

Context-specific barriers affecting women's access to decent work in the Philippines

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1. Introduction

Through recent decades, little progress has been made in closing the gap in labor force participation between males and females globally. Be it potentially due to differences across institutions, legislations, economic systems, resource distribution, social norms or culture (from hereon “context-specific barriers”), women have had a disproportionate disadvantage when it comes to household labor supply decisions or have an added burden of balancing productive and household care work (Mercado, 2019; Yamauchi and Tiongco, 2013). A vast majority of studies have focused on women's labor force participation (LFP) without looking at the quality of jobs that they are engaged in, and it has been identified in developing countries that women are often engaged in lower-paying, occupationally hazardous work (Albert and Vizmanos, 2017). Only recently has the focus been shifted to women's access to decent work. An example would be the work of Lo Bue, Le, Santos Silva, and Sen (2022) who look at gender inequality in vulnerable employment – jobs that put women in precarious environments and inadequate compensation.

Decent work is grounded on the availability of employment that ensures freedom, equity, security, and human dignity (Zu, 2013). The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, 2018) embodied the four pillars of decent work first set out by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 1999: 1) employees should be given rights to demand for improvements in working conditions regardless of the nature of employment; 2) employment opportunities for productive work and decent income should be equal for all; 3) workers must be provided with the needed social protection ensuring occupational safety practices, smoothing adverse shocks, and responding to the dynamics of the labor market; 4) there must be social dialogue between the employees and employers to ensure conflict resolution, social equity, and effective implementation of workplace policies.

Following the pillars mentioned above, the operational definition of decent work in this study is paid work whose basic daily pay is at least the minimum wage, with a permanent nature of employment, and at least forty weekly working hours (according to the Philippine standard definition of full-time work). In aligning with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG5 on achieving gender equality and SDG8 on promoting full and productive employment and decent work, it is imperative that the drivers of the gap in access to decent work are identified and addressed.

Unlike other developing countries, the Philippines has made strides in achieving progress in gender equality. It ranked 19th out of 146 countries in the 2022 Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum (2022), which is second only to New Zealand in the East Asia and Pacific region. This implies that the country excelled in improving the environment of

women in dimensions of Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. Additionally, the country has numerous laws that provide equal treatment, protection, promote the importance of women and their role in the society and their access to decent work. Despite this, a gap in LFP remains – in 2018, the labor force participation of women was only 47 percent, compared to 75% for men (Cabegin and Gaddi 2019). It would seem that despite laws and regulations, the Philippines still faces micro-challenges in ensuring women’s access to decent work.

This paper investigates the barriers to women’s access to decent work in the Philippines. Specifically, this paper aims to:

1. Empirically test the how economic, demographic, social, and cultural factors may affect women’s access to decent work and identify gaps in available secondary data sources pertaining to the context-specific barriers.
2. Conduct a qualitative analysis using key informant interviews and focus group discussions to document the context-specific barriers to decent work.
3. Provide actionable policy recommendations to address the barriers to decent work.

The study is structured as follows. Section two presents a gender-disaggregated landscaper of the Philippine labor market, along with a review of regulatory frameworks and legislations. Section three reviews issues, gaps, and factors affecting decent work. Section four presents the analytical framework. Section five reports data sources and the sampling strategy of the primary data gathering. Section six reports the findings of the empirical and qualitative exercise. Lastly, section seven concludes with policy actions.

2. A gendered look at the Philippine labor market

Gender-disaggregated labor force statistics

We initially look at labor force statistics of the Philippines using a gender lens. We first use the Philippines Statistics Authority’s [PSA] Labor Force Survey (LFS), a nationally representative dataset of households and their members for the years 2017, 2019, 2020, and 2021 to present descriptive statistics (Figure 1, a more complete version of the table is reported in Table S1 of the Supplementary Material).

It may be seen that men have higher labor force participation and employment rates than women. However, there are more men working in jobs that pay below minimum wage, which ties up with a surprising result that average basic pay per day is higher for women than men. This is because when we look at panel (e), there are more women occupying higher-paying jobs (Managers, Professionals, Clerical Support, Services and Sales) than men, who are more likely to work in lower-paying jobs (Elementary Occupations, Assemblers, Crafts, Agriculture). However, it may be noted that women’s average basic daily pay is higher only because it is driven by this quantity effect, but for the same occupation, men are still generally paid higher than women (Table 1).

It may be noted that the distribution of women is more concentrated around higher educational attainment (panel (b)). There are more women that are secondary, tertiary, and postgraduates than men. In terms of the nature of employment (panel (c)), the largest share of working women is those occupying permanent positions, however, this is significantly lower than men (around 17.36 percentage points lower). There are more men engaged in casual employment and have different employers. In terms of class of worker (Panel (d)), the largest share of working women is those in private establishments, albeit significantly lower than for men (around 23.96 percentage points). It is noticeable that the proportion of women working in private households, government, and family business unpaid, are larger than that

of men, and that there are significantly more men in private establishments, self-employed, and are employers themselves.

In terms of industry (panel (f)), more women have been found to work in Wholesale and Retail Trade, Agriculture Forestry and Fishing, other Services, Manufacturing, Public Administration and Defense, and Accommodation and Food Services. Women particularly have higher frequency than men in Wholesale and Retail Trade, Education, Accommodation and Food, Human Health and Social Work, and Financial and Insurance Activities industries.

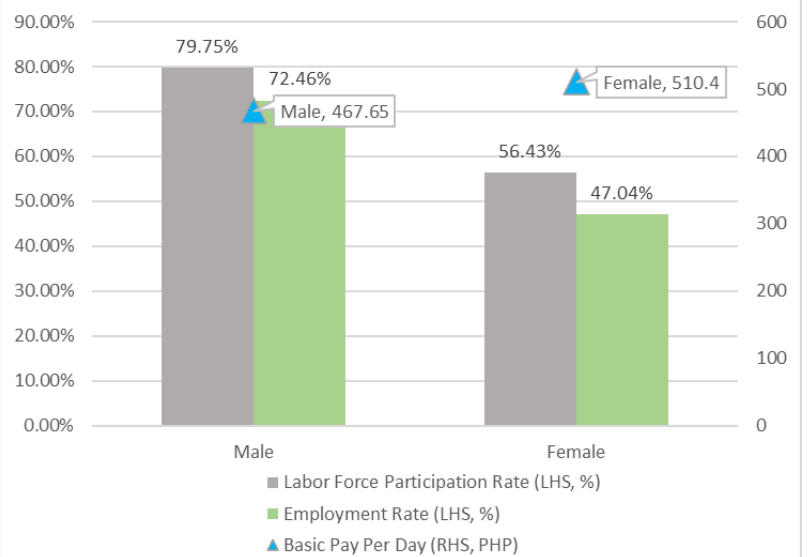
We present employment rates across alternative definitions of decent work (paid at least the minimum wage, full-time, permanent), and vulnerable work (defined either as unpaid or below minimum wage).

Figure 2 presents male and female employment rates across alternative definitions of decent work and vulnerable employment. It may be noted that the gap in employment rates favor women when decent work is defined based on working hours (Panels a), but men tend to have better employment rates in better paying and permanent jobs. As found earlier, it may be noted that females have higher employment rates in unpaid family-owned business (Panel c). However, in terms of participation in work that pays below minimum wage (Panel d), female employment rates are much lower compared to that of males. This reveals that while more females are urged to work in unpaid work, when engaging in paid work, they may more likely be in permanent and decent-paying jobs.

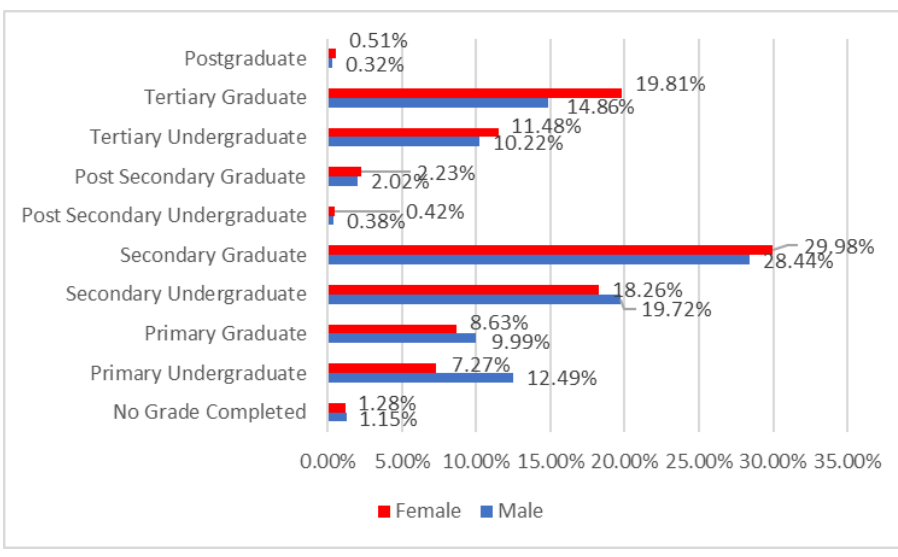
Figure 3 presents participation in decent work by gender across age groups, educational attainment, marital status, occupations, and industries. In terms of age groups (Panel a), it may be seen that access to decent work is higher for females in their tertiary school age (15-19) and early career stages (20-29). This declines steadily and males are seen to have the advantage for mid- to late-career stages (30-59), but females then again have higher access to decent work near retirement (60-64). Across educational attainment (Panel b), it may be seen that males have higher access to decent work for lower levels of education, generally up until the tertiary undergraduate level. Females have higher access to decent work for postsecondary and tertiary graduate, and postgraduate levels.

Across occupations (Panel c), it may be noted that decent work is more likely found for women in the Armed Forces and Plant and Machine Operators, which may be expected because the Armed Forces are bound by civil service requirements which are typically consistent with decent work. They also have the advantage over men for manager and professional occupations. Across industries (Panel d), another surprising finding are the women with decent work conditions in Construction, Households as employers, and Transportation and Storage, given that there are very few women here as well. Women hold the advantage in accessing decent work in Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, Information and Communication, and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation.

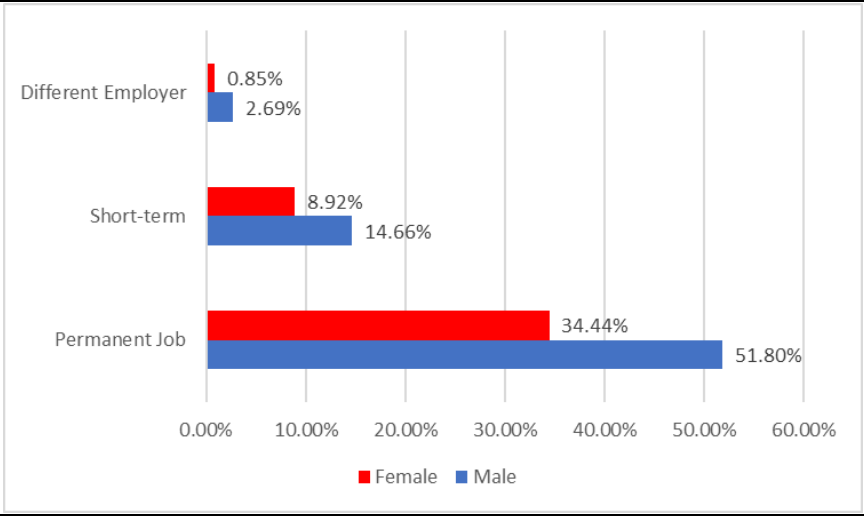
Khatiwada and Flaminiano (2019) examined living wage rates (meeting basic needs, communication, transportation, education, and insurance against shocks) in the Philippines. PSA (2019) reported that men are generally observed to have higher daily basic rates as compared to their women counterparts even though there are more women that work more than 48 hours per week (Figure 4 and 5). Specifically, 26 percent of women in the labor force work more than 48 hours per day as compared to only 22 percent of working men. On the other hand, females employed in agriculture and in the armed forces occupations and special occupations are found to have higher daily rates as compared to their male counterparts (Table 2).



