children with foreigners. They immediately think that those women worked in a bar]”.

Some biracial children failed to secure acknowledgement and financial support from their foreigner fathers due to the latter’s bias against women prostitutes. These men doubted the Filipinas’ capability to correctly identify their children’s male parents because, due to their occupation as prostitutes, the women had sex with many men, therefore. A seven-year-old biracial child shared how her mother took action to get financial support from his American father.

“Si daddy ko pinakulong ni mama ko [tumawa] kasi hindi po nagbibigay ng pera sa amin. [My mother sent my father to prison [laughs] because he was not giving us money]”.

To escape their parental obligations, these foreign men demanded that the biracial children’s mothers prove their paternity through DNA testing. However, this was deemed too expensive given the latter’s meager income, causing additional strain. An unemployed caregiver commented that her biracial daughter’s foreigner father required a DNA test as proof of paternity but refused to shoulder the cost of such screening.

“Gusto daw niyang maging ama. Inano muna niya sa akin, mag-DNA test daw po; tapos, pera ko daw gamitin sa pagpa-DNA test. Siyempre, wala naman akong pambabayad. [He said he wanted to be a father. But he wanted to have a DNA test first, and for me to pay for that test. But I have no money to pay for that]”.

Another factor which contributed to discrimination against indigent biracial children in Angeles City is the imposed Catholic concept of a model family composed of mother, father, and child. This led to a bias against biracial children who were mostly raised by a female parent or an extended family member. A teacher participant commented:

“Hindi sila katulad ng ibang bata dito na karklase nila na Pilipino, kumpleto – may nanay at tatay. [They [the biracial children] are unlike their classmates who are Filipino and with a complete family – mother and father]”.

In some cases, the biracial children were labeled “anak sa labas” (children out of wedlock) and affronted with the phrase “napulot ka lang sa tae ng kalabaw (you were just picked up from the carabao’s dung)” - a representation of the inferior regard provided to biracial children merely because their fathers

were not with them. Such social stigma was common among Filipino adults who also had a presumption that biracial children's deviant behaviors were due to their lack of fathers. A nun participant told:

"Pag hindi nakilala yung ama, barumbado number one. Nalululong sila sa drugs. Wala silang nakagisnang amang magdidisiplina sa kanila. [If their fathers are not around, they become troublemakers. They get addicted to drugs. This is because they are raised without a father who would impose discipline]."

Yet, a mother reported that though it was hard, raising a child, whose father was absent, to be a good citizen was achievable.

"Yung tatay niya, Amerikano. Napalaki ko siya nang maayos kahit wala yung tatay niya dito. [His father is an American. I was able to raise him well, even if his father is not around]."

Based on the colonial notion of a family, all offspring should originate from the same mother and father. A caregiver participant has two biracial children - one from a White American and another from a Black Amerasian. The contrast in their physical features especially their skin color would surprise others and elicit the usual response: "Ah! Magkaiba yung anak niya!" ("Oh! Her children look different from each other!")

Having a transgender parent was not in accord with the Catholic concept of a family and resulted in children experiencing shame or discrimination. A caregiver commented:

Kung minsan, nahihiya siya. Sabi niya, "yung damit mo, ayusin mo, ha?" [tumawa]. Ayaw niya yung mukhang babae ako. [Sometimes he is embarrassed. He would say, "make sure that you dress properly." [laughs]. He doesn't like it when I dress like a woman]."

Biases reflecting the Western society's vertical orientation

The colonial approach to raising children, which positions adults as superior to children (Yacat & Ong as cited in Velayo, 2005), has exacerbated the mistreatment of biracial children. Adults' failure to solicit the child participants' views and opinions indicated their bias against children's perceived capability due to their age. It reflected their misgiving in treating children as co-equal and therefore their lack of pakikipagkapwa with them.

According to the child participants, the teachers and local officials never asked for their suggestions even on programs and projects for children. There was a preconception that adults had the exclusive knowledge on what is good for children. When a local official was asked if he ever consulted with the children in the city, he replied:

"Hindi. Yung mga parents ang mostly ka-interact ng office namin kasi yung welfare ng mga anak nila ay alam nila [No. Our office interacts with the parents mostly because they know about the welfare of their children]."

