

## Coping Stress on Mothers Who Work as Health Workers

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**Abstract.** Mothers who work as health workers have a dual role, namely as a housewife and health workers, so they are vulnerable to stress. Working mothers must apply stress coping appropriately so they do not experience stress that can interfere with the mother in carrying out her role. This study aims to provide an overview of coping with stress for mothers who work as health workers in the TTU District. There were 250 participants who were taken using purposive sampling. The method used in this research is descriptive quantitative. Coping stress is measured using a scale Strategies for Coping with Work and Family Stressors. The results showed that the participants in the research were able to cope with stress well. The results of this study also show coping strategies in the form of increasing family finances, increasing self-ability, and changing the way to handle problems.

**Keywords:** Coping Stress, Working Mothers, Health Workers

**Abstrak.** Ibu yang bekerja sebagai tenaga kesehatan memiliki peran ganda yaitu sebagai ibu rumah tangga dan sebagai tenaga kesehatan sehingga rentan mengalami stress. Ibu bekerja harus menerapkan *coping stress* dengan tepat agar tidak mengalami *stress* yang dapat mengganggu ibu dalam menjalankan perannya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan gambaran *coping stress* pada ibu yang bekerja sebagai tenaga kesehatan di Kabupaten TTU. Partisipan berjumlah 250 orang yang diambil menggunakan *purposive sampling*. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian adalah deskriptif kuantitatif. Pengambilan data menggunakan skala *Strategies for Coping with Work Stressors and Family Stressors*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa partisipan dalam penelitian mampu melakukan coping stress dengan baik. Hasil penelitian ini juga menunjukkan strategi coping berupa meningkatkan keuangan keluarga, meningkatkan kemampuan diri, mengubah cara menangani masalah, rekreasi dan rileksasi adalah bentuk coping yang paling sering digunakan dalam menghadapi stresor.

**Kata kunci:** Coping Stress, Ibu Bekerja, Tenaga Kesehatan

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## **Introduction**

Women no longer only play the role of homemakers but also play the role of working mothers. Data from the Central Statistics Agency show that from 2020 to 2021, the percentage of female formal workers in Indonesia has increased, from 34.65% in 2020 to 36.20% in 2021 (BPS - Statistics Indonesia, 2021). This increase also occurred in the province of NTT (Nusa Tenggara Timur). Based on BPS data, the female workforce increased from 1,042,119 people in 2019 to 1,217,607 people in 2020 (BPS NTT, 2022). TTU (Timor Tengah Utara) is one of the districts in NTT that has also experienced an increase in female workers. Data on labour figures in TimorTengan Utara District also show that from 2018 to 2020, there has been an increase in the number of female workers, from 54,428 people to 65,471 people (BPS TTU, 2022).

The work done by working mothers varies. Some mothers choose to work in the professional field as health workers. Health workers are at high risk of experiencing psychiatric problems in the form of mild to severe stress due to various pressures that have increased due to the health crisis they have to face (Lay et al., 2020). Research by Handayani, Kuntari, Darmayanti, Widiyanto, and Atmojo (2020) explains the factors that cause stress in health workers, including workload, fear of being infected with COVID-19, negative stigma of carrying the virus and being far from family. Pratitis, Haryanti, Hariyanti, and Kusumawat's research (2021) also showed that 67.3% of health workers who were respondents in the study had stress levels in the medium category, 17.9% in the high category, and 17.8% in the low category. Stress reflects a person's pressure due to too many demands, obstacles or opportunities that cannot be fulfilled (Hendrianin, 2018). Excessive stress will affect an individual's ability to deal with the environment (Asih, Widhiastuti, & Dewi, 2018). Stress due to multiple roles can cause a decrease in the performance of working mothers, especially for mothers who work as hospital employees (Thania, et al 2021). To deal with stress, mothers working as health workers must practice stress coping.