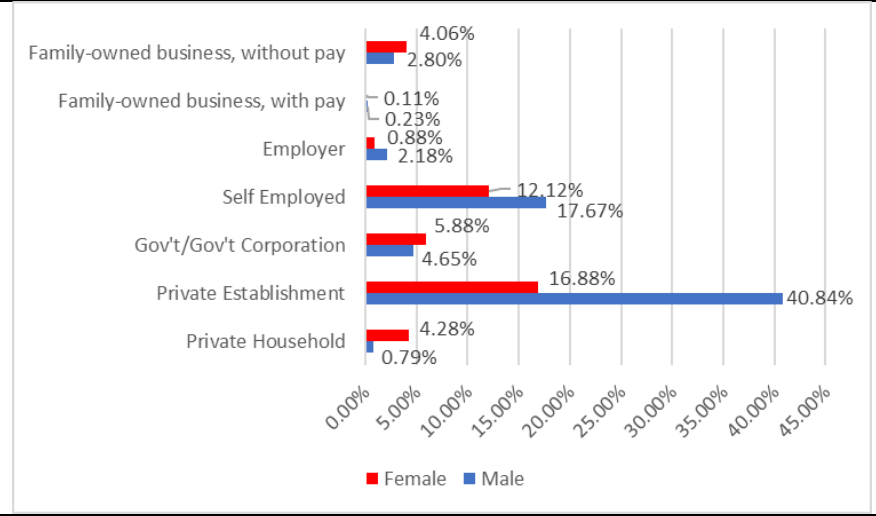
(a) LFPR, employment rate, and daily wage



(b) Educational attainment

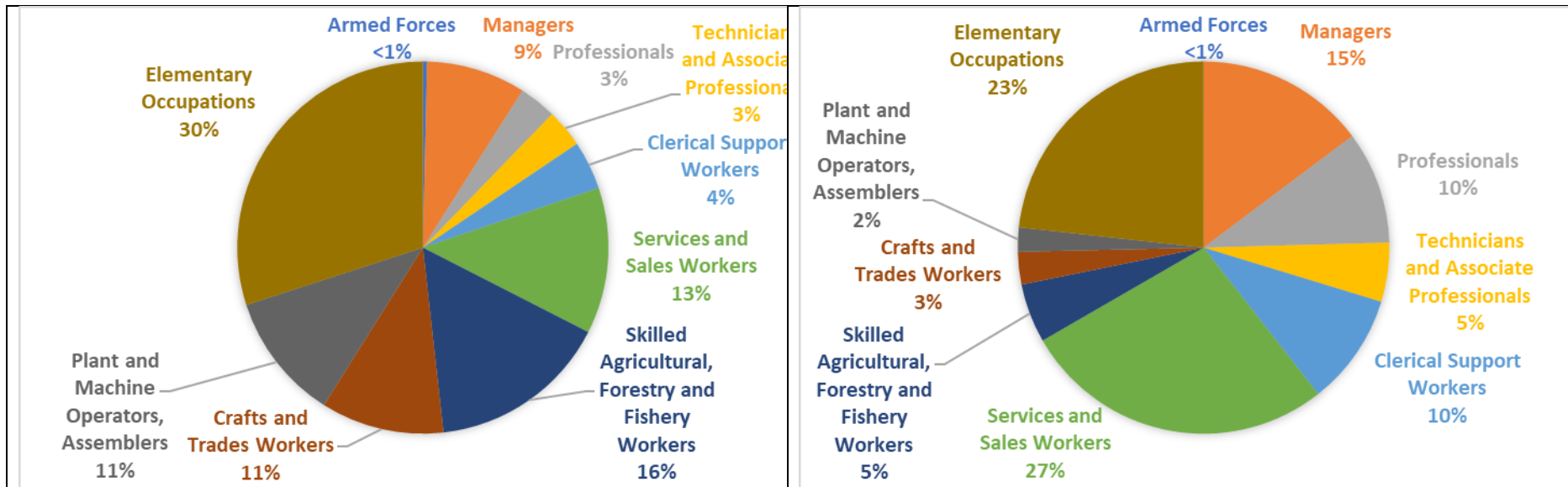


(c) Nature of employment



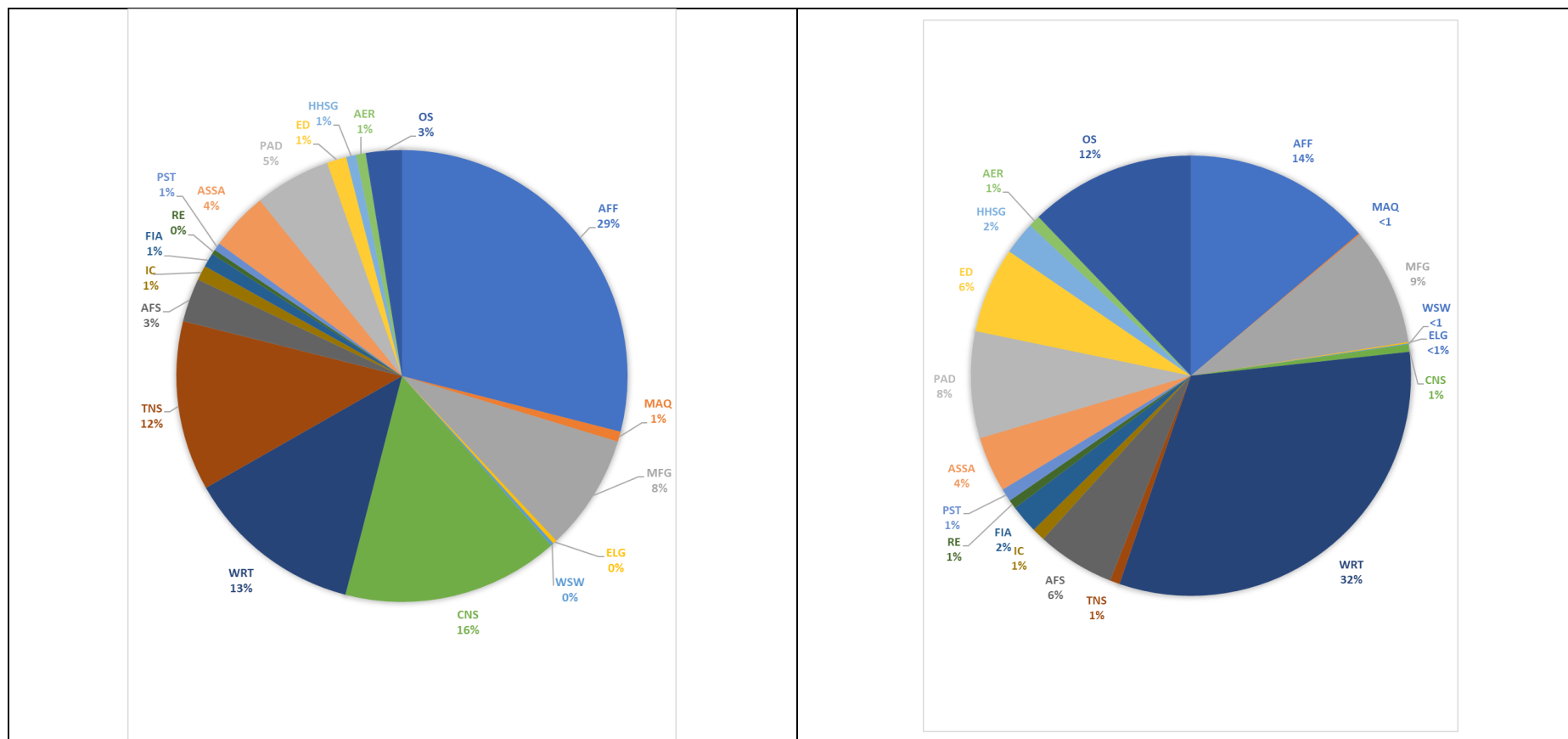
(d) Class of worker

Figure 1 (part 1). Descriptive graphs of the Philippine labor force, by gender



(e) Occupation, male (left), female (right)

Figure 1 (part 2). Descriptive graphs of the Philippine labor force, by gender



(f) Industry, male (left), female (right)¹

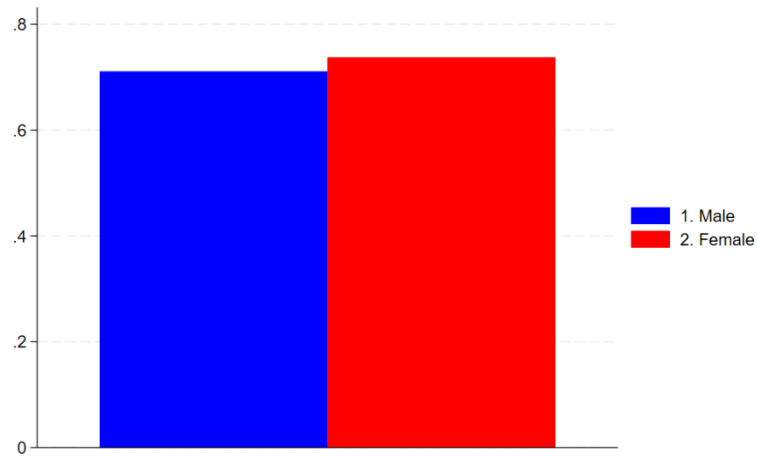
Figure 1 (part 3). Descriptive graphs of the Philippine labor force, by gender

¹ AFF – Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, MAQ – Mining and Quarrying, MFG – Manufacturing, ELG – Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning, WSW – Water Supply, Sewerage, Waste Management, CNS – Construction, WRT – Wholesale and Retail Trade, TNS – Transportation and Storage, AFS – Accommodation and Food Service, IC – Information and Communication, FIA – Financial and Insurance Activities, RE – Real Estate Activities, PST – Professional, Scientific, and Technical Activities, ASSA – Administrative and Support Service Activities, PAD – Public administration and Defense, and Public Security, ED – Education, HHS – Human, Health, and Social Work, AER – Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, OS – Other Services

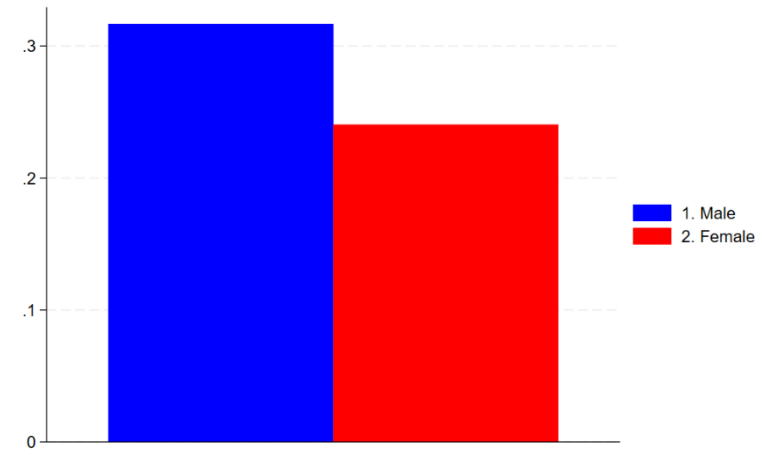
Table 1. Average daily basic pay by sex and occupation group, in Philippine Peso real terms
(Constant 2012; 2016-2018)

Occupation group	2016		2017		2018	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Managers	983.59	971.79	943.51	899.59	924.43	923.60
Professionals	922.42	832.36	921.05	834.99	953.28	871.43
Technicians and associate professionals	597.55	563.75	594.59	556.94	654.15	585.41
Clerical support workers	530.62	533.08	530.52	512.09	654.15	541.36
Service and sales	380.34	278.52	387.89	293.35	426.50	321.56
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery	387.11	400.31	292.02	390.08	388.50	563.43
Craft and related trade	370.40	278.96	383.05	285.54	408.49	309.86
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	393.02	363.42	414.16	373.34	443.46	393.37
Elementary occupations	253.36	187.62	272.09	208.19	296.14	222.50
Armed forces and special occupations	905.03	688.02	833.30	1297.91	999.39	1159.11

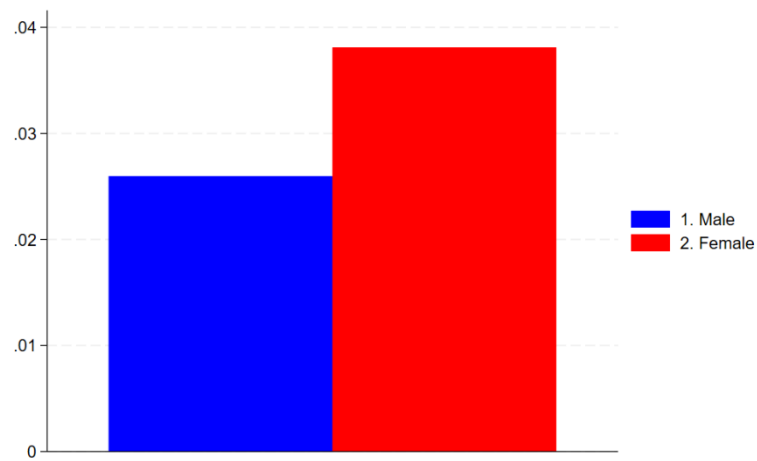
Source: Philippine Statistics Authority (2019)



