

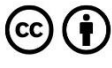


Challenges in Tough Times: Portrait of Stress on Housewives and Mother with Dual Role

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| <p>Submitted: 2022-10-06</p> <p>Revised: 2022-11-21</p> <p>Accepted: 2022-11-23</p> <p>Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, Stress, Housewives, Dual Role</p> <p>Copyright holder: © Novita, M. P., & Huwae, A. (2023)</p> <p>This article is under: </p> <p>How to cite: Novita, M. P., & Huwae, A. (2023). Challenges In Tough Times: Portrait of Stress on Housewives and Mother with Dual Role. <i>Bulletin of Counseling and Psychotherapy</i>, 5(1). https://doi.org/10.51214/bocp.v5i1.391</p> <p>Published by: Kuras Institute</p> <p>E-ISSN: 2656-1050</p> | <p>ABSTRACT: The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in mothers taking on additional responsibilities for their children's at-home learning, leading to increased stress levels. This study aimed to determine the differences in maternal stress levels between housewives and mothers with multiple roles during the pandemic. A comparative quantitative method was used with 200 participants (100 housewives and 100 mothers with multiple roles), who were selected through snowball sampling and assessed using the Perceived Stress Scale. The results showed no significant difference in stress levels between the two groups. This suggests that the stress experienced is a common concern for both housewives and mothers with multiple roles, and poses a risk to their mental health during the pandemic. This study highlights the need for support and resources to help mothers manage stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recommendations for future research could include exploring specific stressors experienced by each group and developing targeted interventions to support maternal mental health. Additionally, it may be useful to evaluate the long-term impacts of the pandemic on maternal stress levels and the potential for resilience and recovery.</p> |
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INTRODUCTION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, parents are faced with multiple roles and responsibilities, including serving as mentors, educators, custodians, and child care providers within the home (Kurniati et al., 2020). They are also tasked with ensuring that their children follow health protocols in their daily lives (Kurniati et al., 2020). The extended time spent at home due to the pandemic has intensified the dual role of women, as revealed by McLaren et al. (2020). It has been found that fathers experience less stress compared to mothers during this time period (Yamada et al., 2012). Anggita (2021) emphasized the important role of mothers in maintaining the mental health of their children during the pandemic, as this helps to minimize any potential problems for the children. However, such demands can cause significant stress for mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic (Windayani & Sakti, 2020).

During this period, mothers have been burdened with additional responsibilities in the household domain (United Nation Children's Fund, 2021). This is particularly due to their children studying from home, which requires mothers to manage their time between work, household chores, and overseeing their children's education (Putri et al., 2021). Mothers have taken on the role of primary caregiver and support system for their children's online learning (Malkawi et al., 2021; United Nation Children's Fund, 2021). A survey conducted by CNN Indonesia (2020) found that 56% of mothers reported experiencing stress during the pandemic, caused by a multitude of pressures such as health concerns, financial instability, and the added burden of their children's education. A study

by Meraya et al. (2021) found that 94.9% of pregnant women and mothers felt psychological distress during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has also resulted in a 27% increase in domestic violence and has added an average of 5 additional hours per day to the already demanding workload of mothers Malkawi et al. (2021). This lack of respite has further exacerbated the stress experienced by mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic (McLaren et al., 2020).

The concept of stress can be approached from three perspectives: epidemiological, psychological, and biological. The epidemiological approach views stress as the negative impact of life events on an individual, while the psychological approach considers stress as an experience that arises when an individual perceives a situation as threatening or dangerous, but lacks adequate coping resources (Cohen et al., 2016). The biological approach suggests that stress is associated with physiological reactions that are triggered by psychological and social stressors, which could contribute to the development of diseases (Cohen et al., 2016).

According to these approaches, highly stressful events have the potential to trigger affective states and elicit behavioral and biological responses that can have downstream implications for health (Cohen et al., 2016). This is particularly relevant to women, including housewives and mothers with multiple roles, as they are more susceptible to stress than men during the COVID-19 pandemic, as demonstrated by the research of Kowal et al. (2020). However, there is still a lack of understanding regarding the dynamics of stress experienced by mothers with multiple roles and housewives during the COVID-19 pandemic (McLaren et al., 2020).

