

Factors, Effects and Coping Strategies in Dealing with Pressure among Mothers

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Abstract

Recently, the world was shocked by the Covid-19 pandemic which resulted in the Movement Control Order (MCO) taking place. In this regard, the media reports that almost the entire population of the world faces various stresses, including mothers. Therefore, this study aims to explore the effects of stress, stress factors and response strategies in mothers. The study used a qualitative method in which group interview sessions were conducted to obtain information. A total of four respondents were selected through brief sampling. Next, thematic methods are carried out to obtain the themes of the studies. The respondents were women who were mothers living in the Klang Valley area. The results of this study show that mothers have gone through challenges in terms of mental, physical, emotional and social support.

Keywords: Factor, Effect, Coping Strategies, Pressure, Mother

Introduction

Recently, the media often reports on mental health issues. Mental health issues also have an association with physical stress. This is because when a person does not get enough rest, their physical health will be affected. This situation also causes emotional distress. Various studies have been carried out that examine mothers who are either working or not working in dealing with stress as a mother. According to a previous study, there is high anxiety and fatigue among mothers due to too much workload such as taking care of children, working, cooking, cleaning the house, sending children to school, managing the household and so on (Durak et al., 2023). In addition, women who work as housewives full-time experience higher distress than women who work (Amir & Mahmud, 2014).

Because of this, more educated women tend to choose to be housewives and focus on family over career (Amran & Saari, 2021). This is evidenced by a report issued by the Women's Development Department which shows that 87.4% of women were involved in careers in 2015 but that involvement decreased to 86.8% in 2017 and 85.9% in 2019 (Women, Family and Community Statistics, 2019). Furthermore, mothers tend to have a more alarming status of emotional distress when they have young children. This is due to the feeling of worry of

leaving the child in the care of another person. This causes working mothers to have to abandon their careers in order to raise children, take care of the household and so on. Therefore, these people need to be appreciated for having sacrificed their careers behind.

Stress factors in mothers should be given due attention. This is because the functioning of the family is also affected if a mother experiences emotional stress and fatigue in carrying out responsibilities. According to Mikolajczak (2018), maternal fatigue is a syndrome that can result in chronic pressure on mothers. Maternal fatigue explains where a mother experiences chronic stress and it can interfere with daily activities including emotional disturbances. In addition, it can be defined as extreme fatigue in performing the role of a mother so that she feels less happy when she sees her children and doubts her ability to be a good mother (Mikolajczak et al., 2019). According to previous studies, three dimensions refer to maternal fatigue, namely (i) fatigue in carrying out daily tasks as a mother, (ii) feeling distant and not interested in interacting with children and (iii) feeling useless as a mother (Mikolajczak et al., 2017). Based on these dimensions, it can be concluded that a mother will experience prolonged emotional stress if she does not pay full attention to the psychological health they experience.

Therefore, the situation of dependence and having too high expectations gives a risk to emotional pressure on parents (Amran & Saari, 2021). Referring to a study carried out titled dealing with parental burnout in the Covid-19 pandemic season to achieve an equal level of balance between the two factors which is the child's dependence on parents with resources is difficult (Amran & Saari, 2021). In addition, a study on balance by Tremolada (2018) states that the dependence of the two factors is formed in terms of history and the process in which it occurs. Highlight statements from past studies regarding the balance of dependency factors and resources that each parent goes through. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to i) identify the types of stress among mothers, ii) identify factors that deal with stress among mothers, and iii) study coping skills among mothers.

Methodology

Research methodology is a method, way or technique that is used to carry out research tasks that are studied on subjects and topics of discussion. This study uses a qualitative method where group interview sessions are conducted to obtain information through the interview process. According to Cresswell qualitative is to identify sites or individuals, gain access and build purposeful sampling records, collect data, record information, solve field issues and store data (Cresswell, 1998). This study also recorded session conversations using verbatim.

This study was conducted in eight sessions to answer the research questions. Four sessions were conducted virtually (online) and another four sessions were conducted physically (face-to-face). Each session took one hour to two hours. This study also took two months to complete all eight sessions including the termination session. There are three types of data collection from this study, including (1) observation results which it was a detailed description of situations, events, interactions and behaviors observed in the field. (2) The result of the interview process which it was a direct quote from people's statements about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs and thoughts in an in-depth interview and (3) written material which means recordings throughout the session.

The target population was those who were working or non-working mothers. Living in an urban area and able to attend all sessions until completion. Sampling in this study uses convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is also known as random sampling or convenience sampling. The researcher chooses any subject found and the closest to participate in the group counseling session. A total of four respondents participated in this session and all of them have small children.

Research Findings

Respondent Demographic Information

A total of four respondents were selected by simple sampling in this study. They consisted of women who were mothers living in the Klang Valley area. Attending group counseling sessions for eight sessions including session termination.

