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## Working Mother's Experience with School-Age Children during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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### Abstract

Work for women is part of self-actualization and fulfillment of family needs. During the covid-19 pandemic, the duties and responsibilities of working mothers have increased with the implementation of the school-from-home policy. Mothers also play a role as teachers and assist in the child's learning process at home. The purpose of this study was to get an overview of the experiences of working mothers who have school-age children during the covid-19 pandemic regarding the conditions experienced, the problems and challenges, and the strategies carried out in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. The study was a qualitative investigation using semi-structured interviews with three Depok, Lampung, and Bangka Belitung participants. The interview process was carried out using the Zoom and Google-Meet online applications. The results showed that all participants acknowledged that there had been changes in work activities and daily routines during the covid-19 pandemic, especially being a teacher for children at home. In the early covid-19 pandemic, working mothers provide their wisdom that there is more time with children and family. Although in general, they experience stress due to the demands of work, household, and assisting children to school from home.

Keywords: pandemic covid-19, school-age children, working mother

### Abstrak

Pekerjaan bagi perempuan merupakan bagian dari aktualisasi diri dan upaya pemenuhan kebutuhan keluarga. Di masa pandemi covid-19 tugas dan tanggung jawab yang dilakukan oleh ibu bekerja bertambah dengan diberlakukannya kebijakan sekolah dari rumah. Seringkali ibu juga menjalankan peran sebagai guru bagi anak yang sekolah dan memerikan pendampingan pada proses belajar anak di rumah. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mendapatkan gambaran pengalaman ibu bekerja yang memiliki anak usia sekolah di masa pandemi covid-19 mengenai kondisi yang dialami, permasalahan dan tantangan yang dihadapi, serta strategi yang dilakukan dalam menjalankan tugas dan tanggung jawab yang dimiliki. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif menggunakan metode wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan tiga ibu di tiga wilayah Indonesia. Proses wawancara dilakukan menggunakan aplikasi daring *zoom* dan *google meet*. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa semua partisipan mengakui terjadi perubahan dalam aktivitas pekerjaan dan rutinitas sehari-hari selama masa pandemi covid-19 terutama menjadi guru bagi anak di rumah. Bagi ibu bekerja, di masa awal pandemi covid-19 memberikan hikmah tersendiri dimana waktu bersama anak dan keluarga menjadi lebih banyak. Meskipun secara umum mengalami stres akibat tuntutan pekerjaan, rumah tangga, dan pendampingan anak sekolah dari rumah.

Kata kunci: anak usia sekolah, ibu bekerja, pandemi covid-19

## Introduction

Currently, the world is being hit by an outbreak of pneumonia coronavirus disease 2019 or Covid-19, first discovered in Wuhan, China, in 2019 and then spread to almost all countries in the world, including Indonesia. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Covid-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (Kemenkes, 2020). In Indonesia, the first confirmed case of Covid-19 was reported on March 2, 2020, and cases are still being found today. Finally, this global pandemic caused various impacts on people's lives in health, economy, social, education, and the order of life in the family (Rolland, 2020).

The life that becomes uncertain raises concerns from every individual in carrying out their activities which are overshadowed by thoughts of whether or not they will be infected with Covid-19 (Rolland, 2020). In the end, Covid-19 Pandemic affects individual physical health and the mental health of individuals (Holmes et al., 2020). The effort by government for anticipate the spread of the Covid-19 virus, a school from home (SFH) was implemented, as well as a work from home (WFH) policy which is also one of the steps in breaking the chain of Covid-19 transmission (Chairani, 2020).

The family as the smallest unit in society cannot be separated from the various impacts of the pandemic. According to Brock and Laifer (2020), the Covid-19 pandemic has various risks that can be detrimental to family functioning, such as couple conflict, child neglect, and decreased responsiveness during parenting. Various changes in the order of life require families to adapt to these changes, one of which is carrying out their daily activities (Sunarti, 2021). Changes in time duration with family after physical distancing become longer, and it can even be all day (Permatasari, Inten, Wiliani, & Widiyanto, 2021). For example, in education, the pandemic has changed the school learning system into a distance learning system through online media that demands creativity and parental assistance in guiding children to learn (Permatasari, Inten, Wiliani, & Widiyanto, 2021). In addition, parents are also forced to re-read school lessons, understand them, and then teach them to their children (Sunarti, 2021).