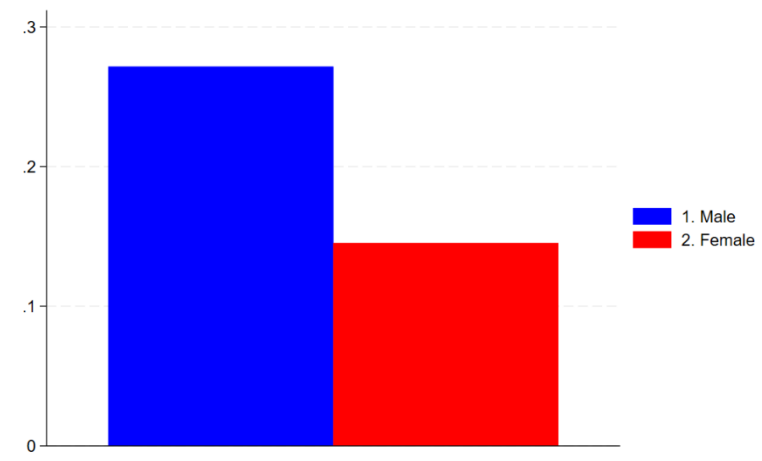
(a) Decent Work: Paid, at least 40 workhours



(b) Decent Work: Paid at least minimum wage, permanent



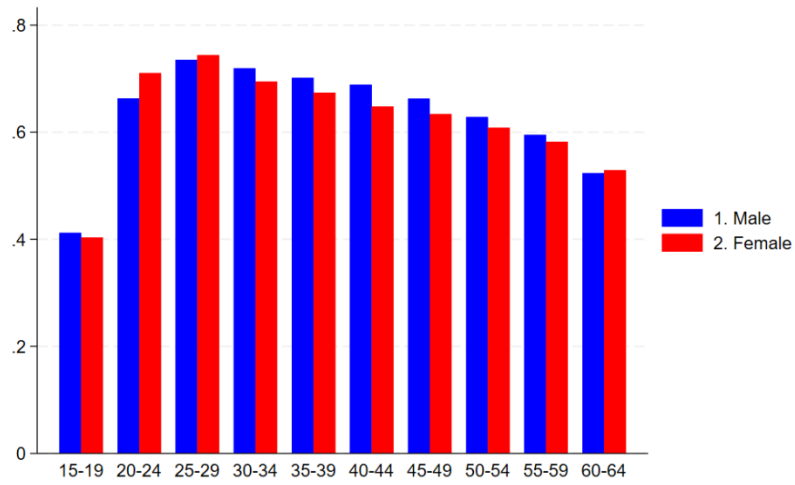
(c) Vulnerable Employment: In unpaid family-owned work



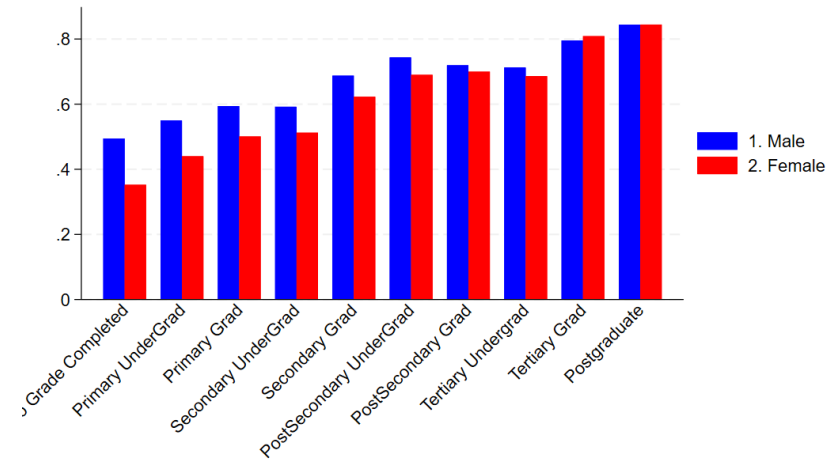
(d) Vulnerable Employment: Paid below minimum wage

Figure 2. Employment rates across measures of decent work and vulnerable employment, by gender.

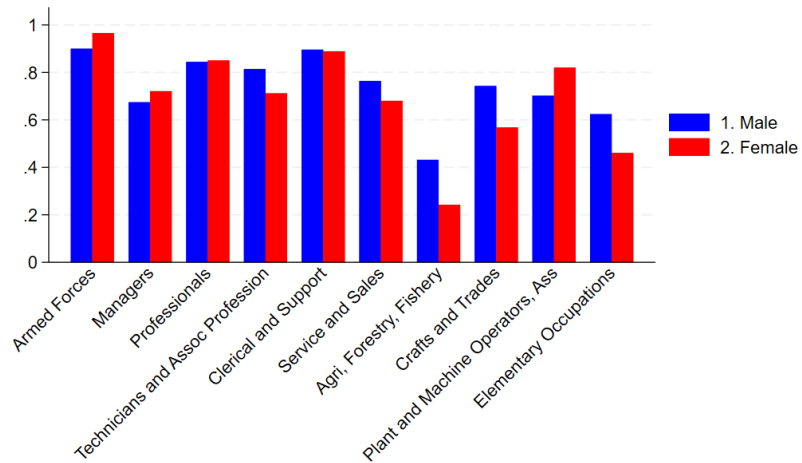
Source: LFS 2017, 2019, 2020, 2021, Authors' computation.



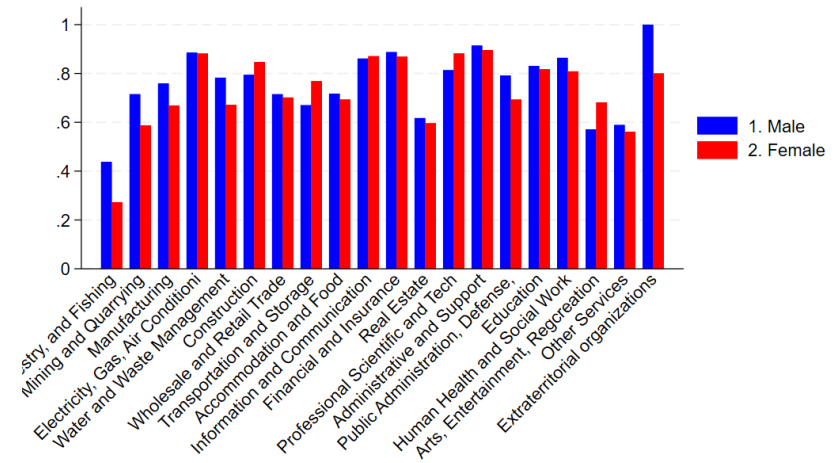
(a) Across age groupings



(b) Across educational attainment



(c) Across occupational classifications



(d) Across Industries

Figure 3. Access to decent work by gender, across age groups, educational attainment, occupations, and industries.
Source: LFS 2017, 2019, 2020, 2021, Authors' computation.

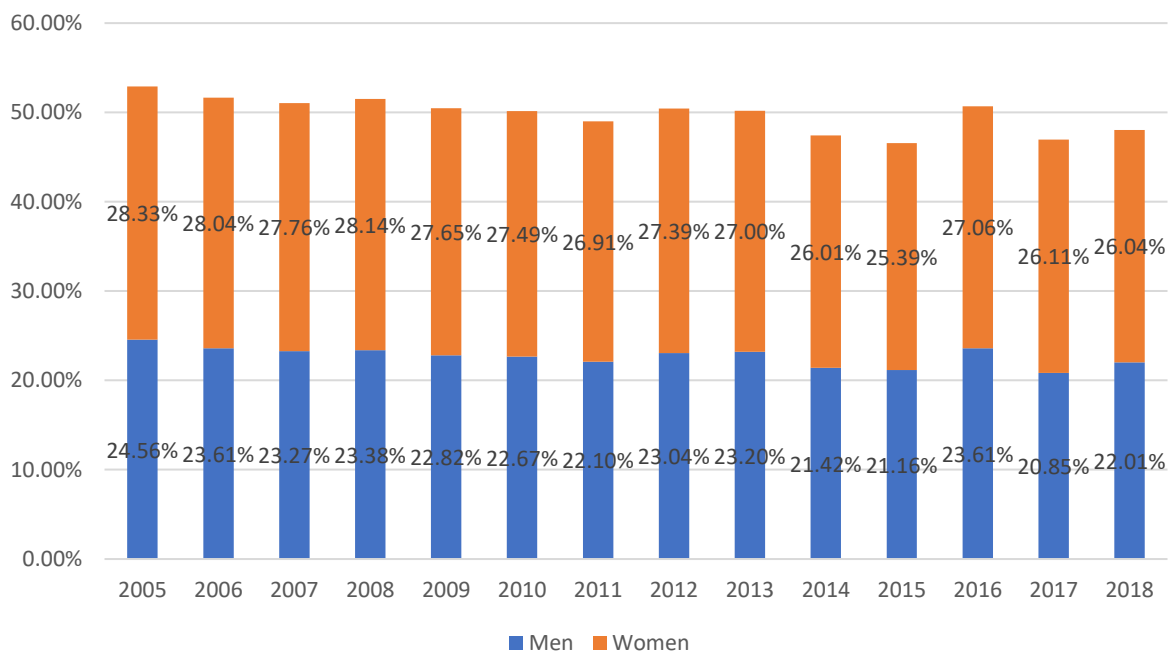


Figure 4. Share of employed working more than 48 hours per week by sex, in percentage (2005-2018)
Source: Philippine Statistics Authority (2019)

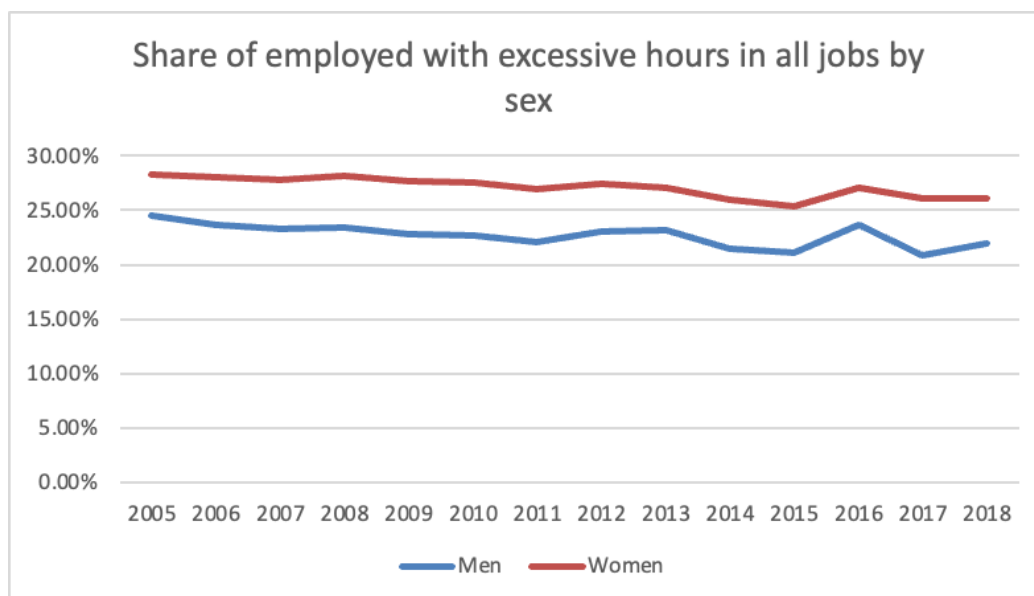


Figure 5. Share of employed with excessive hours in all jobs by sex
Source: Philippine Statistics Authority (2019)

Women-focused regulatory and legislative environment

The Philippines ranked 17th out of 156 countries in terms of gender equality in the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum (2021), and was noted to be one of the very few nations that have continuously closed the gender gap in senior-related

positions, as well as in the professional and technical aspects. The breakdown of ranking and scores of the Philippines are presented in Table S2 of the Supplementary Material.

The ILO (2020a) released a report that described the plans for attaining decent work in the Philippines from 2020 to 2024. The report also indicates the ILO's assessment regarding the country's progress in achieving access to decent work. However, despite the presence of many legislations to provide decent work, the country has many challenges in employment creation (e.g., underinvestment in infrastructure, low productivity), work rights (e.g., gender pay gaps), social dialogue (e.g. effectiveness of representation), and implementing social protection. This is summarized in Table S3 of the Supplementary Material.

The Philippines was one of the countries in Asia that piloted the Decent Work framework (Riguer 2008). The Arroyo administration included the Decent Work framework in the country's Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) for 2001 to 2004. This saw the inclusion of the 2002 National Plan of Action on Decent Work which served as the main framework that trade unions, employer groups, and the government must align their work programs to the four pillars of decent work (Riguer 2008).