Table 1

Demographic information

Respondent	Occupation	Age	Number of Children
Mother A	Occupational Therapist	30 tahun	1
Mother B	Special Need Teacher	30 tahun	2
Mother C	Freelance	31 tahun	2
Mother D	Stay at Home mother	35 tahun	4

Theme 1: Effect of Pressure

Referring to all the study participants involved, the researcher stated that they experienced negative emotional stress. There are three types of stress identified in this study, namely emotional stress, physical stress and mental stress. The findings of the study are as in Table 2.

Table 2

The Subthemes on the Effect of Pressure

Subtheme	Respondent	Statement
1. Emotion	Mother B	<i>"I got married at the age of 25, but at that time I was in the first year of my degree. My husband at that time already had a stable job, so we continued with the plan to married. After that, I did not have plans for having a child, after 3 months of marriage I was pregnant. I am in dilemma and it was difficult for me to accept because I was not ready to become a mother"</i>
	Mother D	

		<i>"I got married at the age of 25, 4 years waiting for the pregnant, then 4th anniversary I'm pregnant but after 6 months giving birth the child pass-away, after that I became pregnant every year, the youngest child was 2 years old"</i>
2. Physical	Mother C	<i>"I was married for 25 years, I give birth when I was 26 years old and my second child when I was 29 years old, I feel alone taking care of children"</i>
	Mother B	<i>"I do everything alone, I take the children here and there, take care of them. Sometimes I feel unappreciated, and no one wants to know about me"</i>
	Mother D	<i>"I feel like I did it all alone"</i> <i>"I feel guilty for asking my husband to take care of the children because my husband works and then comes back and must be tired to take care of them. But that's it..hmmm I've had microsleep, I almost passed out when I got back to work, then my husband told me to take unpaid leave but I stayed at home to take care of the kids too. Haha"</i>
3. Mental	Mother A	<i>"I got married at the age of 27, and I weighed myself at the age of 28. 2 years I'm still finding myself when it comes to being a mother. I do not accept the fact, but I can feel the change in my life"</i>

The findings of the study found that respondents experienced negative emotional, physical and mental stress because of lack of support, especially support from their husbands. In addition, all respondents experienced stress after giving birth. Lack of support from close people can affect the mother's mental health.

The respondent stated that the feeling of shame that was present in him often affected his mental health and caused the respondent to start isolating himself from meeting people. In addition, the respondents were afraid to face the family's response and to tell them the truth. A's mother recounted the feelings of shame and depression she experienced at the beginning of pregnancy. The pressure he experienced was so heavy to bear that he cried a lot

and once thought of committing suicide, "stress, and shame are all there. It's crying. That's what made me want to jump from home." The same goes for other respondents.

Thus, a woman will be emotionally affected after giving birth. Unstable hormones make mothers think more negatively. This needs to be paid attention to by family members so as not to cause dangerous harm. Mother is the backbone of the family. The family will be healthy if the mother who takes care of the housewife is mentally and physically healthy. The results of the study found that the type of stress experienced by mothers is a lack of family support, lack of self-confidence, not asking for help, taking care of children and being home alone and lack of positive association.

Theme 2: Factors Dealing with Stress among Mothers

There are three factors obtained from the findings of the study, namely the readiness factor to become a mother (1). Before becoming a mother, mothers-to-be need to prepare first such as increasing reading about children's development (child milestones), how to take care of children and so on. Increased reading can help mothers prepare after giving birth and will reduce the stress that occurs. This is because, by reading, mothers can be emotionally, physically and mentally prepared to face the journey as a mother. Next, the planning factor Family (2). In this era of a fully developed world, mothers need to be open-minded in planning a family. The example identifies some planning aids such as implants, depots, or condoms.

The issue of family planning is often disputed because it hinders the development of the family according to Islam. However, emotional, physical and mental health needs to be prioritized. The point is that mothers need to accept any advice and ideology from medical officers to help mothers deal with prolonged stress. Then, the "baby blue" factor (3). According to Erin Heger (2023), this baby blue condition occurs only after a mother goes through the phase of childbirth. This situation occurs when a mother feels sad, tired and easily sensitive which lasts every day (Erin Heger, 2023)

Based on the discussion made to all respondents of the study experiencing the "baby blue" condition and 2 out of 4 respondents experiencing Postnatal Depression (PND) which has been diagnosed by a medical doctor. The findings refer to Table 3.

Table 3
The Subthemes on Factors Dealing with Stress among Mothers

Subtheme	Respondent	Statement
1. Factors of preparation for become a mother	Mother A	<i>"I searched a lot for information such as asking people, asking parents and reading about how to get children to sleep easily. My son has had trouble sleeping since abstinence."</i>
	Mother C	<i>"I am now, involved in the mothers' association. Since I socialize with people, I get a lot of knowledge about childcare and at the same</i>