Changes in the order of life during the Covid-19 pandemic require mothers who work and have school-age children to adapt to distance learning methods and work from home. Then how is the condition of working mothers who have school-age children. Hapsari (2020) said that instead of feeling happy with working from home, workers who work from home complain, especially married workers. This is because it is difficult to divide time between office work and homework, so homework is often neglected due to unfinished office work (Hapsari, 2020). The same thing was said by Mungkasa (2020) that workers who work from home have difficulty distinguishing between work time and personal affairs because there are no clear boundaries. The difficulty of dividing time between office work and household work, including child care, especially for school-age children, encourages working mothers to reduce the allocation of working hours (Zamarro & Prados, 2021).

The experience of working mothers in dividing their roles between the family is forced to be able to provide an equal portion and, at the same time, try to reconcile the role of parents and the demands of work (Schieman, Badawy, Milkie, & Bierman, 2021). The various obstacles experienced by parents in accompanying online school children, including not having enough time to accompany children because they had to work, lack of understanding of the material by parents, parent's difficulties in fostering children's interest in learning, parents being impatient in accompanying the children while studying

at home, parent's difficulties in operating gadgets, and obstacles related to internet service coverage (Wardani & Ayriza, 2021). Working mothers' inability to divide their time and carry out a balanced role between work and parenting will lead to work-family conflicts (Nikmah, Indrianti, & Pribadi, 2020). Research results from Lumbangaol and Ratnaningsih (2018) stated a significant negative relationship between work-family conflict and psychological well-being, which means the higher the work-family conflict experienced by a person, the lower the psychological well-being felt by the person and vice versa. Disruption of work in domestic life is a consequence parents face where the house can be a means of education for children or even ignore the needs of children who support their development (Schieman, Badawy, Milkie, & Bierman, 2021).

Based on the background described in the previous paragraph, it is known that working mothers have various challenges in carrying out many roles they have both as mothers and as wives. However, there is still no explanation on how the strategies used by working mothers with school-age children in facing various challenges of work and domestic responsibility. Therefore, this study has the following objectives: (1) to explain the condition of working mothers with school-age children during the Covid-19 pandemic, (2) to describe the problems faced by working mothers during the pandemic in assisting children in studying, (3) to provide an overview of the strategies undertaken by mothers who have school-age children in carrying out work and household tasks, including assisting children in studying.

## Methods

### Participants

Participants in this study were working mothers with school-age children (7-12 years) and live in West Java, Lampung, and Bangka Belitung. Sampling was conducted in March 2021 through in-depth interviews using the Zoom Meeting and Google Meet applications. Participants gave their consent before beginning the in-depth interview in approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The number of participants was three working mothers with the age of 31 years, 32 years, and 35 years. Each participant work as Civil Servant (PNS), private employee, and honorary employee. The highest level of education is Masters, and the income ranges from IDR 2.900.000 to IDR 8.000.000 per month.

### Measurement

This study uses a qualitative method, and according to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) mentioned that qualitative research is research conducted to obtain a holistic, systemic, and integrated picture of the daily life of individuals, groups, communities, and organizations where the researcher himself is the research instrument. This study's type of qualitative research is phenomenology, where the researcher tries to capture data about the subject's perception through a deep understanding process.

Sampling in this study has been done purposively to get participants with the right criteria. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews using an interview guide to explore the important points you want to know. The interviews started with collecting personal information from the participant. The next questions are related to the research theme: work experience during the pandemic, experience in assisting children to school at home, including the challenges faced, and experiences in determining strategies during faced assisting children to school at home.