The Magna Carta of Women (MCW) enacted in 2009 include provisions that ensure the protection, support, and representation of women in all aspects of Philippine society. Moreover, the law ensures that women should have access to decent work. One of the key provisions of the MCW is the inclusion of the Gender and Development (GAD) budget which requires all government agencies to allocate five percent of their budgetary appropriations for GAD policies. Table 2 summarizes other laws and regulations for women in the Philippines.

Table 2. Laws and regulations for women in the Philippines

<u>Republic Act No.</u>	<u>Republic Act name</u>	<u>Description</u>
RA 11210	Expanded Maternity Leave	The law extends the maternity paid leave from 60 to 105 days with an option to extend for additional 30 days without pay. There is also an extension of 15 days for paid maternity leave for female solo parents.
RA 1186128	Expanded Solo Parents Welfare Act	The law promotes the rights of solo parents and provides adequate social protection programs such as monthly cash subsidy, discount, and exemption from value-added tax, among others. Though this is not exclusive for female solo parents, they comprise 95 percent of the 14-15 million solo parents in the Philippines as of 2021.
RA 6725	Prohibition on Discrimination Against Women	Discrimination based on gender is prohibited. This includes favoring male employees over females in promotion, capacity building, and other benefits.
RA 7882	Assistance for small-scale women entrepreneurs	All possible support to women owning, operating, and managing small business enterprises should be given to them.
RA 6972	Barangay-level Total Development and Protection of Children	All barangays are required to provide day care centers in their respective areas. These daycare centers care for the children of working mothers during the day, and at times can provide the same care for those mothers working at night.
RA 11313	Safe Spaces Act (Bawal ang Bastos)	Prohibits any form of gender-based sexual harassment to any individual in public places (includes public transportation, common carriers, and private vehicles under the Transport Network Vehicle Services), educational institutions, training institutions, workplace, and online platforms.
RA 7877	Anti-sexual harassment Act of 1995	Any form of sexual harassment, to any gender, in work-related environments is strictly prohibited. Employers are tasked to create committees or groups that observe the decorum and are given responsibility to investigate any gender-based harassment.
RA 10395	Act Strengthening Tripartism, Amending for the Purpose Article 275 of Presidential Decree No. 442 (Labor Code of the Philippines)	The act guarantees the legitimate involvement of employees in tripartite bodies. In order to reinforce tripartism, the law institutionalizes tripartite councils at all levels, which have evolved and grown to include migrants, youth, women, public and informal employees.
-	Gender and Development (GAD) budget	It is a key provision under the RA 9710 or Magna Carta for Women. It requires that all government agencies should include 5 percent of their total budget appropriations for activities supporting GAD.

Source: Philippine Congress

3. Factors influencing women's labor force participation and access to decent work

In reviewing the factors affecting women's LFP and access to decent work, educational attainment is expectedly the biggest factor that encourages FLFP and women's access to decent work. Investing in female schooling has been found to one of the best responses to discrimination of women in the labor market and increases the likelihood of being part in the labor force (Yamauchi and Tiongco 2013 and David et al. 2018). This provides a reassurance given the observation that girls have higher participation rates in basic education compared to boys (David et al. 2018).

FLFP remains low in the Philippines due to inadequate employment and decent work opportunities, but this may in part be due to cultural and social norms (ADB 2013). The country is still observed to have a patriarchal society and that men and women are brought up differently ever since their childhood (Valdez et al. 2022). At the household level, common beliefs on gender-based roles are instilled in both girls and boys. Gendered social norms are factors that contribute to women taking up both domestic and care work (ADB 2013). Samman (2019), Liwag et al. (1999) and Valdez et al. (2022) find that boys are instilled that they should be doing labor-intensive work while girls are given household responsibilities. Cabegin and Gaddi (2019) and Samman (2019) explain that women are given the domestic and reproductive roles while men are expected to have the burden of both economic and productive roles. This belief is embedded in both formal and informal settings as gender roles are evident in curricula, instructional materials, and educational policies (PCW, 2022), and further reinforced in the home and community (Torell et al. (2021); Mercado , 2019). As girls grow older, they are expected to manage both household and career. Such commitment to both work and household serves as a barrier in labor force participation and can hinder women's work-life balance (Torell et al. 2021 and Mercado 2019). Furthermore, parents also expect that they will be able to get a larger share of income of their educated daughters (Yamauchi and Tiongco 2019).

There are also several factors that affect FLFP and the access of women to decent work that Cabegin and Gaddi (2019) and David et al. (2018) identify. David et al. (2018) find that as women age, the lower the probability that they will participate in the labor force. There are more working-aged women who are not in the labor force due to household or family duties (ADB, 2013). Women aged 15 to 24 were observed to have high unemployment rates due to marriage, childbirth, and child rearing responsibilities (Cabegin and Gaddi, 2019), but also because they are more likely to be enrolled in higher education than men (Epetia, 2019). However, Epetia (2019) observed the LFP life-cycle of men and women and found that the gap widens at the age of 20 onwards, and LFPR peaks earlier for men (around 35-39), whereas for women, LFPR will only peak nearing the end of childbearing age (45-49). It has been documented that some women are choosing to engage in unpaid household work and childcare due to the increasing financial costs and logistics of household care work. (Cabegin and Gaddi 2019). Furthermore, pregnant women are discriminated against by private employers as they are perceived to have lower productivity and that medical care costs are higher (Cabegin and Gaddi 2019). Religion can also affect women's access to work. For example, Muslim women cannot be employed in the arts and entertainment industries due to them wearing traditional religious clothing (Cabegin and Gaddi 2019). Lastly, informal work practices such as entertaining and socializing with clients after work hours also detract from the decent work experience of women as it places additional burden on them who are already disparately expected to shoulder the responsibility of household care work in addition to their productive work (David et al, 2018).

There has been a rise in ICT or platform-based jobs in the Philippines as a top destination for Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) work (Errighi et al. 2016). However, this raises

questions on how these industries ensure decent work. Bayudan-Dacuycuy and Baje (2021) examine decent work in the gig economy or platform work and found more women to work due to the inherent flexible work arrangements. There is also the absence of any gap in compensation between male and female platform workers. Regardless, there is still a lack of programs that aim to develop skills, social protection, protection of workers, and data collection on workers on platform-based work in the country. Moreover, there is an apparent skill shortage, high stress, lack of trade unions, and an urban-rural divide in ICT and related training (Bayudan-Dacuycuy and Baje, 2021; Errighi et al., 2016).

Establishing trade unions (Collective Bargaining Agreements or CBAs) seems to help promote decent working environments in workplaces (Edralin, 2019). The presence of CBAs can be a powerful instrument to ensure decent work, especially in private companies. Additionally, allowing to have workers' unions provides workers the opportunity to demand good working practices and protection by their employers.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns affected many industries and households. This is mainly due to the persistent lockdowns and other restrictions that reduced the mobility of individuals. The imposed lockdowns caused many businesses to close, and the digitalization of prospective work caused many businesses to face an unprecedented transition. The pandemic provided opportunities for employees to have alternative working arrangements, while some have shifted to non-standard forms of work such as independent contracting and freelancing (ILO 2020b). Further, women were able to keep their jobs, relative to men, during the pandemic due to the shifting to working-from-home arrangements and to other non-standard forms of work. In fact, some women perceived that they are more productive during the pandemic as compared to men (Hill et al. 2020). Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), particularly those led by women, improved their marketing and distribution channels as well as their online presence and adopted digital payments (Peña and Bayudan-Dacuycuy 2022). Cabegin and Gaddi (2019) showed evidence that the flexibility of alternative working arrangements, virtual jobs, and/or e-commerce provided opportunities for women to still perform their domestic responsibilities while being employed.

Aside from the loss of employment, the pandemic adversely affected many dimensions of FLFP and decent work. One is that school closures had negative impacts on private education institutions as well as FLFP. Lavado et al. (2021) estimates that the reduction in enrollment by 21.58 for SY 2020-2021 resulted in 123,000 jobs lost, 66 percent of which are women. Mothers, particularly, experience increased pressure since they have to divide their time and responsibilities between work and their families. This includes them being more involved in online distance learning or at-home schooling. The other adverse effect is that there has been an increase in gender-based abuse and domestic violence during the pandemic (ILO 2020b and UN Women 2020).

4. Analytical Framework and Methodology

The model

The Becker-Gronau framework explains participation well under the condition that economic determinants matter. One of the main factors that identify participation decisions is nonlabor income. The higher the nonlabor income, the higher will be the utility threshold for participation. However, most of the traditional models have paid little attention to the existence of barriers that act as wedges to optimal decisions. Understandably, the situation predictably changes when barriers other than economic constraints enter the individual's decision calculus. Such constraints are increasingly latent and formed through the interaction of non-monetary factors, social phenomena, personal circumstances, and norms.

Labor force participation decisions are empirically modeled in terms of a quantifiable likelihood that a worker with certain attributes will enter the labor force subject to binding participation constraints. Additionally, barriers that do not form part of such constraints condition participation as well. We can interpret such decisions as by-products of complex intra and extra-household processes that involve bargaining among household members in consideration of internal and external constraints. We believe that the core set of determinants that drive labor force participation pertains to endowments and internal and external constraints (Pimkina & de la Flor, 2020).

Household endowments pertain to time, assets, and capabilities. Endowments inform participation decisions in a non-uniform, heterogeneous way. Regarding the time endowment, women usually handle the bulk of non-market activities, like housework, elderly care, and childcare, leaving infeasible market participation. These non-market activities push women out of the labor force. Assets consist of financial assets and labor-saving assets. One important issue concerns the distribution of power within households to control assets. Finally, human capital endows members with capabilities, skills, and opportunities to engage in market work.

Internal constraints may act as impediments to the labor force participation of women in decent work. These constraints render relevant aspirations, attitudes, market perceptions, confidence, and other reservation wages. Most of these variables are not directly observed, but they figure well in characterizing intrahousehold processes.

External constraints involve shocks and labor demand, which interact with supply decisions made by women. Negative income shocks, for instance, may force women to participate in sectors with low productivity. This is the case when shocks such as those propagated by the pandemic adversely affect male-dominated occupations in manufacturing. However, labor demand encompasses factors that may increase non – participation, as well. These are substantial gender wage gaps and labor market discrimination. Thus, labor participation hinges on observed and unobserved individual attributes, her household's circumstances, interactions within households, and access to opportunities.

Our proposed model of labor force participation has two states: participation and non-participation. We assume that there are utility flows associated with non – participation. We denote this variable as the utility threshold or reservation wage.

To model participation propensity, equation (1) defines the following linear process that generates a latent variable,

$$u_i^* = x_i' \beta + x_h' \delta + f(w_i; \theta) + \epsilon_{i,h}, i = 1, 2, \dots, N \quad (1)$$

Vectors x and x_h refer to women's personal/individual attributes and household-level characteristics, respectively. Individual attributes such as marital status, age, educational attainment, and skills. Household attributes include household composition, family income, and even power arrangements. $f(w_i; \theta)$ is a function that contains other factors with their respective effects. w may pertain to measurable attributes linked to social norms, beliefs, perceptions, and aspirations. The presence of $\epsilon_{i,h}$ means that latent utility may be affected by factors not included in the model. As the $\epsilon_{i,h}$ is stochastic, so is the latent utility process. In the context of labor force participation, we do not observe u_i^* directly but it determines the observed outcomes in d_i . d_i is dichotomous, with the applicable threshold at \underline{U}_i .

$$d_i = \{not\ participate, u_i^* \leq \underline{U}_i\} \cup \{participate, u_i^* > \underline{U}_i\} \quad (2)$$

\underline{U}_i may refer to reservation utility or minimum psychic costs. Participation ensures that the individual has a chance to earn income. Therefore, the utility threshold may be interpreted as the amount of utility that the worker will receive by not participating.

To account for heterogeneity and without loss of generality, let $g_1, g_2 \in G$, where g_1, g_2 are groups belonging to a set of groups G that partition an underlying population such that $g_1 \cup g_2 = G$. We assume that utility maximization will still be feasible when introducing a rule pertaining to heterogeneity.

We can rewrite (1) as follows:

$$u_i^* = x_i' \beta + x_h' \delta + f(w_i; \theta) + \epsilon_{i,h}, i \in g_1 \quad (1')$$

$$u_j^* = x_j' \beta + x_h' \delta + f(w_j; \theta) + \epsilon_{i,h}, j \in g_2 \quad (1'')$$

We assume that when the decision to participate is reached, we can compare u_i^* and u_j^* .