Asih, Widhiastuti, and Dewi (2018) explain coping with stress is an effort made by individuals to manage the demands of both internal and external demands to provide resilience to the effects of stress. Previous research conducted by Shechter et al. (2020) showed that 74% of subjects were worried about transmitting COVID-19 to their families and loved ones, and coping was carried out by health workers in this study in the form of participating in sports activities, religious or spiritual activities, meditation, yoga, talk therapy and also join a virtual support group. Research by Suminanto, Widiyanto, Handayani, Kuntari, Darmayanti, and Atmajo (2021) shows strategies to support the mental health of professional health workers during a pandemic, including rotating workers regularly, minimising stigma and giving appreciation for performance and seeking to increase spiritual practice by involving religious leaders. Sa'diah and Machfud's research (2021) shows four coping strategies used by young nurses, namely having a positive view of events (positive reappraisal), seeking support from others (seeking support), taking direct action (problem-solving), and belief in God (religious coping).

Based on data from health workers from the TTU District Health Office, 84.5% of health workers in the TTU District are working mothers. In previous studies, no one specifically discussed coping with stress in mothers who work as health workers. Seeing the high percentage of mothers who work as health workers and the impact of stressors received as health workers, researchers are interested in research related to coping with stress on mothers who work as health workers in TTU District.

### **Method**

Participants in this study were mothers who worked as health workers in TTU District, totalling 250 people. The number of samples was determined based on the sample table of Krejcie & Morgan (1970). Sampling used a purposive sampling technique with participant criteria of female sex, married, working as a Civil Servant health worker, living in Timor Tengan Utara District and willing to be research participants. The variables in this study were measured using the

Strategies Scale for Coping with Work Stressors and Family Stressors made by Clark, Michel, Early, and Balte (2014), which researchers modified and adapted into Indonesian. The data obtained was then analysed using descriptive statistical methods.

**Result**

Table 1.

*Distribution Category of stress coping scores of mothers who work as health workers in TTU District*

Variable	Types of Coping Stress	Category					
		High		Medium		Low	
Coping Stress	<i>Problem-focused coping</i>	205	82%	45	18%	0	0%
	<i>Emotion-focused coping</i>	136	54,4%	113	45,2%	1	0,4%

Table 1 shows 205 participants (82%) had a high category of problem-focused coping scores, and 136 participants (54.4%) had a high emotion-focused coping score. This data shows that most mothers who work as health workers in TTU District can apply stress coping well.

Table 2.

*Description of problem-focused coping by age*

Age (Years)	Problem-focused coping category					
	High		Medium		Low	
22-29	46	88,5%	6	11,5%	0	0
30-39	85	85%	15	15%	0	0%
40-49	62	75,6%	20	24,4%	0	0%
50-57	12	75%	4	25%	0	0%

The analysis results in Table 2 show participants with problem-focused coping abilities; the highest category is at age range 22-29 years.

Table 3.

*Description of emotion-focused coping by age*

Age (Years)	Category emotion-focused coping		
	High	Medium	Low

22-29	29	55,8%	23	44,2%	0	0
30-39	54	54%	46	46%	0	0%
40-49	44	53,7%	38	46,3%	0	0%
50-57	9	56,3%	6	37,5%	1	6,2%

The analysis results in Table 3 show that participants with the highest category of emotion-focused coping skills are mainly in the age range of 50-57 years.

Table 4.

*Description of Coping Stress Based on Aspects*

Coping Type	Aspects of Coping Stress	Category			
		High		Low	
<i>Problem-focused coping</i>	Seeking help	198	79,2%	52	20,8%
	Scheduling	142	56,8%	102	43,2%
	Talk to other people	181	72,4%	69	27,6%
	Separation of work and family issues	202	80,8%	48	19,2%
	Improve skills	226	90,4%	24	9,6%
	Change the way you deal with problems	223	89,2%	27	10,8%
	Spend time with family	170	68%	80	32%
<i>Emotion-focused coping</i>	Fixing finances	241	96,4%	9	3,6%
	Cognitive reconstruction	156	62,4%	94	37,6%
	Explode emotions	185	74%	65	26%
	Recreation and relaxation	209	83,6%	41	16,4%

The results of the analysis in Table 4 show that the coping most often used by participants to deal with work and family stressors is improving family finances by 241 participants (96.4%), improving skills by 226 participants (90.4%), changing ways of solving problems by 223 participants (89.2%), and recreation and relaxation as many as 209 participants (83.6%).