After the interview has conducted, the next step was to compile an interview transcript and check the transcript based on the recording in the zoom meeting. After checking the validity of the interview transcripts, the next step is to create a coding table for the interview results and map them according to the specified theme. Based on the theme of the coding results that have been compiled, the next step is to compile tables of axial coding and selective coding. The final stage is to conclude from the results of the data processing.

### **Analysis**

Data processing is carried out through several stages: (1) assigning codes or themes to field notes interview transcripts, (2) sorting and sorting material into codes, (3) identifying phrases, relationships between variables, patterns, themes, categories, differences available from the results of notes or interviews, (4) establish patterns and gradually describe statements, propositions and generalizations that include consistency, (5) compare generalizations of statements with a theoretical concept (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Furthermore, Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) mentioned three activities in the analysis process: (1) data condensation, which is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming data, (2) data presentation, using matrix, charts, graphs, and/or networks designed to collect organized information, and (3) draw conclusions or verification.

### **Findings**

The findings of this study are divided into three discussion themes related to the experience of mothers working with school-age children during the Covid-19 pandemic. The three themes are the condition of working mothers, working mothers' problems, and strategies of working mothers.

#### **Working Mother's Condition**

The decision to keep working for mothers who have school-age children is caused by several things, such as personal motivation and economic factors. Working mothers who have school-age children during the Covid-19 pandemic are described in various conditions based on their work background, implementation of duties and responsibilities, physical conditions, and mental conditions.

#### **Working Background**

Working for women means actualization and development of self-potential. Individual motivation to have better knowledge is why a mother decides to enter the formal world of work.

*I decided to work because of my husband, who is also working in this field, and I felt like we didn't understand a lot of things when we were talking. At that time, I continued my study and met a lot of civil servants there. To be honest, it is enough to change my views about civil servants, and finally, I think I was interested in working as a civil servant (HN).*

In addition to self-motivation, economic needs are also a reason for mothers to decide to keep working. Various household needs should be paid, such as school fees, daily needs, and various installments.

*The reason I work is because of economic needs. To help fulfill my household needs. Especially since i gave birth, daily needs are also increasing. My first child's school needs and the needs of milk, diapers, etc. of my second child, who is only three years old. We also need to pay for house installments, electricity, and water (SR).*

The personal motivation of working mothers is to have their income and increase family income.

*My work motivation is to have my income (DA).*

In addition, the various reasons behind the support from the family are also a reason for mothers to keep working.

*My husband just realized that, apparently, I'm the type who enjoys routine in the world of work, and I also feel that this is fun for me regardless of all the dramas or things in it and still provides support until now (HN).*

*When i decided to work, my parents gave me their full support (DA).*

*I have the full support of my husband and in-laws. They give me support. Sometimes my husband takes the time to pick me up at the office when he comes home from work. My in-laws also help to look after our children (SR).*

### **Implementation of Job Duties and Responsibilities**

The role of mothers in daily life cannot be separated from caring for and accompanying children in various activities even though they also have to do office work. Mothers will stay focused at work if they prepare their children's various online school needs.

*There is a time for WFO, and I always go to work in the afternoon because I have to prepare the children first and accompany them to study until they are finished or at least until they are calm and can be left behind. (HN).*

All working mothers have experienced the policy of working from home (WFH). However, the demands of work related to the health sector on two participants caused them to have to work normally again.

*When covid-19 was still booming for the first time, the working hours were reduced by one hour. Usually, I work 8 hours a day, but after the early Covid pandemic, it was reduced to 7 hours. Then there is one day off in a week, so six days work a week become only five days a week. Since it's already in the new normal era, we're starting to work 8 hours from Monday to Saturday as usual. But we work only 6 hours on Saturday, meanwhile, we work for 8 hours on Monday until Friday (DA).*

*Before the pandemic, I used to work from half-past eight until half-past three. Suppose it's Friday, only until twelve o'clock. On Saturdays, I also work until one o'clock in the afternoon. I used to do WHF but not anymore (SR).*

In carrying out mothers' duties and responsibilities during the Covid-19 pandemic, mothers need various changes.