		<i>time I get time to relax from managing work at home"</i>
2. Factor family planning	Mother A Mother D	<i>"The use of the family planning depot helped me, it's not that I don't want to get pregnant again. But I don't feel mentally ready." "Our children are small and there are 4 of us. So it is advised by Dr to plan. Now make the Implanon planner. Now I feel like I can pay attention to the children growing up" "I'm a housewife, every time I meet my relatives, they must say that I stay at home and only take care of my children because I have many children"</i>
3. Factor baby blue	Mother B	<i>"I am now pregnant with my third child. Since I had previous experience, I was ready to go through "baby blue" because the chronological "baby blue" I experienced before was more challenging. After all, the first and second children were only a year apart. Therefore, when the difference is 3 years and I am about to go through the phase of waking up at night, changing diapers and crying, I need to be mentally ready."</i>

The findings of the study found that mothers who experience this pressure do not find the right support channel. Therefore, they will feel inferior and lack self-confidence in making their life decisions. Family members should always be aware of any behavior that shows "red flags" such as lack of socialization, isolation, depression and lack of appetite. Support and words of encouragement should be given to mothers who have given birth to children because they are willing to sacrifice themselves to bring happiness to the family.

Theme 3: Action Strategies in Dealing with Stress among Mothers

Stress is always present in the life of all individuals. However, each individual has a different way of coping with stress. In this study, some coping strategies for dealing with stress among mothers have been discussed. According to Stern & Zevon in a previous study stated that a family that has a good stress management method can manage life better. (Stern & Zevon, 1990). Therefore, coping strategies that mothers often do are to be alone, eat, socialize, and make reflections such as praying. Research findings are in Table 4.

Table 4

The Subthemes on Action Strategies in Dealing with Stress among Mothers

Subtheme	Respondent	Dialog
1. Isolation	Mother A	<i>"The way I release stress is I will isolate myself for 1 hour after coming home from work. It's time to listen to loud music while eating or think back on what happened today. That way you can reduce the stress and focus on your family."</i>
2. Binge Eating	Mother B	<i>"I will eat a lot when I'm stressed. I think that was a good coping for me"</i>
3. Socialize	Mother C	<i>"I join a lot of mom's clubs and meet people when I am stressed"</i>
4. Spiritual	Mother D	<i>"When I stress I will be doing self-talk and pray to God. I believe what happens in my life now may have a reason"</i>

This can be concluded that sometimes a mother needs to find or steal time to be alone so as not to feel too burdened in living life as a mother. In addition, mothers can try "self-talk" therapy to reduce anxiety and increase self-efficacy. According to a previous study which is Back Massage and Self-Talk Therapy on Anxiety and Breastfeeding Self-Efficacy in Postpartum Mother: Analytic Descriptive states that the postpartum period is not only about physical problems but also about psychological problems and a mother needs to take time to recover from psychological issues faced (Latipah et al., 2020)

Hormonal changes are usually a factor in weight gain. However, some individuals have different ways of dealing with stress. According to Mother B, she will eat a lot when she is stressed. This, therefore, can affect health when there is no balanced diet in eating. Everyone has a different personality. Therefore, for those who have an "extrovert" personality, they will prefer to socialize and be friendly with people to fill their sadness. This can be seen when C's mother often says "I like to meet people" and every movement dynamic of C's mother's group will volunteer to have a discussion. In addition, C's mother often said "I'm depressed, I have to talk or meet people just to catch up once". Therefore, just talking or socializing can reduce the stress experienced by a mother. Especially mothers who do not work. Every religion has its own beliefs. When the spiritual element is combined with the psychosocial, it is easier for a person to let go of feelings.

Discussion

The results of this research paper show that each of those who become mothers or are called mothers go through mental, physical, physical and social challenges. This was formulated from research findings by 4 mothers from group counseling sessions. In addition, emotional

challenges occur when there is a lack of support from close people such as husbands, parents, siblings and friends. Social imprisonment after having a family is the cause of mothers having a lack of self-confidence and always blaming themselves when there is any misfortune such as a child having a fever, a child falling and a child not achieving good growth development.

The implications of social distancing can reduce general knowledge and make us less sensitive to environmental changes. Therefore, mothers need to be aware of every change that occurs in life. In this way, mothers can identify the problems that occur so as not to point fingers at others. Mother is the backbone of the family. If mentally and physically damaged, a family will be paralyzed. Referring to the findings of the study from the respondents involved are the stress when the child is sick, the stress when no one comes home from work to help manage the house, the stress when the child does not want to relax, the stress when having to buy the child's necessities before the salary, the stress of the fast behavior of the child who does not want to sleep and the stress when seeing no functionality of the "husband" in helping to take care of the children.

Conclusion

This study of this to be continued due to the lack of previous studies that focus on the stress experienced by mothers. In addition, there are too many social stigmas that label a mother as a strong person, but they are a population that needs "psychological first Aide" to reduce the increase in mental health statistics. Next, working mothers tend to suffer mental health problems because some companies do not practice "family-friendly". It refers to when the child is unwell, no one can take care of the child at home or things happen that force the mother to take leave. A company only sees a woman as an employee and not as a working mother. The implication is that for many working women, the quality of productivity will begin to be affected as well as affect the standard of living. Finally, this study can also be developed with a quantitative study.

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