### Discussion

These results indicate that mothers who work as health workers in TTU District can cope with stress by trying to solve problems or cope emotionally well. Hendriani (2018) explains that using appropriate and effective coping strategies for stressful situations will result in more positive adaptations. The results of this study

are supported by research conducted by Sehularo, Molato, Mokgaola, and Gause (2021), which shows that health workers have sufficient resources to implement constructive coping strategies. Research conducted in China by Huang, Xu, and Liu (2020) at the start of the pandemic also showed that health workers showed a fairly intensive reaction to dealing with the stressors they experienced,

The findings of this study indicate that participants aged 22-29 years tend to be more able to do problem-focused coping well, while participants in the age range of 50-57 years tend to be more able to do emotional-focused coping well. Asih et al. (2018) said coping behaviour will change as the individual develops for each age. This result does not align with previous research conducted by Salopek-ziha et al (2020), which showed that health workers under 40 use avoidance techniques more often. This result is also not in line with research conducted by Subasi, Sumengen, Simseg and Ocakci (2021), which said that health workers aged 20-29 years more often choose surrender coping strategies. Chigozie and Nwatu's research (2020) found working mothers who adopt an emotion-focused style show fewer symptoms of marital stress.

The results of the study show that the types of stress coping that are often used by mothers who work as health workers in TTU Regency are problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping is improving family finances, increasing capabilities, and changing how to deal with problems—emotion-focused coping in recreation and relaxation. Nwatu and Chigozie's (2018) research on working mothers shows that problem-focused strategies are more likely to occur in controlled stress than in uncontrolled situations, while emotion-focused strategies are more likely to occur in uncontrolled stressful situations.

This study found that improving finances was the most widely used form of coping. This coping was used by 96.4%. Clark et al. (2014) explained that improving family finances is an effective form of coping, especially in dealing with family stress. Andriyani (2014) also explained that one of the resources used to deal with

stressful situations is resources in the form of money, goods or services that can usually be purchased.

This form of coping increases the ability to be used by 90.4% of participants. This form of coping is carried out by participating in activities to improve workability or the ability to carry out roles at home to be able to handle the stressors received. This finding is supported by research by Clark et al. (2014), which shows that training employees on various coping strategies will increase each employee's personal resources to successfully manage the many demands of work and family and reduce work and family stress. In previous research, Shechter et al. (2020) also explained the need for fast intervention (psychological or organisational) to reduce psychological pressure on health workers. In Handayani's research, Kuntari, Darmayanti, Widiyanto, and Atmojo (2020) also explained that trauma healing programs,

The next type of coping that is often used is changing the way of dealing with problems, and this coping is used by 89.2% of participants. Hendriani (2018) explained that no one coping strategy functions effectively in every problematic situation, so the more individuals have alternative coping strategies, the more excellent the opportunity to find the most appropriate strategy or method to deal with stressors. Previous research conducted by Siemianowska, Podsiadlo, and Slusarz (2018) shows that individuals with more diverse stress-coping strategies can use strategies more flexibly and efficiently.

This study found that forms of emotion-focused coping that were often used were recreation and relaxation, namely 83.6% of the participants. This finding is supported by research by Shechter et al. (2020) in New York, which shows that physical activity or exercise is health workers' most widely used behaviour as a coping strategy. Research by Smallwood et al. (2021) also shows that the adaptive coping strategy most often used by health workers is to do sports. Research by Agustina et al. (2022) also shows that refreshing, such as doing hobbies like farming and cycling, can temporarily relieve tension due to heavy work and high pressure.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis results show that mothers who work as health workers in TTU Regency can cope with stress by trying to solve problems or cope emotionally. Based on age, participants aged 22-29 years tend to be able to do problem-focused coping well, while participants aged 50-57 years tend to be more able to do emotional-focused coping well, namely problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping is improving finances, increasing capabilities, and changing how to handle problems. Emotion-focused coping in the form of recreation and relaxation.

### *Suggestions*

It is hoped that health agencies, especially those in TTU Regency, will conduct more training or provide interventions to increase the ability to deal with stressors in health workers both from work demands and from family. Future researchers who wish to examine coping stress in mothers who work as similar health workers are expected to be able to see the relationship or the effect of other variables on coping stress.

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