*It takes a lot of adjustment, where we are usually at home only for rest or for interaction with children. But this is really all the rooms become one, and there is the children's study room as well as our workspace. Actually, something that is hard, maybe it must be hard for everyone (HN).*

*Well, let's just face it all, just do it, which one do you think you really want to do, do it. Where do you think your body can't handle it, just leave it first. There's still tomorrow.*

*Like for example, you don't have to wash clothes every day, right, so once every two days it's okay \*laughs\* (DA).*

Implementation of *work from home* and at the same time accompanying children to study at home makes the participants have more workload to do.

*It's really difficult for children to study from home. I really don't agree with this online school. I'm getting more and more work, now, the teacher only gives assignments, doesn't explain directly to the child about every material, the teacher gave a lot of assignments, and it can be up to 7 assignments in a week, in the end, I'm the one who explains to my children. But, still, teachers and I have a different way to explain to the children, right (SR).*

The fulfillment of children's school assignments and mothers' work assignments almost simultaneously causes mothers to feel confused about completing work assignments or fulfilling children's tasks.

*I'm troubled by this, and the teacher gives children assignments, they told us to take the assignment to school together with the assignment that was given last week. The teacher waited at school for only a short time, from 8 to 10, the teacher was not at school anymore. It's my office hours, I want to ask for permission to go out, but it's not good when my boss says this "I just arrived, did you ask for permission to leave". If I wait until 8 o'clock at school and come to the office after that, then i will be late, so it's really difficult (SR).*

### **Physical Condition**

Activities that are sometimes out of bounds can be caused physical conditions to decline so that mothers become easily sick and often feel tired.

*Then the negative effect is that our activities are sometimes out of bounds, sometimes the body drops. Sick. Sometimes it's because there are too many activities, and if you don't balance it with time, your body will drop (DA).*

In addition, the number of activities carried out often makes participants eat late and experience a lack of rest time and altered sleep patterns.

*But if you eat right, eat at the right time, rest on time, yes, that's okay all this time. But, once in a while, there's a feeling of tiredness because there's a lot to do (DA).*

*During this pandemic, what is the name of the sleep pattern? It becomes messy because I feel that it is difficult for me to sleep at night (HN).*

Almost endless activities cause participants not to have special time for themselves or do fun activities, reducing boredom and fatigue. To overcome that, participants usually use their sleep time to do activities they like.

*The challenge may be more towards 'me time'. It's like it's really hard to find a time where we have ourselves, not as wives, not as mothers, not as workers, but as us. During this pandemic, what can we do with the sleep pattern, it becomes messy because I feel that those nights are me. I dare to sacrifice sleeping time just so I have free time to do whatever I want, [...]. I can do without interference from other people, without any calls from other people. It fits at night (HN).*

### ***Mental Condition***

The problems experienced by participants as working mothers who have school-age children cause various psychological problems such as experiencing stress, mood swings, and anger.

*Yes, sometimes it's stressful, sometimes our mood, well, this is it, sometimes our moods also like to change, if you are tired, come home from work, the house is still messy, our children have a lot of excuses to do their homework, but it's okay, we just need to control and don't get emotional (DA).*

*I, who was tired of working, became emotional when I taught my children. My child is also lazy to study at home, [...], he has so many distractions from cellphone, tv, not to mention his sister messing around in the end, he'll be late when he's on assignment (SR).*

In addition to the negative impacts experienced due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the three participants gave the same opinion that there are positive sides that can be drawn from the ongoing pandemic.

*In the end, I am grateful, yes, we as working mothers are given a break to be able to have time to handle children (HN).*

*I get to spend more time with my children. Especially during this pandemic, I feel safer when my child and I are not going anywhere. The point is that I spend more time with my family (SR).*

*For the positive experience, we will know where our child's development has reached. It's like, wow, how come the writing is really bad, oh how come the way of writing it is backwards, now it's obvious because we're accompanying (DA).*

Not only can directly monitor children's physical and motor development, the pandemic conditions also provide wisdom for mothers to monitor the development of other children.