Effects of non-income/non-economic barriers

Barriers exist at different levels, household/individual, community, and macroeconomy. For instance, women who are not given equal opportunity to access quality education may lack the skills needed to access decent work. Even women who have achieved good education may feel unable to access decent work if no access to childcare exists or they live in neighborhoods with less dependable transportation access. At the macro level, the availability of jobs may be a constraint, or workplace discrimination or biases may persist. Thus, women are affected at different levels differently.

Some of these barriers are realized within the household, plausibly induced by intra-household bargaining, cultural beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions in the labor market. Initially, we interpret a barrier's general effect by using the concept of reservation wage or the utility threshold. However, barriers may not be modelled simply as components of reservation wages, as they may be measured using a different metric.

Let j index the set of barriers B . If these factors render the threshold endogenous by shifting it, then the female worker's utility may not be enough to cross a modified threshold, making the probability of participation smaller. To adjust, we reflect the necessary modifications to (2):

$$\underline{U}_{i,b_j} > \underline{U}_i \text{ and } \Delta \underline{U}_{b_j} = \underline{U}_{i,b_j} - \underline{U}_i \geq 0 \quad (3)$$

where $\Delta \underline{U}_{b_j}$ is the differential between two thresholds. Condition (3) simply shows that the minimum threshold associated with a barrier is greater than when the barrier does not exist. Letting $u_{i,b_j}^* = u_i^* + \Delta \underline{U}_{b_j}$, the adjusted utility is lower as non-monetary barriers may increase utility loss relative to the case when barriers are not present. Thus, in the presence of barriers,

$$d_i = \{ \text{not participate, } u_i^* \leq u_{i,b_j}^* + \Delta \underline{U}_{b_j}; \text{ participate, } u_i^* > u_{i,b_j}^* - \Delta \underline{U}_{b_j} \} \quad (4)$$

Thus, barriers introduce a wedge into the labor force decision, altering the utility flow associated with non-market activities, making reservation utility higher, and plausibly influencing the decision calculus of the worker.

Interpreting decent work

Decent work may be allocated within the labor market – more convincingly than non-decent work. Thus, access to decent work is conditional on characteristics that may be correlated with participation, absence of discrimination, availability of transport systems, and intrahousehold arrangements that facilitate working, such as members who can engage in childcare, power-sharing arrangements, and educational attainment. The industrial structure and occupational characteristics may also determine access.

We adopt a model that highlights the intricacies of how women make decisions. We assume that preference over jobs increases with decent work attributes – remunerative, productive, inclusive, etc. A prospective worker, for instance would prefer a job that prescribes work hours, provides an opportunity to engage in collective bargaining, access to training, and exercise various freedoms that will allow integration and independence. Thus, labor supply or participation likelihood to decent work may imply the centrality of job attributes, which deviate from wage levels.

We presume that employers offer jobs that comply with decent work standards or not. When women's latent attributes positively correlated with the likelihood of getting decent work, then they are positively selected. An instance in which women's latent attributes make them likely to land on a non-decent work/job makes them disadvantaged or negatively selected.

Because decent work is aligned with labor standards, job design or enhancements entail labor costs, which may affect labor demand. Thus, it may be possible that decent work may be subject to labor search frictions in the sense that selection mechanisms may be more restrictive or may result in the underproduction of decent jobs.

The framework can be easily expanded to accommodate multiple outcomes. We use a simple random utility framework.

For each female, who has decided to participate would evaluate pairwise utilities associated with multinomial outcomes. Let the utility for each outcome be denoted by s .

$$U_{i,s} = V_{i,s} + \epsilon_{i,s}, s = 1, 2, 3, \dots, S \quad (5)$$

$V_{i,s}$ is known as the deterministic components of the random utility function. It contains variables that pertain to the characteristics of the decision maker and sectors, labor demand and supply conditions, and factors that are linked to societal norms. The decision rules are simple.

The choice rule involves pairwise evaluation. An outcome $j \in S$ is chosen if $U_{i,j} \geq U_{i,k}, j \neq k$. To be consistent with the earlier model, we also introduce outcome specific barrier that modifies utility thresholds.

Box 1 in the Appendix provides a summative framework for how non-economic barriers may affect the decision of women to engage in the labor force, particularly in decent work.

5. Data and Methodology

In identifying the context-specific barriers to women's access to decent work, we first use a quantitative approach with nationally representative data to establish empirical relationships. However, due to limitations in the information collected by surveys, we complement our

quantitative approach with a qualitative approach to delve deeper into the multidimensional nature of these context-specific barriers (Molina-Azorin, 2016).

Quantitative Approach

This study uses the LFS, a nationally representative dataset of households and their members conducted on a quarterly basis. We gathered the LFS rounds for quarters 1-4 for 2017, 2019, and 2020, and quarters 1-3 for 2021. The dataset includes information for 744,318 households, which sum to 3,269,945 individuals. We take only individuals of working age 15-64 (2,091,453, or 63.96% of the sample). The structure is non-panel, but we constructed a repeated cross-sectional dataset for a time-consistent representation of the labor market and to be able to capture the effect of COVID-19. All estimations include quarter and year dummies to capture within-year seasonality and yearly aggregate demand changes.

Our estimating equation for the factors affecting women's access to decent work takes inspiration from Klasen and Pieters (2015). However, directly integrating variables on legal barriers, social context and norms into the specified model is not possible given how these are not observable in the LFS. Considering available information in the LFS, we estimate the following model of FLFP in decent work:

$$Y_{iqt} = \beta_0 + \beta_E D_{Eiqt} + \beta_X X_{iqt} + \alpha_r + \tau_q + \gamma_t + \varepsilon_{iqt} \quad (6)$$

Where:

i , q , and t refer to the individual, quarter, and year, respectively.

Y_{it} = 1[woman i at time t is participating in what is considered Decent Work]

Our definition for Decent work is taken from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific [UNESCAP] (2018) where decent work is defined as "full, productive employment, rights at work, social protection, and promotion of social dialogue", where employment is full-time, wage and salaried, and employers. We, therefore, adopt the following alternative measures for decent work:

- a) 1[In paid work; weekly work hours ≥ 40 (based on Philippine definition of full-time work hours)]; this definition stays true to the UNESCAP definition
- b) 1[In paid work; basic daily pay \geq minimum wage; permanent nature of employment]; this definition, while improvised, purposely imposes higher quality-of-life features in jobs such as reasonable pay and stability of tenure.

D_{Eit} = Dummies for highest educational attainment, classified as follows:

X_{it} = Vector of individual and household level indicators including age, marital status, primary occupation, industry of primary occupation, and an indicator for children at different age groups.

α_r = Is a vector of region fixed effects to account for region-specific, time-invariant factors such as differences in the level of development, institutions, and governance. This removes any region-specific correlated effects.

- τ_q = Is a vector of quarter dummies to account for seasonal changes in the trends of participation in decent work, such as effects that may be attributable to the start of school.
- γ_t = Is a vector of year dummies to account for yearly changes in

To approach the problem from an angle of categorical placement across multiple, simultaneously determined outcomes, we also conduct a multinomial logistic approach outlined in Section B of the Supplementary Material.

Introducing heterogeneity into the analytical framework may clarify why even for the same attribute, different effects are observed. We further test this for the first definition of decent work across rural and urban areas, before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, across developmental age groups, and having children.

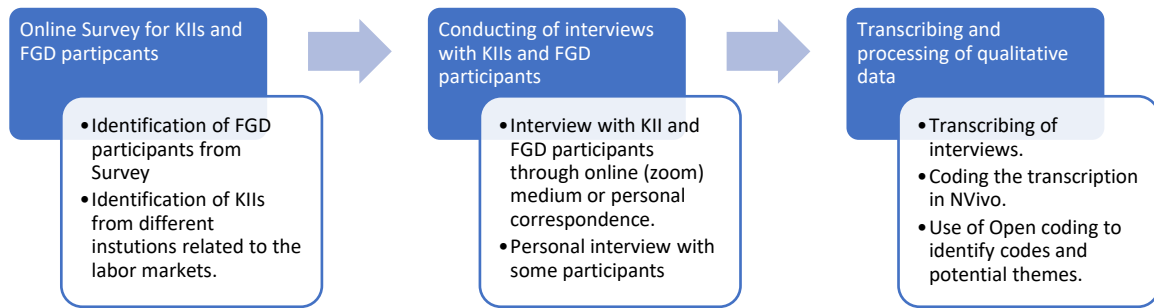
As an extended analysis, we come up with an innovative way to capture how social norms may act as barriers to female labor force participation in decent work. We turn to an approach of collective labor supply decisions, where access to decent work may be influenced by bargaining between household head and spouse within a household. We test how the distance of power between male and female partners in a household can affect female access to decent work. The proxy measure for power distance is calculated per household as the difference in highest grade completed and age between the married household head and the spouse. Details on this measure are provided in Section E of the Supplementary Material.

Qualitative Approach

Figure 6 summarizes our qualitative approach. We conducted interviews with three classifications of employed women aged 15-64. Some of the interviews were conducted with pairs, while some were done individually.² First, we conducted online interviews with women working in formal sectors. We first conducted an online screening survey sent to working women's groups in professional networking and social media sites. The online screening survey is used to collect demographic information as a preliminary check of perceptions on decent work and the context-specific barriers. This step also asked participants whether they were willing to participate in a longer, more intimate, and in-depth round of questioning through personal interviews. Around 61 women answered the screening survey. Of this number, around 44 percent (around 27) were willing to engage us in an interview. We randomly ordered these women and contacted them in succession and let them choose the date and time convenient to them for us to engage them in an online interview.

Figure 6. Summary of qualitative procedure

² The authors initially scheduled the interviews to be conducted as a focus group discussion (FGD) but there were scheduling conflicts among the participants. The group decided to divide the interviews based on the participants' availability.



Source: Authors

Second, we conducted live interviews with women working in informal sectors – particularly those in domestic care work. They hail from local low-income communities around the capital region. Lastly, we conducted policy-focused interviews and discussions with lawmakers and researchers that are considered gender and labor experts, and government facility workers. The gender experts were chosen based on their history of work and the centrality of their position in shaping the legislative landscape. We reached out to researchers from prestigious think tanks that have worked with policymakers on issues in labor, family, and gender. We also reached out to lawmakers – heads of labor-related political parties to collect information and enter a discussion as well. Over the course of the primary data gathering, some barriers started to appear particularly surrounding the provision of daycare services, so we engaged in additional interviews with barangay officials and daycare workers to identify the factors that contribute to the persistence of these barriers.

In total, we conducted 7 interviews with women in formal work, 2 sets of interviews with women in informal work, and 4 sets of interviews with experts, lawmakers, and government facility workers. Specifically, the group was able to conduct one FGD and 7 individual interviews. A description of the women in the sample is provided in Section C of the Supplementary Material.

Box 2 in the Appendix contains a table summarizing the research questions. These questions inquire into perceptions of decent work, the context-specific barriers to decent work. Interviews were recorded using video conferencing software and mobile phone, transcribed, translated to English, and responses were then analyzed using NVivo.

We use inductive thematic analysis to process interview responses and identify codes and potential themes within the transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, audio and video files from the interviews were transcribed, and we increased our familiarity with the data through repeated reading and listening. We identify keywords and passages in the transcripts that are related to each of the context-specific barrier, and are then coded into themes under each barrier. For example, keywords and passages revealing a patriarchal society, gender expectations of care work, and how these roles are instilled will be coded under cultural norms and biases. Repeated coding cycles helped identify all conceptual clusters – codes related to each other via a central identified decent work barrier that may evolve into major themes. A coding table summarizing counts of appearances of emerging themes were then generated to help finalize themes. The final themes based on the codes and clusters were identified in a roundtable discussion of the research team, complemented with the use of thematic maps and spreadsheets. Coding tallies for emerging major themes and their sub-themes are provided in Section C of the Supplementary Material.

6. Results and Discussion

Quantitative Results

Table 3 shows estimates pertaining to participation and access to decent work equations. To empirically characterize access, two definitions of decent work were considered: women's access to decent work in terms of working at least 40 hours (columns 1-4), being paid at least the minimum wage, and occupying a permanent position (columns 5-8). We report the marginal effects of key variables, and parameter significance was determined using the delta method. Probit models were used to estimate equation (6). However, a potential issue is sample selection so the Heckman correction is applied using selection equations based on employment status and labor force participation. We provide an additional robustness check by restricting the sample to only employed individuals (Columns 2 and 6). In this exercise, we find comparable marginal effects estimates relative to models that do not restrict the sample to employed workers.