Adults believed that consulting with children would result in incurring monetary expense. When asked if they were consulted by their caregivers, the children replied:

"Opo. Kapag may pera kami. Ano po ang gusto kong kainin? Saan po kami kakain? [Yes. When we have money. What do I want to eat? Where are we going to eat?]."

Corporal punishment is not in accordance with kapwa as it is a manifestation of a hierarchical relationship between children and adults. Filipino adults' use of violence to impose "discipline" among children is an indication of adults' bias about children's age particularly their ability to think and act based on reason. The biracial children reported that they were subjected to physical punishment at home and in

school and that this did not contribute to their development but rather evoked feelings of anger against adults. A child participant expressed her disfavor against her teacher who used a metal ruler to “discipline” students. The child considered such methods as intrusive and disdainful.

“Kasi po namamalo siya dito [kaliwang palad]. Nananakit habang nagsusulat po yung mga kaklase ko. Pinapalo po kami ng bakal na ruler. Masakit po. [Because she hits us here [points to her left palm]. She hits us while my classmates are writing. She uses a metal ruler. It hurts]”.

The biracial child participants and their caregivers faced discrimination stemming from diverse biases, resulting in psychological, economic, and social challenges that they had to navigate. These biases were deeply ingrained and perpetuated by adults, either knowingly or unknowingly. Yet, these adults wield control over key social institutions such as schools, government offices, and churches, significantly influencing the development of social consciousness. Given that society is controlled by adults and children lack voice and political power, it is evident that confronting and resolving discrimination against the biracial child participants is a difficult endeavor. Nonetheless, the adult participants argued that access to education is the potential solution to discrimination against biracial children.

Combat Discrimination through Education

Filipinos have high regard for education. They believe that education offers a route out of poverty (Figueroa et al., 2016), to the extent that families are willing to take loans from others to support their children's education (Baclig, 2021). Obtaining a high level of education is seen as an advantage (Garcia & de Guzman, 2020), leading to favorable job prospects and a stable or higher income. However, the adult participants argued that education is not only a means to guide biracial children away from poverty but also to address their encounters with social prejudice. A mother commented:

Sinasabi ko sa kanya, “pag nakapagtapos ka, hindi ka na masyadong kukutyain. Idolohin ka pa nila.”

[I tell my son, “when you finish your studies, they will not tease you that much anymore. They will even idolize you]”.

The adult participants likewise perceived education as a way for the biracial children to search for their biological fathers. A nun explained:

“Kung nakatapos sila ng pag aaral, makakapag-ibang bansa na sila. Who knows, doon nila makita ang parents nila. Maaari na silang tumayo sa sarili nilang paa at makapagtrabaho [If they complete their education, they could travel overseas. Who knows, they might meet their parents there. They could stand on their own feet and work]”.

On a micro level, education is viewed as a crucial measure to shield biracial children from the biases impacting them and their families. However, since discrimination against these children stems from entrenched societal attitudes influenced by colonial ideologies, education can also serve as a potent tool for implementing broader reforms aimed at challenging such prejudice.

Integrating the Findings into Existing Literature on Biracial Children in the Philippines

Similar to the investigation by Gastardo-Conaco and Israel-Sobritchea (1999), this study's findings revealed that having women prostitutes as parents led to the biracial child participants' experiences of discrimination. As explained by Jugo (2022), the patriarchal Filipino society that was based on Spain-led Catholic colonization led to the lowly treatment of women prostitutes which, based on this research, impacted their children as well.

Stereotyping of poor biracial children as offspring of Filipino women prostitutes and foreign men was evident in this study. However, like the earlier generation of Amerasians, there were those whose male and female parents had “committed relationships” (Lapinig, 2013, p. 1).

Filipino Amerasians’ experiences of paternal abandonment contributed to their public humiliation (Gastardo-Conaco & Israel-Sobritchea, 1999). Similarly, the biracial child participants were discriminated because their circumstances were different from the colonial concept of a Catholic Filipino family comprising a wedded male and female adult with their children - an ideal which Mananzan (2018) considered to be a shallow view of a family.