*Also, the most important thing before the pandemic was that I was confused because the children had not prayed 5 times and I was always busy checking whether they had prayed at the office. Well, during this pandemic this year, I pay attention to whether the children pray or not, what prayers, what daily life is like, who they play with. So it can be more intense. And in the end I am happy because I am grateful that there is time off so that we can also understand that we can never be separated from their education even though they return to school later (HN).*

### **Working Mother's Problems**

A working mother with school-age children experiences various problems, both in carrying out work assignments and assisting the child's learning process at home. In this theme, the study results found the problems working mothers face with school-age children into several sub-themes.

#### ***Challenges in Accompanying Children's Learning***

In assisting children in learning and doing assignments, the number of tasks given by the teacher is a challenge for parents. In contrast, the time available to assist children in learning is quite limited and doing work assignments and other household tasks.

*If it's my first child, I just have to pay bills. You have this task, which is your task later. Mom will check it, so she does it herself. If we don't accompany him, he won't do it if it's the second child. In comparison, we don't always have much time to accompany us. So*

*it's like their work debt is my work debt too. So if you question it, it's more towards why there are so many tasks (HN).*

In addition, parents are also required to re-understand the lessons that have been received for a very long time when they were in school.

*I also have to remember my child's school material. Until my child has so many tasks, I take it to the office and continue working at the office (SR).*

Participants find it difficult how to teach children. There are differences in teaching methods between parents and teachers, making parents find it difficult in the process of mentoring learning from home, and children tend to listen more to directions from teachers.

*Sometimes I'm also confused about how to explain it to your child. For example, he got the question of how many tens of  $16 \times 2$ , right, in the first grade, he had not been taught multiplication, so I feel that my child might also be confused about the school material. Why is it surprising? (SR).*

Home conditions that are not conducive to learning make parents need special efforts to continue to study optimally. However, this often raises emotions for participants when accompanying children to learn.

*My child is also lazy to study at home, maybe because of environmental factors. If there is a teacher at school he is afraid of, then maybe he sees his friends working on it, so he is excited when he tries a lot of cellphones at home. He said, "tomorrow, ma'am" "no, how do you answer this" there's a reason (SR).*

*When my son was still in school, my son was eager to learn, he did his homework after school. So, I'll just check later, and now my son lazy to study. Instead, play more games (SR).*

In addition, children who are not enthusiastic and less motivated to learn become a challenge for mothers in accompanying children to study at home.

*It's okay, maybe because learning the online method is also less enthusiastic, maybe the kids are bored, so they just hold their cell phones, look at the explanations, write, answer the teacher's questions, that's all, so maybe he just got bored doing that (DA).*

*Because in my opinion, learning via zoom is less effective for children, only 10% or 20% effective, the rest is like our mentoring. The names are also children, sometimes while lying down, left to the bathroom, just playing around, leaving the zoom on (HN).*

The mother made various efforts, so the child felt enthusiastic again about learning and wanting to do the task, for example, by persuading the child and giving gifts or appreciation in the form of goods to the child.

*Doing the task should be forced, perhaps because it is too much (SR).*

*If you buy toys, it's still okay, not anymore, and sometimes you get tempted. But, if you're really lazy, sometimes you buy slime, then buy what you want to eat, you have to be persuaded. "Well what do you want? snack? So do the work first, then have a snack", yes (DA).*

In addition, there is not enough time to help children learn. So sometimes they have to take advantage of the time at night even children do their work.

*In general, I still understand what their job is like, what to do. So far, there has been no moment to question what this task is, what to do and how to confuse. But it's more like I haven't accompanied them to do the task tugas (HN).*

*Due to work, so ask for time dispensation to collect children's assignments. For example, if assignments are collected at 9 am, ask for time dispensation to get home from work. Because online he can't do it himself, he must wait for his parents (DA).*

Using technology in the learning process at home through online media is a challenge for parents.