The probit regression results confirm several observations on LFP and decent work. First, for the working hours-based definition of decent work, the likelihood of access increases significantly with educational attainment. This increase is most pronounced at the tertiary to postgraduate level. An exception would be those unable to finish secondary education, where the likelihood of decent work is consistently lower. Results also indicate that attending or graduating with a post-secondary diploma yields a higher probability compared with those who did not complete a college education. Participation increases with age at a diminishing rate.

Looking at different types of marital status, it may be noted that relative to the base category of being single, married, or widowed women are less likely to be in decent work at least 40 hours per week, while being separated or annulled does not show any statistical difference. Lastly, having children decreases the probability of access to decent work compared to those with no children, but this is much less pronounced for children ages 12-14.

The selection issue requires empirical clarification. Earlier, we estimated probit models that accounted for endogenous selection into two separate states: access to decent work and participation. We use the likelihood ratio (LR) test for the independence of two equations, the probit, and the selection function. Based on the results, the two equations are not statistically independent, necessitating the joint estimation of both equations using a selection-corrected probit model.

The story changes when we shift the definition of decent work to being paid at least the minimum wage and is of a permanent nature. First, any level of education less than a tertiary graduate decreases the likelihood of engaging in decent work. This is one aspect that definitions of decent work matter. Age works to increase the likelihood of decent work. Still, over time, its effect diminishes. Currently married or at any one point tends to give advantages compared to single women. Lastly, having children aged 6-11 is also seen to, statistically significantly increases the likelihood of being engaged in decent work, while there are no visible effects for having children in other age groups. The presence of members who can potentially offer childcare services becomes negative, an indication that the female worker may be less likely to participate.

The sensitivity of results to how decent work is defined may hardly be surprising. Attaining a greater quantity of work hours may be easier as fewer barriers exist. Married life and having children also provide the much-needed motivation for women to seek stability in pay and tenure without necessarily having to work more hours. One area of consideration is how the presence of potential providers of childcare would affect participation and its non-robust response to changes in the definition of decent work.

Table 3. Factors influencing access to Decent Work.

	Decent Work At least 40 work hours		Decent Work At least 40 work hours		Decent Work Paid at least minimum wage, permanent		Decent Work Paid at least minimum wage, permanent	
	Selection uncorrected		Selection Corrected		Selection uncorrected		Selection Corrected	
	Full sample	Probit Employed sample	Employment Selection	Labor Force Participation Selection	Full sample	Probit Employed sample	Employment Selection	Labor Force Participation Selection
	1	2	1	2	3	4	3	4
Reference: No grade completed								
Primary Undergraduate	0.0088	0.0086	0.0427 ***	0.0302 ***	-0.0144 **	-0.0143 **	-0.0066 **	-0.0126 ***
	0.0069	0.0069	0.0032	0.0033	0.0063	0.0063	0.0032	0.0031
Primary Graduate	0.0226 ***	0.0223 ***	0.0374 ***	0.0285 ***	-0.0151 **	-0.0153 **	-0.0033	-0.0106 ***
	0.0069	0.0069	0.0032	0.0033	0.0063	0.0064	0.0032	0.0032
Secondary Undergraduate	-0.0097	-0.0099	-0.0221 ***	-0.0263 ***	-0.0084	-0.0086	-0.0010	0.0005
	0.0069	0.0069	0.0032	0.0033	0.0063	0.0063	0.0032	0.0032
Secondary Graduate	0.0509 ***	0.0508 ***	0.0298 ***	0.0273 ***	-0.0370 ***	-0.0373 ***	-0.0146 ***	-0.0178 ***
	0.0067	0.0067	0.0031	0.0033	0.0062	0.0062	0.0032	0.0031
Post Secondary Undergraduate & Graduate	0.0852 ***	0.0852 ***	0.0526 ***	0.0547 ***	-0.0358 ***	-0.0359 ***	-0.0099 ***	-0.0135 ***

	0.0076		0.0076		0.0040		0.0041		0.0071		0.0071		0.0038		0.0038
Tertiary Undergraduate	0.0341 ***		0.0338 ***		-0.0130 ***		-0.0077 **		-0.0162 **		-0.0165 **		0.0123 ***		0.0178 ***
	0.0070		0.0070		0.0033		0.0035		0.0065		0.0065		0.0033		0.0033
Tertiary Graduate	0.1094 ***		0.1093 ***		0.0895 ***		0.0820 ***		0.0395 ***		0.0394 ***		0.0742 ***		0.0675 ***
	0.0069		0.0069		0.0033		0.0034		0.0064		0.0064		0.0033		0.0033
Postgraduate	0.1407 ***		0.1401 ***		0.1481 ***		0.1224 ***		0.2043 ***		0.2043 ***		0.2138 ***		0.2001 ***
	0.0092		0.0092		0.0060		0.0060		0.0089		0.0089		0.0058		0.0055
Age	0.0152 ***		0.0152 ***		0.0329 ***		0.0233 ***		0.0160 ***		0.0160 ***		0.0108 ***		0.0026 ***
	0.0004		0.0004		0.0005		0.0004		0.0004		0.0004		0.0005		0.0004
Square of age	-0.0002 ***		-0.0002 ***		-0.0004 ***		-0.0003 ***		-0.0001 ***		-0.0001 ***		-0.0001 ***		0.0000 ***
	0.0000		0.0000		0.0000		0.0000		0.0000		0.0000		0.0000		0.0000
<hr/>															
Reference group: single															
Married	-0.0502 ***		-0.0502 ***		-0.0020		-0.0066 ***		0.0562 ***		0.0565 ***		0.0375 ***		0.0436 ***
	0.0020		0.0020		0.0012		0.0013		0.0020		0.0020		0.0011		0.0011
Widowed	-0.0313 ***		-0.0313 ***		-0.0283 ***		-0.0320 ***		0.0127 ***		0.0130 ***		0.0225 ***		0.0292 ***
	0.0032		0.0032		0.0022		0.0023		0.0033		0.0033		0.0021		0.0021
Separated	-0.0301 ***		-0.0301 ***		0.0002		-0.0090 ***		0.0032		0.0034		-0.0074 ***		-0.0030
	0.0037		0.0037		0.0025		0.0026		0.0036		0.0036		0.0024		0.0024
Annulled	-0.0083		-0.0083		-0.0081		-0.0094		0.0868 **		0.0866 **		0.0427 **		0.0526 *

	0.0392	0.0392	0.0319	0.0330	0.0415	0.0415	0.0291	0.0290				
Household has members who can provide childcare	0.0172 ***	0.0172	-0.0208 ***	-0.0081 ***	-0.0322 ***	-0.0321 ***	-0.0219 ***	-0.0133 ***				
	0.0037	0.0037	0.0023	0.0023	0.0037	0.0037	0.0022	0.0021				
Has Child Aged 0-5	-0.0123 ***	-0.0123	0.0051 ***	0.0061 ***	0.0033 **	0.0032 **	-0.0034 ***	-0.0045 ***				
	0.0014	0.0014	0.0009	0.0009	0.0014	0.0014	0.0008	0.0008				
Has Child Aged 6-11	-0.0239 ***	-0.0239	-0.0187 ***	-0.0161 ***	0.0031 **	0.0032 **	-0.0006	0.0036 ***				
	0.0014	0.0014	0.0008	0.0009	0.0013	0.0013	0.0008	0.0008				
Has Child Aged 12-14	-0.0156 ***	-0.0156	-0.0123 ***	-0.0087 ***	-0.0039 ***	-0.0039 ***	-0.0032 ***	0.0018 **				
	0.0014	0.0014	0.0009	0.0009	0.0014	0.0014	0.0009	0.0009				
Has Child Aged 0-5 x Household has members who can provide childcare												
Obs.	458149	457,395	2946752	2,414,455	458149	457395	2946752	2414455				
R2	0.1670	0.168			0.2350	0.2350						
Censored Obs			1675832	1142015			1675832	1142015				

Uncensored Obs	1270920	1272440	1270920	1272440
LR test of independent equations				
Estimated rho	0.6380	0.4819	-0.0483	-0.3330
	0.0112	0.0111	0.0143	0.0124
Test statistics	1264.7	1188.43	11.47	496.66
Prob > chi2	0.0000	0.0000	0.0007	0.0000

Source: Author's computation, LFS.

Notes: *, **, *** represent significance at 10%, 5%, and 1%, respectively. Robust standard errors are reported. Pseudo R² is reported for Probit. All specifications include a vector of occupation dummies, industry dummies, region fixed effects, quarter dummies, and year dummies.

In the multinomial logistic regressions (Table S4 in Section C of the Supplementary Material), while evidence is suggestive at best, we find that previous findings are reinforced: higher levels of education and age are associated with a greater likelihood of working in more stable or permanent jobs usually in private establishments, government, or self-employed. Whereas being married and having children see women sorting in less stable employment such as unpaid family business. This supports how cultural factors and norms may enforce gender roles. In fact, it is found that the most reported reason why unemployed women are not looking for work is to attend to household and family duties (Table S7 in Section D of the Supplementary Material).

Looking at heterogeneity of effects (Table S6 in Section D of the Supplementary Material), we find that women in urban areas tend to have greater returns to educational attainment and greater penalties to being married in terms of access to decent work. In terms of developmental age groups, a similar pattern of greater returns to educational attainment and greater penalties to being married emerges among women in their early career (aged 21-35) and late career to retirement (48-64). We note a few surprising results. With regards to women having children, as it turns out that while having children may reduce the access to decent work on average, returns to education and even marital status tend to be unclear, suggesting that having children may not provide as large a burden, and may indicate that women eventually regain access to decent work as their children grow older. During the pandemic, returns to educational attainment were dampened, but the same applies to penalties to married women.

The extended analysis (Section E of the Supplementary Material) offers newer insight in terms of bargaining spouses. While wages, decent work employment rates, and female labor force participation in general tend to be higher when the female's education and age is higher than the males, it appears that these rates are highest for women in households where they have the same level of education or age with male partners. Moreover, for the women not engaged in the labor force, those in households with same or higher levels of education and age than their male partners have lower frequencies of reporting household and family duties as reasons for not looking for work. This may be suggestive that equality in education and age may lead to better bargaining, and may translate to better planning, or perhaps teamwork between spouses than situations where differences in age and education between spouses are more striking.

Qualitative Results

Figure 6 provides an illustration of the five major themes that emerged from the responses of the women in our sample reflecting their perception on decent work. The largest themes that emerged are all often interlinked to each other. (1) Fair compensation that is enough to cover the costs of living, with (2) fair benefits (usually health cover for the worker and their family), a (3) conducive working environment that prioritizes health and safety, and helps cultivate their growth in both personal life and career. As for other emerging themes, up to some extent, women view work that is decent as one that (4) promotes work-life balance – where they do not have to bring home work and allows them to leave on time, and (5) fair treatment, freedom and dignity.



Figure 6. Major themes on women's perspectives on decent work.
Source: Authors' analysis of interviews.

Figure 7 illustrates the major barriers to female access to decent work. The size of the nodes and text reveal the gravity of these issues as reflected in the interviews, with much larger nodes and text being larger hindrances to the decency of work for women (meaning the times they have appeared across files and respondents is greater in number).