Studies have shown that the level of stress experienced by mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic has increased compared to pre-pandemic levels (Tchimtchoua Tamo, 2020). Kermane (2016) posits that working women experience higher levels of stress than homemakers due to the greater demands and pressures they face. However, Utami & Puspitadewi (2014) reported a different finding, suggesting that homemakers experience higher levels of stress than working mothers. On the other hand, the research conducted by Sari et al. (2015) concluded that the employment status of the mother (whether working or not) does not have a significant impact on maternal stress levels.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an increase in stress levels for individuals who work, including women in various sectors. According to Sandoval-Reyes, Idrovo-Carlier, & Duque-Oliva (2021), workers experienced decreased work-life balance and job satisfaction along with increased stress levels. Research has shown that working mothers experienced increased stress levels during the pandemic when compared to before the pandemic due to additional household responsibilities, financial problems, and decreased work productivity (Bittar et al., 2022). However, some studies have shown that housewives may experience even higher levels of stress when compared to working mothers (Harilal, 2017). Housewives often have low self-esteem, which can result in depression, and the COVID-19 pandemic has added to these stressors through social isolation and limited mobility (Ahmad, 2018; Bhattacharjee & Ghosh, 2022).

Carrying out multiple roles in challenging circumstances, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, can be difficult for housewives and mothers. To mitigate the stress and maintain family harmony and well-being, it is necessary to have the appropriate personal resources. In light of the existing stress dynamics, this study aims to determine the differences in stress levels between housewives and mothers with multiple roles during the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposed hypothesis is that there will be differences in stress levels between housewives and mothers who hold dual roles during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rational of current study

Previous studies have revealed differing results with regards to the level of stress experienced by housewives and mothers with multiple roles. While some studies found that housewives

experienced less stress than mothers who held both the role of housewife and worked outside the home (Apreviadizy & Puspitacandri, 2014; Nurhayati, 2021), others reported that the stress level of housewives was higher than that of working mothers (Sultanpur, 2019). These conflicting findings highlight the need for further investigation to determine the true difference in stress levels between housewives and mothers with multiple roles.

Study Aims and Hypotheses

The aim of this study is to examine the disparities in stress levels experienced by housewives and mothers who undertake multiple roles during the COVID-19 pandemic. The hypothesis of the study proposes that there is a significant difference in stress levels between housewives and mothers with dual roles during the pandemic, with the latter group expected to exhibit higher stress levels.

METHODS

Participants and procedure

The study involved 200 mothers (100 housewives and 100 mothers with multiple roles) who had children under the age of ten (10) in Indonesia. The samples were determined using an incidental sampling technique. Before the data collection, participants were asked to fill out an informed consent form as a part of the research procedure.

Measures

The data were collected using a stress scale as the method, adapted from the perceived stress scale (PSS10) by Cohen et al. (1988). PSS10 is recommended for measuring stress received in practice and research settings (Lee, 2012). PSS10 contains 10 questions with five choices in the answers. The choices vary from Never (0) to Very Often (4). An example of an item on the stress scale is “Over the past month, how often have you felt unable to complete things that needed to be done?”.

Data Analysis

This research is quantitative type research with a comparative design and uses an independent sample t-test to see differences in stress levels between housewives and mothers with multiple roles during the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, the data analysis was carried out to perform validity and reliability using Cronbach's alpha and discrimination selection Item test. After that, a descriptive test was used to see the demographics of the research participants (see table 1). The data analysis technique used in this study is a t-test comparison test. All of the research data were tested using the IBM SPSS series 25.0 for windows computer program.

Table 1. Participant Demography

| Participant Characteristic | Valid (N) | % |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------|
| <i>Job Status</i> | | |
| Housewives | 100 | 50% |
| Multi-roles Mother | 100 | 50% |
| Total | 200 | 100% |
| <i>Age</i> | | |
| 21-25 years old | 15 | 7,5% |
| 26-30 years old | 47 | 23,5% |
| 31-35 years old | 71 | 35,5% |
| 36-40 years old | 30 | 15% |
| 41-45 years old | 29 | 14,5% |
| 46-50 years old | 8 | 4% |
| Total | 200 | 100% |