*So, we use Google Classroom as the media. So later, the teacher will give assignments in the classroom. Assignments can be collected via photos or videos in the Google Classroom. There are one or two lessons a day. [...]. If sports are sports, we will record their children and then enter them into the application. Later the teacher asks, try standing upright, standing perfectly, sitting, static motion, or dynamic motion, well, later on, the children will be asked to practice. Now, our parents will take a photo or video and then send it to the teacher (DA).*

### ***Division of Roles in the Family***

The division of roles between husband and wife in carrying out household work tasks is left to the mother.

*Because it seems like for us, because my husband is full outside, so in the end, the burden is too much on me. I, as a mother, become a husband, more towards if I can't really because I have to go to the office early in the morning and I have to leave the house what is the name to replace it like that (HN).*

*My husband is not the type of person to meddle in household matters. I've said before to help me, but yeah, he's so stubborn. So, instead of fighting, just shut up. But, I am helped by my in-laws to take care of the children. When I work with my sister-in-law, I sometimes help my son with his homework. (SR).*

*If her husband helps her once a week, she mops the same, at most, hmm, sometimes she helps to cook too. Sweep, it's rare. Never wash dishes, don't expect to wash dishes (DA).*

### ***Office and Household Work Load***

There is no clear time limit between work and household tasks.

*Ah yes, the names are children, sometimes they don't understand that we also need what it's called to finish the job, especially if there is a deadline like that (HN).*

*At half-past three, I come home from work then pick up the children at their grandmother's house. After work, I'll clean up the house while taking care of the little one (child number 2). After that, there is a time at night, ma'am, usually from 7 pm to 9 pm, I can only accompany the children to study (SR).*

*After coming home from work, usually, everything is sorted out, so it's okay. But, number one is directly accompanied by studying first. Like it or not, it becomes homework that should be done after work, so it will be done later after teaching-learning first. So, hurry up time (DA).*

Working mothers also do domestic work for mothers who do not have household assistants.

*I wash the dishes after work, but work like washing clothes is done before going to work, I wash them first, so they don't pile up when I get home from work, so I can share them. Yes, rake a little time after work. So, the children's work is finished, the work at the office is finished, the work at home is also finished (DA).*

In addition, working mothers often feel reluctant to ask their superiors for permission to complete their duties in assisting children to study from home during working hours.

*It's my office hours. If I want permission to go out, I feel bad when my boss says this "you just arrived, do you want to ask permission to leave?" If I wait until 8 o'clock to collect my son's assignments, it's impossible because I will be late for work, so the situation is very difficult to get to the teacher. Likewise, when my child studies in groups, I have to leave the office first before taking my child to a friend's house if the boss allows it (SR).*

### **Working Mother's Strategy**

Working mothers who have school-age children have various strategies to deal with the challenges and problems faced with work assignments and the demands of assisting children to learn from home and household duties and responsibilities. The strategy of working mothers is divided into three sub-themes: time-sharing, coordination and communication, and family support.

#### ***Time Management***

Facing various jobs simultaneously makes the participants divide their time to be more effective and efficient and determine priorities.

*If you divide the time, yes, when you get home from work, you go straight home, don't go anywhere else. Go home, immediately help the child, that's the first thing to do after work, it's over, the child is done, sees the child has done the task, supervises him, has immediately cleaned up again, and cleaned the house much as possible. Which homework can be done before leaving for work or which homework can be done after work (DA).*

*For example, if I have a meeting early in the morning and have to accompany the children, let alone the task of memorizing deposits. [...] So, I know his schedule is memorized tomorrow, and I know that there will be a meeting, so I will prepare it in the evening. Usually in the morning to prepare it. Our strategy is H-1, or when it's late at night, we already understand what we're going to do tomorrow. So I'm not surprised on the day (HN).*

In addition, participants have a strategy by doing several jobs at one time.