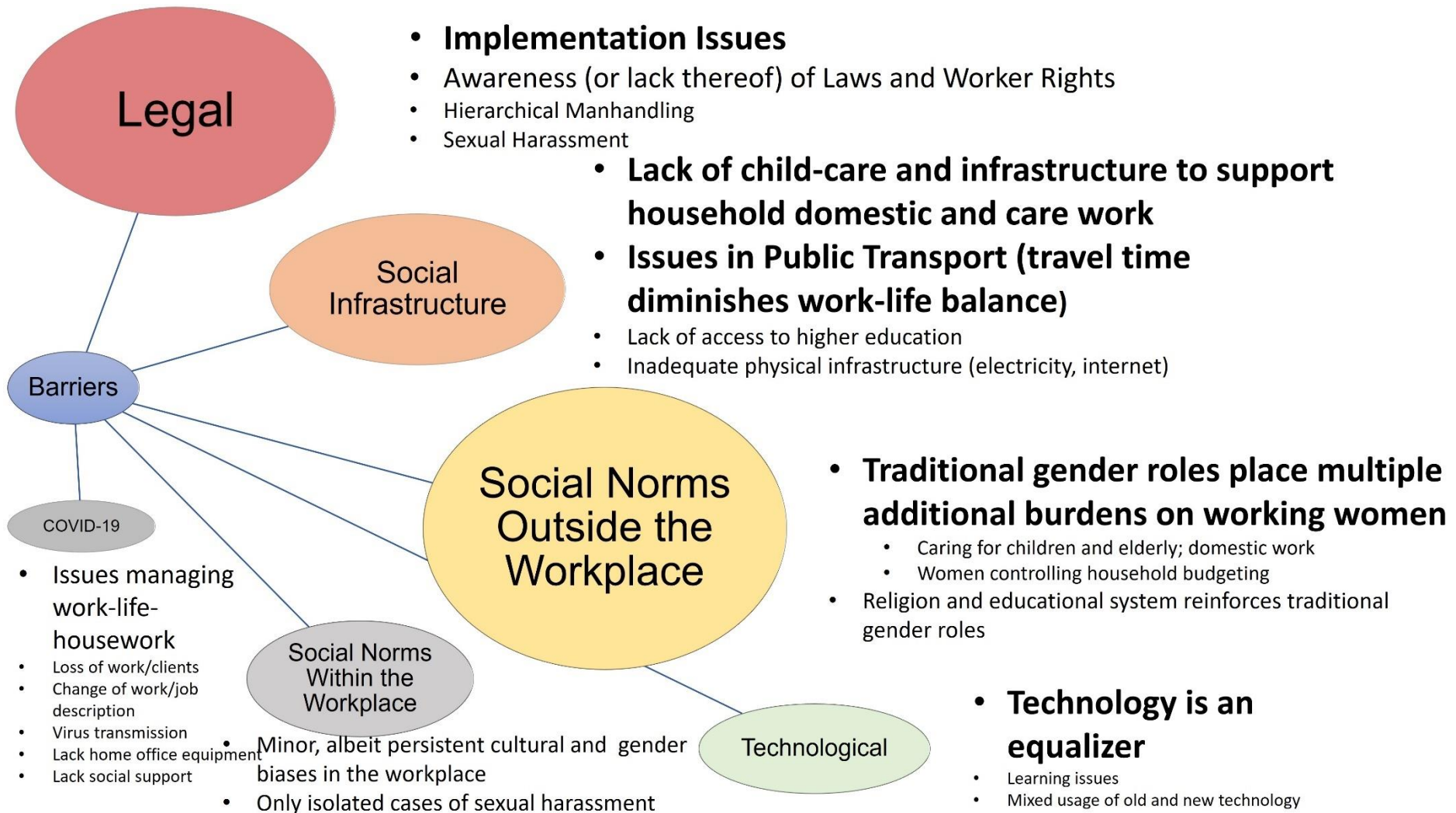


Figure 7. Major themes in context-specific barriers to female access to decent work.
Source: Authors' analysis of interviews.

The greatest legal barrier are implementation issues of laws that should protect labor working women. Respondents shared that there is a lack of enforcement and administration of labor laws in companies and institutions in the country. This was confirmed in our interactions with lawmakers, experts, and barangay officials. There is no lack of laws, rather the problem is in the enforcement – implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. At the barangay level, the GAD budget can be used to build capacity among women usually in trades such as sewing, dressmaking, and food processing. However, this varies wildly with political will and the presence of authorities with the technical expertise to approach issues and policies with gender sensitivity. LGUs do not have a uniform set of policies or targets regarding use of the GAD budget they adhere to, which may be why GAD initiatives are highly uneven and often lackluster. In addition, companies may not have proper orientation on their workers regarding the laws and workers' rights just to take advantage of some of the laborers. While there are companies that have initiatives in improving the awareness of such laws, there are some that desire the expansion of existing laws, particularly targeting the preservation of the health of women. Respondents identified that despite the presence of laws, the way that companies operate and resolve gender issues within the workplace still depends on the culture and the values of the company – leading to what was identified as “hierarchical manhandling”.

Among themes that emerged about social infrastructure barriers, the greatest hindrance to FLFP was the lack of child-care facilities. Some women forego productive work and focus on domestic and care work. While there are some daycare centers in LGUs mandated by law, it has been a matter of daycares being spread too thinly in terms of human resources and supplies. Interviews conducted with barangay workers revealed that utilization rates are very high among lower income households, with some barangay daycare centers reporting high pupil-teacher ratios. Workers are also underpaid, and at times lack facilities and supplies to accommodate more children. Another barrier was the poor quality of public transport in Metro Manila as it diminishes work-life balance. There are problems on accessibility as well as how public transport systems work and are designed, which influenced women on the type of work they want to have. It was also identified that lack of access to higher education has affected women's decision where to work.

No major themes emerged around social norms within workplaces. Regarding power relations within the workplace, it was noted that attitudes of management toward their subordinates were the single, definitive factor that can determine decency of work in the workplace, however, this is not specific to women. Difficulty in filing leaves, and less understanding managers were examples cited by respondents. However, these tend to be isolated cases, and the women in our sample were content about their work, as they felt represented, protected, and overall empowered. It may be said by looking at our sample's responses, that men and women are generally treated equally in the workplace.

On the other hand, age-old, deep-rooted traditions and beliefs continue to shape contemporary Filipino culture. Expectations about gender roles are still widely observed. Household care work remains to be the largest reason why women are not looking for work. “Bringing in the money is the man's job” and “caring for children, the elderly, laundry, cleaning, and household budgeting is the woman's job” are stereotypes that summarize these gender expectations. Women are expected to one-sidedly shoulder these additional responsibilities in addition to maintaining their own full-time jobs. Participants noted that fathers are often uninvolved in teaching or raising children and doing household chores, thinking that their duty ends once they come home and hand off their paycheck to their wives. This uneven distribution of the household workload is what detracts from the decency of work of our participants, despite them being employed in relatively well-paying, stable, and progressive careers. When asked about institutions that reinforce these beliefs, they cite how these roles are instilled in them at a young age, and even observe these roles from their

parents. Ultimately, they identify two institutions responsible for the persistence of these gender roles, and these are religion (specially Catholicism) and the educational system. These longstanding institutions are what have taught families to place the father/husband as head of household, while mothers/wives are expected to submit, follow, and take on the role of support. Learning modules developed in the educational system were even cited to still perpetuate these stereotypes through discrimination in colors (i.e., blue is for boys, pink is for girls), toys (cars vs. dolls), and roles in the household (hard labor vs. cooking and laundry).

Technology has not been observed as a barrier among women but there are still issues that females encounter. There are companies that lack the proper investment in technology, which put workers, particularly women, at a disadvantage in terms of digital productivity. There are also instances that women's employment can be affected adversely if their skills do not adapt to changes in technology. However, it was also found that technology was able to give more working opportunities for women and that it has now levelled the playing field in terms of work. Both the working women and our gender experts agree on this sentiment. Having allowed women to work from home and technology has given more opportunities for women to do a lot of tech-related occupations, and therefore, has established itself as an equalizer that can close the gap in LFP between men and women.

The pandemic has had adverse effects on women's employment as well as access to decent work. From the responses, the main barrier that women encountered was on issues on managing work-life-housework. During the pandemic, it was harder for them to balance work, leisure, and care work in their respective households. It was identified that support in terms of accessing the internet or providing equipment would have been helpful in navigating the new digital workplace.

7. Policy Implications

The Philippines has been putting in the effort to closing the gender gap, particularly in wage, but little progress has been made in closing the gap in LFP and women's access to decent work. Although laws and regulations are in place to protect and encourage women to be part of the workforce, gaps are still present due to barriers that hinder women in participating in the country's labor force. These barriers, such as the cultural separation of treating girls and boys at their childhood stages, expectation of women of balancing career and family needs, providing financial support to their parents, and the expectation of staying in school longer to be able to compete with their male counterparts, are factors that prevent women to participate in the labor force. These effects and factors are often not captured in many quantitative datasets and studies in looking into identifying the barriers that hinder women in being part of the labor force.

The quantitative analysis reveals that higher education is indeed the great equalizer and is the key to greater access to decent work. On the other hand, while being married and having children may expectedly have penalties due to women being engaged in unpaid care work, depending on certain conditions, these penalties may be short-lived and women could make up for lost time in the labor market. These penalties also disappear when power imbalances in terms of educational attainment and age between spouses are narrowed.

The qualitative analysis reveals that the greatest barriers to women accessing decent work are poor implementation of laws protecting women (and not the lack of or inadequacy of existing laws). Child-rearing, raising, and the associated housework, are by far what reduces labor force participation among women the most, and this is perpetuated by age-old beliefs and enforcement of traditional gender roles that disproportionately place the burden of household care work upon women. Lastly, daycare centers which are supposed to alleviate

the burden of mothers who have children, while available, may be spread too thinly in terms of human resource and supply.

A strategy for policy

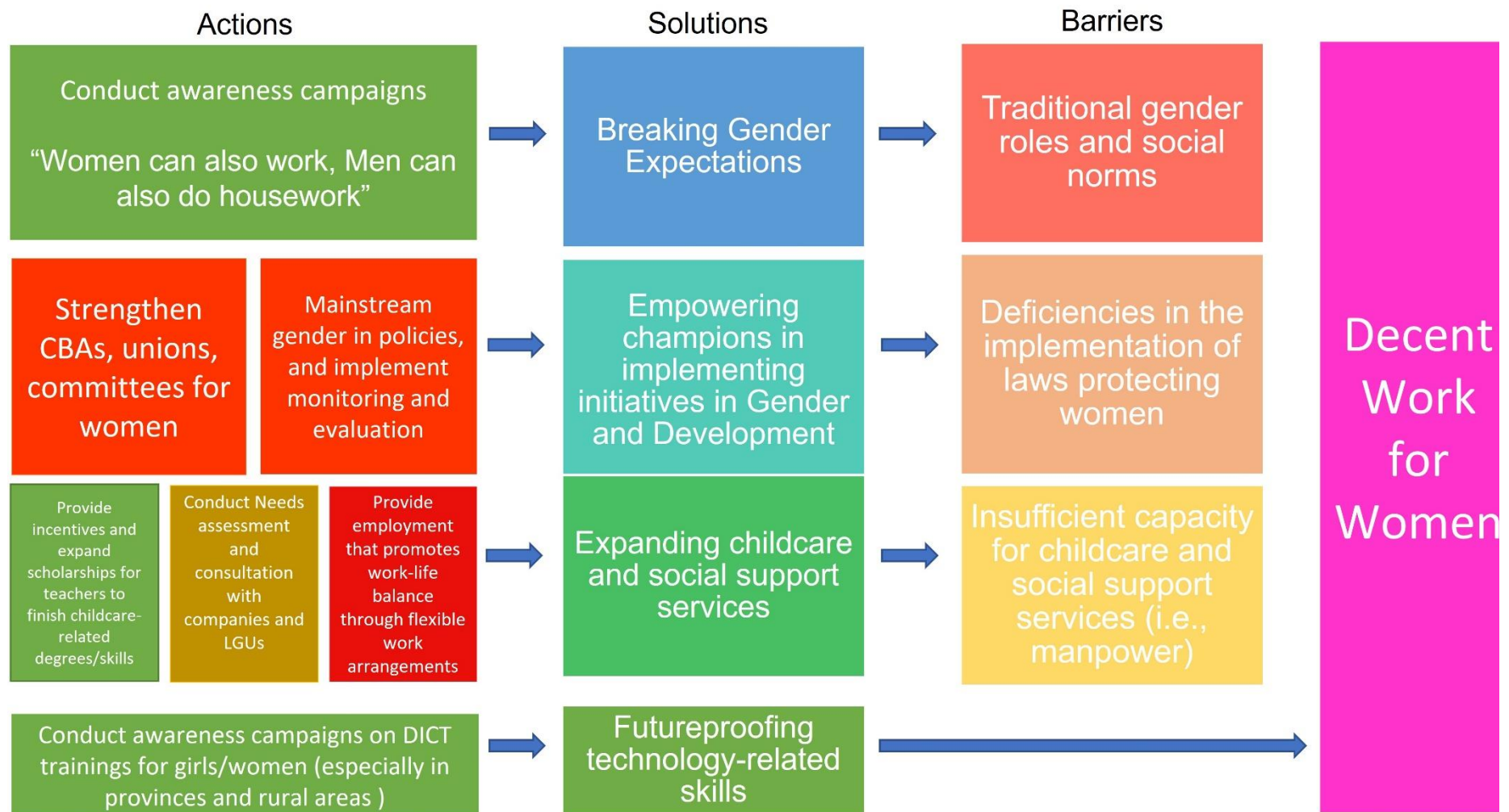
To address the barriers hampering women's access to decent work, we recommend a four-pronged approach. This is summarized in Figure 8 which presents broad solutions and actions that can be taken.

First, the most feasible strategy would be to create awareness campaigns breaking cultural norms reinforcing traditional gender roles. Domestic and international institutions have started pushing for this –the Philippine Commission on Women and Philippine Institute for Development Studies, and international initiatives such as Investing in Women (<https://investinginwomen.asia/our-work/influencing-gender-norms/>) are already launching campaigns on women empowerment, challenging gender norms, and raising the value and visibility of unpaid care work, as well as capacitating institutions on gender mainstreaming. Philippine society's collective psyche needs to learn about possible marital benefits when partners are equally engaged in domestic household and care work. "Women can work too. Men can care for the household too."