Being raised by single unwed mothers or by homosexual or transgender parents was a divergence from the preferred Filipino notion of a family and led to the biracial child participants being discriminated. This bias against biracial children permeates the Filipino society with same-sex marriage (Salaverria & Inquirer Research, 2018) and divorce (Inquirer Research, 2018) being unsupported by the legal system.

The findings of this study disclosed the adult participants’ bias based on skin color and thus echo the works of Gastardo-Conaco and Israel-Sobritchea, (1999) and Rondilla (2012). Based on data provided by the child and adult participants, dark complexion was associated with poverty, lack of hygiene, and racial inferiority. On the other hand, white complexion was attached to affluence, observance of proper hygiene, and racial superiority. For instance, one of the participants said that market sellers would usually offer items at higher prices to White buyers due to the former’s preconception that the latter were wealthy. Such bias is a consequence of Western colonization that imposed European and American standards of beauty among Filipinos (Rondilla, 2012).

This research supports the arguments of Velayo (2005) that Filipino adults discriminated against children because they were seen as young and helpless. Hence, as reported by the child participants, the adults failed to consult them and used corporal punishment as a method to enforce “discipline”.

The age hierarchy in Philippine society is a barrier to regarding children as capable citizens (Padigos, 2022). A child’s perspective is less valued (Lundy & Templeton, 2018) as compared with adults’ suggestions which are treated with greater respect (Coram International, 2018). Such “authoritative and hierarchical” dynamics result from Western colonial ideologies (Yacat & Ong as cited in Velayo, 2005, p. 194) which considered children as beings who lack intelligence (Velayo, 2005).

Such biases against children impact adult-formulated policies in government. In the Philippines, use of physical form of punishment on children persists (Coram International, 2018). Accordingly, the Duterte administration claimed that the proposed law against corporal punishment would be an intrusion on families’ personal space, and hence, vetoed the anti-corporal punishment bill last March 2019. Former President Rodrigo Duterte also noted that, based on his own account, corporal punishment, if done in moderation, was a reliable means of implementing disciplinary action (Romero, 2019).

On the contrary, earlier studies on corporal punishment argued that such intervention had adverse implications on children’s mental health such as inclination towards aversion, reclusiveness, and antagonism (World Health Organization, 2021). Corporal punishment made children less motivated and unfavorably impacted their social skills (Sarmiento & Rudolf, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The biracial child participants’ experiences of discrimination degraded their dignity. The infliction of Western and Catholic ideologies gave birth to biases that restricted pakikipagkapwa - a crucial promoter of the biracial children’s positive dangal experiences. Such biases are deeply ingrained in the minds of numerous adult Filipinos, and their discriminatory behaviors have been firmly established within the

institutions they oversee. Hence, addressing discrimination against indigent biracial children is a gargantuan task that necessitates efforts aimed at fostering a shift in social awareness. This change can be facilitated through reforms in Philippine education and institutions. Educational reforms need to give top priority to examining the curriculum and learning materials to eliminate colonial-based biases from their content. This requires creating a committee composed of experts who will lead the review and revision of academic programs and resources at all levels. It is also imperative to ensure that teachers and school administrators are aware of these biases and act in a manner that does not promote discrimination. This can be achieved by incorporating a test on unconscious bias in licensure examinations as well as a mandatory training on how to acknowledge and manage biases.

Institutional reforms involve looking into the programs and policies of government offices, media companies, and religious groups, as these entities heavily influence social consciousness. Consequently, efforts to combat discrimination necessitate these organizations fulfilling their roles responsibly and fostering equality and inclusivity across all sectors. The government can establish an agency that can develop a program that will train representatives of said bodies on identifying and eliminating biases from their initiatives and protocols. Rewards and incentives can be given to those who have performed well. The agency must apply a rigorous and reliable monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. It is difficult to undo the effects of colonial beliefs and practices which have penetrated Philippine culture and institutions for centuries. However, it is morally unacceptable to remain passive especially if the biases have negatively affected the lives of the younger generation. The Filipino adults must take steps to diminish the effects of colonial biases and revert the Philippine society back to its mainly egalitarian character that upholds the dignity of all.

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