*I work from half past 8 to half past 3 pm. Then, continue to come home from work and take a short break to clean the house while taking care of the children, like bathing them and feeding them. After that, at 7-9 pm, I accompanied my oldest child to study. Finally, it's all over, let's go to sleep (SR).*

*So on the sidelines of work, while looking at the child's assignments, what is there in the application, I've seen it later I will share it with my child, so when I'm still in the office, I already have a little bit of an idea for my child (DA).*

### **Coordination and Communication**

Another most important strategy for participants is communicating and coordinating with various parties, namely husbands, children, superiors and co-workers, extended families, neighbors, and other supporting systems.

*So we need to communicate and convey our condition to our supervisors. The point is, the point is that we convey to the children, convey to our partners, and both adapt and convey what we feel so that everyone can be equally comfortable at home (HN).*

*If the assignment is collected at 9, ask for time dispensation (to the teacher) to get home from work (DA).*

Communication is done to children to understand the conditions experienced by mothers when working from home and must accompany children to study or do assignments.

*Ah yes, the names are children, sometimes they don't understand that we also need what it's called to get work done, especially when there's a deadline like that. So, at first, it was not easy because for them, if there is a mother at home, it means that you are a mother to us. But often try to communicate it to them. If the mother is working then, there is a special time where we can play later (HN).*

### **Family Support**

The support from a large family becomes a strength for working mothers in carrying out various tasks.

*The child is entrusted to Nini's or grandma's house if you are at work. So when you get home, pick him up there. If, for example, cousins are not busy and want to accompany the children, sometimes I send assignments to them and ask them to help supervise the children doing assignments (DA).*

*My in-laws help me take care of the children when I am working, and my sister-in-law sometimes helps my son do his homework (SR).*

In addition, to support from extended families, a household assistant is a form of family support provided for working mothers. The role of the household assistant is to complete domestic work such as cooking, washing, sweeping, and so on. Meanwhile, assisting children in learning remains the mother's main task.

*So, husbands and household assistants stay at home. At home, the position of domestic assistant is only for household activities, not taking care of children, household assistants don't know how to study children, what to prepare for children's school, household assistants don't know children's lessons, which textbooks. Even if the housekeeper helps out, it's just taking care of the third child and just making sure he bathes and eats, that's all (HN).*

## **Discussion**

Stress on working mothers is a problem that cannot be ignored during the Covid-19 pandemic. The demands of office work accompanied by household work and assistance to children's learning process at home create pressure for working mothers (Nikmah, Indrianti, & Pribadi, 2020). Dua (2020) said that the implementation of work from home during the pandemic influenced the balance of work-life and family interests. This relates to satisfaction with work and personal life. The Covid-19 pandemic has a

very real impact on individual health, both physically and psychologically (Brock & Laifer, 2020).

The additional role as a teacher to assist in the learning process from home for children is considered a form of parental responsibility which often makes mothers experience stress disorders. This statement is in line with the findings in our study where working mothers experience challenges in assisting their children to learn including the problem of limited time, understanding of children's school material, teaching techniques, learning environment conditions that are not conducive, and the problem of lack of knowledge in the use of technology. The implementation of mentoring children learning from home requires parents to be creative and intelligent in building a learning atmosphere to create focused and conducive conditions and learning motivation (Permatasari, Inten, Wiliani, & Widiyanto, 2021).

In addition, the study results also show that there is an imbalance in the division of roles in the family where the mother performs more household tasks and roles and is responsible for assisting children's learning. This imbalance will lead to dual role conflict. Even mothers often do various work activities at the same time. Hapsari (2020) stated that dual role conflict harms workers' psychological well-being. This means that the more roles that are the mother's responsibility, the lower the psychological well-being felt by the mother. Psychological well-being is defined as a condition in which individuals have a positive attitude towards themselves and others, can make their own decisions and regulate their behavior, can create and manage an environment that is compatible with their needs, have a purpose in life and make a person more meaningful and more engaged in exploring and developing themselves (Ryff, 1989). The conflict between work and family can affect job satisfaction for working mothers (Sunarti, Rizkillah, & Muktiyah, 2020).