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|---|-----|-------|
| <i>Origin</i> | | |
| Central Java | 27 | 13,5% |
| East Java | 5 | 2,5% |
| West Java | 5 | 2,5% |
| Yogyakarta | 13 | 6,5% |
| Jakarta | 20 | 10% |
| North Sumatera | 4 | 2% |
| West Sumatera | 2 | 1% |
| South Sumatera | 2 | 1% |
| Bangka Belitung | 2 | 1% |
| Lampung | 4 | 2% |
| West Kalimantan | 8 | 4% |
| North Kalimantan | 4 | 2% |
| South Kalimantan | 5 | 2,5% |
| Central Kalimantan | 10 | 5% |
| East Kalimantan | 6 | 3% |
| South Sulawesi | 14 | 7% |
| Central Sulawesi | 10 | 5% |
| North Sulawesi | 18 | 9% |
| Southeast Sulawesi | 9 | 4,5% |
| Bali | 5 | 2,5% |
| East Nusa Tenggara | 11 | 5,5% |
| West Nusa Tenggara | 2 | 1% |
| Maluku | 6 | 3% |
| Papua | 8 | 4% |
| Total | 200 | 100% |
| <i>Number of Children</i> | | |
| 1 person | 61 | 30,5% |
| 2 persons | 76 | 38% |
| 3 persons | 44 | 22% |
| >3 persons | 19 | 9,5% |
| Total | 200 | 100% |
| <i>The age Children</i> | | |
| 3 years old | 30 | 15% |
| 4 years old | 24 | 12% |
| 5 years old | 30 | 15% |
| 6 years old | 40 | 20% |
| 7 years old | 26 | 13% |
| 8 years old | 24 | 12% |
| 9 years old | 12 | 6% |
| 10 years old | 14 | 7% |
| Total | 200 | 100% |
| <i>Children Education Status</i> | | |
| Toddler | 42 | 20,5% |
| Kindergarten | 63 | 32% |
| Elementary school | 95 | 47,5% |
| Total | 200 | 100% |
| <i>Status of Residence</i> | | |
| Living with husband | 129 | 64,5% |
| Living with mother-in-law | 22 | 11% |
| Living alone with children (Husband work out of town) | 49 | 24,5% |
| Total | 200 | 100% |

Table 2. Independent Sample Test

| Stress | Mean | SD | F | % | t | Levene | p |
|--------------------|-------|-------|----|-----|------|--------|------|
| Housewives | 19,64 | 4,988 | 55 | 55% | .243 | .909 | .809 |
| Multi-roles Mother | 19,47 | 4,925 | 54 | 54% | | | |

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of the item selection and reliability tests revealed that the item selection values ranged from .523 to .775, with a Cronbach Alpha value of .862. The demographic data of the 200 participants is presented in Table 1. 35.5% (71) of the participants were mothers between the ages of 31-35 years. The majority of participants came from Central Java, with 27 participants, while 38% (76) had 2 children, and the remaining 124 participants had either 1 child or more than 2 children. 95 of the 200 participants' children were attending elementary school (47.5%). 129 participants lived only with their husbands, while the others lived with their mother-in-law or solely with their children as their husbands worked out of town.

The results of the t-test are presented in Table 2. The Levene's test for equality of variances yielded a result of .909 ($p > .05$), indicating that the variance in stress levels between housewives and mothers with multiple roles is homogeneous. The significance value of .583 ($p > .05$) demonstrates that there is no significant difference in stress levels between the two groups. Additionally, a significance value of .809 ($p > .05$), a t-score of .243, and a mean difference of only .170 all suggest that there is no difference in stress levels between housewives and mothers who play multiple roles. Although the average stress level of housewives is slightly higher than that of mothers with multiple roles (as indicated in Table 2), there is no statistical difference between the stress levels of housewives and multi-role mothers.

The results of the empirical test indicate that the stress levels of both housewives and mothers who play multiple roles are in the high category. As seen in Table 4, the stress scale of housewives has an average value of 19.64, with a standard deviation of 4.988, and indicates a high level of stress among 55% of the participants (55 individuals). Meanwhile, the stress scale of mothers who play multiple roles has an average value of 19.47, with a standard deviation of 4.925, and reflects a high level of stress among 54% of the participants (54 individuals).