While not a barrier, we identify technology as an equalizer in terms of work opportunities for men and women. While there have been accounts that work from home arrangements added stress for women (thanks to the blurring of the line separating work-household care work-leisure), it also enabled women to engage in employment from their homes, and allowed them to save on various costs. Hence, women should be more empowered to work in an increasingly digital workplace by taking advantage of training programs that are being offered by the DICT. We recommend conducting awareness campaigns to raise the visibility of these training programs, and give women the nudge they need to pursue their dreams of being engaged in productive work.

The increase in households where men and women are working will require greater social support in the form of childcare services. Childcare services at the barangay level need to be expanded. There is a need for greater incentives to increase the number of teachers and daycare workers, along with the necessary financial support to gain human capital. Fortunately, the Magna Carta for Daycare Workers aimed at improving remuneration and benefits of daycare workers is being pushed by members of Congress, and this should work well in conjunction with the existing Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education Act which provides scholarships and financial assistance to students. Supply and facility concerns of LGUs also need to be investigated, and targets need to be set for them to provide women with livelihood programs. Either working from home, or work that allows them to bring their children, women should be given more flexible working arrangements especially in light of poor public transportation and long travel times which detract from the overall decency of employment.

Lastly, the emerging barrier that "laws are adequate, but implementation is not" warrants a stronger tripartite partnership of government-employer-employee. This entails applying a gender lens in policy making, capacitating lawmakers and government workers to develop gender-responsive policies, and improving coordination across various levels of government agencies. Champions for gender-responsive policies are needed. These could be organizations of collective representation – collective bargaining agreements, unions, committees. Or these could be GAD focal persons, who need to be made more visible or their roles strengthened. These champions should ensure that the marginalized are heard, laws are enforced, gender-related targets are met, and that resources are efficiently and effectively utilized to enhance the well-being of its intended beneficiaries.



Note: Different colors of actions indicate different levels of feasibility. Green = high, Yellow = medium, Red = low.

Figure 8. Policy roadmap for addressing the largest barriers to women’s access to decent work.
Source: Authors’ quantitative and qualitative analyses.

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Appendix

Box.1. A framework for analysing social, political contexts for female labour force participation

Dimensions	Areas to cover
Understanding legal, social barriers to female labour force participation	
Legal	<p>Attitudes towards gender equality in the legal framework (constitution, ratification of international treaties). Legal protection against discrimination based on gender, affirmative action to ensure gender equality. Legislation governing working conditions, working hours and holidays, social security (i.e., maternity leave), employment/income protection, anti-discrimination laws.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the legislation treat men and women equally? - Does it acknowledge causes of gender-based inequalities and works to transform gender roles, norms and relations?
Answer	The country has several laws and regulations that promote the protection of women. These laws also promote the equal treatment of men and women in all institutions and in front of the law. The laws and regulations have some clauses that acknowledge some gaps that need to be addressed.
Social infrastructure to facilitate work-life balance	<p>Availability of childcare facilities. Access to safe and secure transport. Access to schools and vocational training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is there quality and affordable childcare available throughout the country? - Is public transport safe and secure? - Is there easy access to public transport? - Is access to schools and vocational training different for men and women? Why?
	<p>The RA 6972 mandates that all barangays in the country should be able to provide day care centers. These centers are mandated to provide care to children, especially to mothers who are working. However, there are still several barangays that do not have community day care centers.</p> <p>The RA 1131, which is the Safe Spaces Act law, ensures the safety of all genders against sexual harassment in public places. These include public transportations, transportation terminals, common carriers, and private vehicles under TNVS. A notable government initiative is that the first coach in the Metro Rail Transit (MRT) is designated for women and elderly only.</p> <p>The current laws and regulations also protect against the discrimination of both men and women in access to schools and vocational training.</p>
Social norms - outside workplaces	<p>Harassment and violence against women in public spaces; restrictions to women's social interactions and freedom of movement; beliefs on women bread winners; responsibility for household chores; perceptions on safety on the way to work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What knowledge, perceptions and norms exist among different gender groups? - What are the main causes of gender inequalities in labour force participation?
	<p>Studies point out that there are significant gender norms in the country. As early as the childhood stages, Filipino families have treated male and female offsprings differently. Boys, at the very young age, are poised to get used to physical labor while girls are given more household responsibilities. The</p>

	<p>Philippines is primarily a patriarchal society where male dominance is the norm in the family and in social institutions. Males, when they become adults, are expected to be part of the labor force to take care of the financial needs of the family. Meanwhile, females, once they become adults, are expected to manage both household and their own careers.</p> <p>One of the factors that contribute to inequalities is that women are expected to receive more schooling as compared to their men counterparts. As a response to discrimination in the labor force, women are forced to spend more years in schooling. Parents also expect that they will be able to get a larger share of income from their educated daughters.</p>
Social norms - within workplaces	<p>Challenges in moving up in the career; Challenges in in-service training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are working conditions female-friendly (i.e. wash rooms/ rest rooms)? - Do working hours allow for work life balance? - Safeguards against discrimination, harassment in the workplace, satisfaction with workplace, challenges facing when working? - Differences in treatment of men and women? - Do women have opportunity to participate in collective representation? - Male/female preferences at recruitment? Reasons?
	<p>RA 1131 and RA 7877 are laws that protect women from sexual harassment in public places and in the workplaces. Employers are required to create committees or groups that observe the decorum within workplaces. The committee should be headed by a female and that there should be a gender balance in the members of the group.</p> <p>There are studies that point out that there are preferential treatments to both men and women when it comes to recruitment. Industries that need cognitive skills and physical labor mostly hire men. Meanwhile, industries that require care, such as the healthcare sector and the education sector, have preferential treatment to women.</p>
Impact of COVID_19 and technological change on female labour force participation	
COVID-19 impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How is COVID-19 affecting the labour force participation of females? - What kind of relief has government given to the workers? Were any special considerations given to improve female labour force participation? - What were the main shortcomings in the labour market institutions that were exposed by the emergency?
	<p>Many industries in the country, such as service, retail, hospitality and tourism industry, had to close due to the pandemic. There are approximately 4.1 million women that are employed in these affected sectors. Moreover, there are also many women working in MSMEs that were adversely affected by the pandemic. The ILO (2020), however, pointed out that women were not much affected as with men as working from home became the norm. More men in the labor force were affected during the pandemic. Although, it was highlighted that due to the lockdowns, there was an increase in domestic abuse among women and that they are unable to report it to the authorities given the stringent measures.</p> <p>The government has created the Bayanihan Law that provided some financial assistance to the general population. The law further provided</p>

	<p>additional assistance to MSMEs. However, there are no government programs that specifically target the welfare of women, especially in increasing the labor force participation, during the pandemic.</p>
<p>Technology change impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How is technology change affecting the labour force participation of females? - Are there any government policies for preparing workers for the changing labour markets? (i.e., training, facilities) Do they give special attention to females? - Do you feel your country's labour market institutions are adequately prepared to address the challenges of changing labour markets (Why)? How are these capacity gaps affecting females?
	<p>The proliferation of e-commerce for continued business operation during the pandemic has made online marketing and consumer knowledge imperative. With 84% of the newly registered businesses during the pandemic owned by women, there is a growing need for women empowerment programs. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) initiated the "Connecting Women to the Digital Economy" program back in July 2020 which provided a 90-day integrated digital marketing training program to women entrepreneurs in partnership with Shopee, Lazada and Facebook. This was later turned over to the Department of Trade and Industry "E-taas ang Pinay MSMEs" program in February 2021 (Department of Trade and Industry, 2021).</p> <p>The Philippines has the highest percentage share of female platform workers at 62% globally (Payoneer, 2020). There is a need to continue availing of programs to increase their competencies as they keep abreast with the times. As platform work becomes increasingly popular, the number of registered profiles increases while the number of successful workers does not increase at the same rate. Thus creating a surplus. Based on data from Upwork.com in 2018, the surplus for the Philippines is at 145,888, while the successful workers are 18,869 (Graham and Anwar, 2020)</p> <p>The Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) has a programme called digitaljobs.ph which provides free training programmes to promote ICT-enabled work environments and e-commerce training for MSMEs (DICT, 2022).</p> <p>The Senate has been actively developing bills that would help keep platform workers abreast with the times. This includes the Digital Workforce Competitiveness Act (Senate of the Philippines, 2022).</p>

Box 2. Summary of research questions and sources used in primary data gathering.

Dimension	Specific Research Objectives	Specific Research Question	Data Collection Method	Source/Informants
Legal	Identify and analyse the barriers that prevent the enforcement of legislations that promote gender equality and women empowerment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are existing policies that seek to promote gender equality and women empowerment? • What is the current status of the implementation of these policies? How have companies and LGUs institutionalized these policies in their respective jurisdictions and what mechanisms (e.g. formal, informal, monitoring/reporting) have been put in place? • Are all relevant stakeholders (working women, HR officers and managers of companies) aware of existing laws that seek to promote gender equality and women empowerment? • What factors (e.g., institutional, governance, resources, politics) impede/promote the enforcement/implementation of these laws at the national, sub-national, and local government level? • How can existing laws and their implementation be improved? What new policies are needed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of laws and policies • KIIs/FGDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women working in formal sectors • Civil society groups • Companies and HR officers, managers, recruiters • Government agencies • Legislators • Local government units • Gender experts/specialists
Social infrastructure	Identify the role that social infrastructure (day care facilities, social protection, microfinance, domestic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are women aware about available social infrastructure and laws that aim to provide them? • Are these social infrastructures readily available and accessible to all women? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of laws and policies • KIIs/FGDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women working in formal sectors • Civil society groups • Companies and HR officers, managers, recruiters

	<p>help, transportation) serve in access to decent work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are women able to make use of these social infrastructures? How do they perceive the quality of existing infrastructure and services? • To what extent do working women think the previously mentioned social infrastructures can help improve access to or quality of decent work? • What factors (e.g., institutional, resources, politics) hamper the provision of these services? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government agencies • Legislators • Local government units • Microfinance institutions
<p>Social norms outside the workplace</p>	<p>Probe into how gender norms affect access to decent work, how unpaid care work is perceived among households, and whether women are given the same decision-making ability as men.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What role in the household do women perceive their immediate society/community expect them to fulfill? • Are women given the same decision-making ability as men? • Are women given the same access to and control over economic resources and social services? • What attitudes or perceptions do women and their immediate communities have about women engaging in productive work and contributing to household income, as opposed to being engaged in unpaid household care work? • How do social gender norms affect women's labour supply decisions? • To what extent do social institutions (basic education, religious groups, ethnicity, family) enforce gender expectations in society? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KII/FGDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women working in formal sectors • Women in agriculture, and in informal sectors • Civil society groups, church groups • Gender specialists • Local government units

Social norms within the workplace	Investigate the extent of discrimination against women in the workplace, and whether women have increased participation at top management positions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What policies have companies implemented and what mechanisms (e.g. formal, informal, monitoring/reporting) have they established to institutionalize laws that ensure that women are treated equally in the workplace? • Do women receive the same opportunities, incentives, and rewards that men are given? • Are women able to actively participate in developing the workplace? • Are women given fair representation in decision-making structures of their workplace? • Do men and women have equal representation at middle and top management positions in companies? • To what extent do women experience inequality or harassment in the workplace? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of laws and policies • KIIs/FGDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women working in formal sectors • Women in agriculture, and in informal sectors • Civil society groups • Companies and HR officers, managers, recruiters • Gender specialists • Microfinance institutions
COVID-19 impact	Investigate how COVID-19 has impacted women's access to decent work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What roles in the household did women take up during the COVID-19 pandemic? • What effect did COVID-19 have on the labour supply decisions of women? How did it affect women's allocation of time between productive and household work? • How did COVID-19 affect women's employment status and access to decent work? • How did COVID-19 affect women's work arrangements? • Did women experience harassment or violence during the respective lockdowns? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIIs/FGDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women working in formal sectors • Women in agriculture, and in informal sectors • Civil society groups • Companies and HR officers, managers, recruiters • Local government units
Technology change impact	Explore how technological changes in industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did changes in industries'/companies' structure and technology affect women's employment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIIs/FGDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women working in formal sectors

	<p>and workplaces have affected women's access to decent work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are women able to adapt to technological changes in the workplace? (Are available technologies gender-sensitive?) ● What resources do women need to effectively work given the technological changes occurring in the workplace? ● What skills or training do women need to help adapt to the changing work environment? What kinds of training are available? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Civil society groups ● Companies and HR officers, managers, recruiters
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