External factors influence the balance between work and family in the form of social support, family support, seniors, colleagues, and the presence of children (Handayani, Afiatin, Adiyanti, & Himam, 2015). Adisa, Aiyenitaju, and Adekoya (2020) mentioned that cohabitation between work and domestic tasks for women could lead to conflict between roles. However, working mothers understand that each role cannot be separated. To achieve better performance, they must be professional at work (Uddin, 2021). To maintain a balance of work and family life, the strategies used by working mothers are time-sharing, coordination and communication with various related parties, and family support. In line with Dua (2020), time-management or managing time and sorting priorities and support from family members who provide more flexible space and time for female workers in carrying out multiple roles play an important role in helping to maintain the quality of balance between family life and work. Sunarti, Rizkillah, and Muktiyah (2020) stated that a balancing strategy between work and family influences job satisfaction. Therefore, time management has an important role in achieving work and family balance. Time management is a mediating relationship between family stability and attention problems that can prevent conflict in the family and help increase productivity and quality (Malatras, Israel, Sokolowski, & Ryan, 2016). Moreover, realistic time management can help increase productivity and quality of life (Jackson, 2009).

Baxter and Braithwaite stated that communication is central to the functioning of a family where each member participates in building and maintaining relationships within the family (Moore & Asay, 2018). According to Olson, communication within the family is one of the dimensions in the functioning of the family (Dai & Wang, 2015).

Communication becomes very important to convey various information or expressions of feelings among family members, including during the Covid-19 pandemic. Communication is something that is not only needed in family life. More widely in the work environment and society. Communication is a process that takes place continuously and is always changing and is transactional, each individual who communicates will impact the other from the communication results (Moore & Asay, 2018). Communication not only helps solve problems but can also strengthen relationships and show attention and form of support to provide satisfaction in marriage (Marpaung, Manurung, Akmal, & Mirza, 2021). Good communication is a form of family support. Family support is very important for working mothers to increase marital satisfaction and gain subjective well-being (Sunarti, Kamilah, Almas, & Pitriani, 2021). Time management and personal life strategies and husband and family who support working mothers can improve performance and provide happiness (Uddin, 2021).

The limitation of this study is not described how the pattern of family interaction, so it cannot clearly describe the condition of family support for working mothers with school-age children during the pandemic. In addition, this study also limited to working mothers who have children of primary school-age (7-12 years), so it cannot be generalized to mothers with middle-school-age children.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

### **Conclusion**

Based on the research results, working mothers who had school-age children during the Covid-19 pandemic were not always perceived with negative conditions. However, working mothers also view that the Covid-19 pandemic has a positive side that can be felt. Working mothers view that the lesson drawn from the Covid-19 pandemic is the availability of more time with family at home. As a result, mothers feel they have more time to see firsthand the development and growth of their children. The condition of mothers working with school-age children during the Covid-19 pandemic has various challenges and problems that must be faced in office work, household work, and additional tasks as teachers to assist children's learning process at home. In addition, problems in dividing time in carrying out various tasks and jobs make mothers have multitasking abilities. Nevertheless, these problems and challenges do not become obstacles for mothers to carry out their duties and responsibilities.

In addition to the problems and challenges working mothers facing school-age children during the Covid-19 pandemic, this study also found that mothers have various strategies to carry out their duties and responsibilities. In addition, various tasks in the office, household work, and assisting children studying at home can be fulfilled properly. The strategy is closely related to family support, communication and coordination, and time management.

### **Recommendation**

There are several recommendations based on the research results that have been done. First, the government as a policymaker can consider implementing school from home by providing various learning supplements, considering the learning load given to children. Second, non-governmental organizations can assist working mothers so they don't feel more pressured by the workload and household tasks that must be done,

including accompanying school children. Third, the next study is expected to research children who are studying from home during the Covid-19 pandemic, husbands, and family members who support working mothers. So, get a comprehensive picture of the problems in implementing the policies during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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