

Family and Health Communication

In a time of rapid technological developments, changing social structures, and shifting health landscapes, the interplay between family and health communication has become a vital area of scholarly inquiry. This special issue of *Plaridel* delves into this particular in-between space, presenting a collection of articles illuminating how families navigate health-related issues vis-à-vis mediating information and adapting to contemporary challenges. From the early adoption of digital media by very young children to the transnational caregiving sustained through digital technologies, and from individual health information-seeking behaviors to collective online health advocacy, these studies offer insights into the evolving nature of family and health communication in the Philippine context and beyond.

The issue opens with Annalyn De Guzman Capulong and Jose Antonio R. Clemente's "Digital media practices among infants and toddlers based on Filipino mothers' self-reports," a timely and pertinent study that tackles the issue of early childhood screen time, a growing concern among parents, educators, and healthcare professionals globally. By surveying over a hundred Filipino mothers, the research provides empirical data on the touchscreen practices of infants and toddlers, revealing an average daily screen time of nearly two hours and a preference for video content taken to have educational and maternal benefits. The study delves into the factors influencing these practices, including parental motivations, mediation strategies, and perceived

benefits, providing the existing literature with a contextualized understanding of early childhood screen use in the Philippines.

The second article, Randy Jay C. Solis's "Intensive care: Mediatized parenting and the circulation of transnational family care between Hong Kong and the Philippines," shifts our gaze to the complex dynamics of transnational families and the critical role of communication in sustaining familial bonds across geographical divides. Focusing specifically on the Philippine context, where transnational migration for work is prevalent, this study investigates how digital and convergent technologies have transformed the circulation of global care. Offering a rich empirical account of how digital technologies facilitate and redefine familial caregiving in a globalized world, the findings reveal how mediatized parenting has become a more intensive and embodied mode of distant caring, transforming traditional modes of care circulation such as gifts, cross-border mobilities, and remittances.

The third contribution, Immanuel V. Perez's *Building familiar-looking bridges and reaching familiar-looking outcomes: Information behaviors of recovered mental health patients and their roles in sense-making their mental health*," offers a poignant exploration of mental health communication from the perspective of recovered Filipino mental health patients (RMHPs). The author uncovers practical and socio-psychological motivators that drive RMHPs to seek information, engage deeply with their concerns, and strategically manage their privacy boundaries. This article enriches the literature on health information seeking by providing a unique perspective from a vulnerable population within the Philippine context. It challenges conventional notions of "ideal" outcomes in health information seeking, suggesting that the goal of returning to normalcy might be more critical than an aspirational state of perfect health for individuals in recovery.

Following this, the fourth article, Yuyun Wahyu Izzati Surya's "Gender identity, everyday politics, and social media: Indonesian female millennials' social media activism," delves into the role of media literacy in orienting health behaviors, particularly during a global health crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. Through an online survey of 375 respondents, this study investigates the media literacy levels of the Kota Belud community in Malaysia and their influence on health practices during the pandemic. It validates the link between media literacy and health behavior, highlighting the conjunction between robust media

literacy interventions and effective health management and resilience in communities facing public health challenges.

Finally, the special issue concludes with Charles Erize P. Ladia’s “#MassTestingNowPH tweets as acts of citizenship: The rhetorical functions of tweets in pandemic-stricken Philippines.” Using rhetorical political analysis, this article offers a rhetorical analysis of the #MassTestingNowPH hashtag on Twitter during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines, examining how tweets served as acts of citizenship, asserted citizens’ rights and responsibilities, sought to exact government accountability, and generated collective grievances for marginalized groups and medical frontliners. It contributes to communication scholarship by illustrating the power of digital activism and online public spheres in enabling citizens to engage in political discourse and demand accountability during crises.

Collectively, the articles offer a diverse exploration of the connections between family and health communication in contemporary society. Grounded in diverse methodologies and theoretical frameworks, they advance our understanding of specific communication phenomena and contribute to a broader appreciation of the dynamic and evolving nature of family and health communication, on the personal and the communal levels, in the scales of the local and the global. Through them, we are challenged to understand and respond to the complex ways individuals, families, and communities navigate health in an ever-changing, interconnected world.



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