Discussion

The results of this study are in line with previous research by Sari et al. (2015), which mentioned that stress on mothers can occur anytime and anywhere, and can be experienced by housewives and working mothers. Moreover, it is in line with another study conducted by Mahakud et al. (2013), which explained that an individual can experience stress due to a continuous stressor from time to time and even years, and eventually the individual will feel out of energy and experience fatigue.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, parents, in this case, felt the same stressors experienced by others. However, they also experienced additional stress due to changes with children and spouses, parents' physical health, academic problems, and children's physical health, causing most parents to suffer high levels of anxiety, symptoms of depression, and lack of sleep (Brown et al., 2020). Many reported having lower and higher anxiety, which family structure, and the number of children with psychological, physical, or genetic diseases contribute to parental stress, including mothers (Cusinato et al., 2020).

The results of the study illustrate that the stress experienced by mothers is included in the high category. This indicates that every intrinsic stimulus that evokes an individual's biological

response triggers the increase in stress level experienced by housewives and mothers who play multiple roles. Individuals who have high levels of stress will be at risk of mental pathology and death (Yaribeygi et al., 2017). The pandemic has made the living environment full of pressures, resulting in a higher impact on mothers experiencing many disturbances. More to the point, stress can be a trigger or aggravating factor for many diseases and pathological conditions (Yaribeygi et al., 2017).

Every mother faces hard and difficult times because they have to ensure the health of all family members and control all child's activities (Perry et al., 2022). It is found that mothers' age, had an influence only on parenting stress and decreased as the age increased (Vargas Rubilar et al., 2022). Additionally, working hours and the number of children contributed to the perceived stress level for mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic in which mothers with three or more children who work more than 10 hours a day have higher perceived stress (Vargas Rubilar et al., 2022). Parents, one of whom is a mother, play a role in providing supervision to the pattern of clean and healthy living behavior (PHBS) to avoid the COVID-19 virus (Kurniati, Alfaeni, & Andriani, 2021). This big responsibility can be a trigger for mothers to experience an unusual increase of stress level. This is in line with what was stated by Babore et al. (2021), that individuals' maternal stress and depression, and parenting stress significantly increased during the pandemic and adversely affected their mental health.

The problem of stress should not be taken lightly as it is critical if it is not addressed immediately. The results of the study provide a portrait of how everyone in the family should be able to build positive strengths and support for each other, and thus able to help mothers reduce and minimize the stress they experience. Adams et al. (2021), offer an effective step for managing the difficulties and adverse effects of stress. It is to provide mental health support in a practical and simple manner for every family member. In addition, the unconditional support services provided within the family will help family members to be secure in facing difficult times such as in the COVID-19 pandemic period of time (Rizzo et al., 2021).

Implications

This research provides a new perspective on the stress felt by housewives and mothers with multiple roles. Previous studies have shown that stress on mothers plays a higher role compared to housewives, but this study revealed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was no difference in stress. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has given many new tasks to mothers, who work in offices and those who work as housewives. Both roles are experiencing isolation while completing other tasks online and offline such as working from home, or assisting children's learning and school activities. Changes in the transition from offline to online, provide new challenges for mothers to adapt to the new situations.

This research also provides a new view, that both housewives and mothers with dual-roles experience stress that is not much different. Thus, we should not underestimate the work of a housewife, because in fact it is the same as giving the same stress as a mother who has multiple roles. This research also encourages husbands to not underestimate housewives' roles and it is hoped that they can always appreciate and support their partners.

Limitations and future research direction

This study focuses on the stress of housewives and multi-role mothers. It would be interesting to focus on other variables such as anxiety or other appropriate variables. In addition, representatives of regional subjects in Indonesia are still few, so future research may increase the number of subjects in order to better describe the actual portrait in Indonesia. Furthermore, later research should also involve fathers to see their opinions and perceptions.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that there is no difference in the level of stress experienced by housewives and mothers who play multiple roles. The stress level of housewives and mothers with multiple roles is included in the high category. These results indicate that a high level of stress tends to cause risks to an individual's mental health and can even have a worse effect, namely death. For this reason, it is necessary to have social empathy in the family. This can be in form of positive support and attention among the family members so that it becomes a source of positive strength for mothers to face challenges and overcome risks of stress during the difficult times due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

MN and AH made equal contributions to the research and composition of this article. Both parties concur with the final version of the publication.

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