WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AND COPING STRATEGY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF MOTHERS WORKING AS PRIVATE EMPLOYEE WHOSE PRE-SCHOOLERS CHILDREN ATTENDING ONLINE CLASS DURING THE PANDEMIC OF COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

Many research have consistenly shown that mothers face work-family conflict (WFC) during pandemic COVID-19. However, there were limitations prior to the previous studies such as (a) not focusing to working mothers whose job as a private employee, (b) not targetted specifically to private employees mothers whose children (pre-schoolers – aged 3-6 years) attending daring class during pandemic, and (c) not discussing how these mothers cope with the WFC. With that, the objective of the currect research is to address these limitations. This research adopted a qualitative study in which there were 10 mothers working minimum eight hours in a day as a private employee and adopting a work from home scheme. Moreover, those mothers should have pre-schoolers children attending daring class during this pandemic. All participants were interviewed daring and data were analysed using a thematic technique. Results showed that all participants faced three different types of WFC namely, (a) time-based, (b) strain, and (c) behavioral (based on dimension of WFC by Greenhouse and Beutell, 1985). On top of that, most mothers claimed that they found difficulties in controlling their emotions, causing the conflict to be aroused. Furthermore, in line with the dimensions of coping strategy proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), most participants applied emotion-focused and only small proportion mothers used problem-focused as their coping strategies to cope up with the WFC.

Keywords: Work-family conflict, coping strategy, working mothers, pre-schooler attending daring class, the pandemic of COVID-19

1. PREFACE

Family is an integral part of adulthood. Strong et al. [1] states the definition of a family is a group of individuals who generally consist of two people who live together, have a legally recognized bond, as well as a relationship with the context of marriage, birth, child care, and so on. In addition, families generally have interpersonal interactions with each other in living life together.

The most important role in a family is the role of parents. Especially in taking care of children, this role usually falls to the wife and mother. It is undeniable that this role is inseparable from women in the family. Papalia and Martorell [2] stated that a mother tends to try to be close to her child and make sure her child is under her supervision.

In addition to parents, the role of children is the responsibility of both parents, but in terms of parenting, most children will be attended to more by their mothers, especially younger children such as preschool age. The age range of preschool children, which is three to six years, requires a mother figure who accompanies them when they are at school for the first time [2].

The role of the mother plays a big part in the family, especially when having preschool-aged children, where the mother is the entry point for the child to know the world, the mother is also

the main educator for her child [3]. In addition, most children feel much more comfortable and safer when with their mothers [2]. This is natural because the mother has a very influential role in taking care of the child.

But in modern times like today, the role of women is not limited to taking care of children and families. Now women often work to earn a living or help their own family's economy without letting go of the responsibilities of both roles. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) [4] stated that the number of female workers currently has reached 34.65%.

In addition to having an economic background, working women also generally consider the level of education they have as well as an understanding of their work, so that insight will continue to develop over time [5]. This is a predictor of why many women choose to work.

There is another reason why women currently choose to work, that is most women who work have high expectations about providing the best and maximum possible education that will be given to their children. Women choose to work outside the home, supplementing the earnings of their husbands for the education of their children [6].

A mother who chooses to work while taking care of children is carrying out a dual role. Khan et al., in Greenhaus & Beutell [7], define multiple roles as a condition in which individuals perform two or more roles at the same time. The dual role is prone to conflict among working mothers who already have children.

The dual role of a working mother who already has children is very important to be investigated at this time. Especially in today's modern era, so many women are working and having children at the same time. However, carrying out multiple roles is not as easy as one might think, because one must be able to manage all roles properly and in a balanced manner. The pressure from one role to another will make it difficult for the individual to schedule their activities which may happen at the same time [7]. This needs to be researched so that the community, especially working mothers, recognize and can harmonize the dual roles they are living.

Mothers who have multiple roles will certainly face difficult situations trying to balance the two roles. Several complaints came from mothers who have multiple roles. Kompas [8] revealed one of the phenomena, namely that many working mothers who have children and feel the difficulties in working and having a career because the responsibility for child care is mostly in the hands of the mother. In addition, based on the results of brief interviews with several working mothers who have children in the preschool age, they also complained about the same thing, that is, it was difficult to manage the division of roles as mothers and workers.

These difficulties are referred to in psychology as Work-Family Conflict. Greenhaus and Beauatell, 1985 [7] define Work-Family Conflict as a form of inter-role conflict in which role pressures from the work domain and the family domain conflict with each other. The conflict has an underlying source of the occurrence of Work-Family Conflict. This resource can be categorized into three main dimensions in Work-Family Conflict, such as (a) Time-Based, namely the difficulty of dividing time between one role and another. The Time-Based dimension is related to the total time spent in one role, so it can make it difficult for individuals to participate in other roles. These dimensions are the main and most important predictors in Work-Family Conflict [8]; (b) Strain-Based, which is a dimension that is closely related to the emotions of the individual himself to the experience or situation and condition he is living at that time [9]. In the Strain-Based

dimension, there is consistency in terms of irritability and physical and mental exhaustion; (c) Behavioral-Based related to behavior. This dimension is closely related to specific patterns of behavior that may not match expectations from one role to another.

Work-Family Conflict is very important to study because in the modern era, many women choose to work and face their challenges in balancing the roles that occur in working mothers. In Work-Family Conflict, some negative impacts may occur. Research by Alteza and Hidayanti [10] states that such negative impacts include psychological impacts such as emotional exhaustion, stress, and other health-related issues, whether directly felt by the individual or the people around them.

Work-Family Conflict has been studied rather extensively the past year. The results of several previous studies have shown that Work-Family Conflict tends to harm mothers who have children, with the main cause being the limited time allocation for raising children and working. Research conducted by Achour et al. [11], and Vieira et al. [12] states that working mothers and having children under the age of six are much more prone to experiencing Work-Family Conflict, especially in the pattern of relationships and in taking care of children. Another study conducted by Beigi et al. [13], and Kara et al. [14] stated that Work-Family Conflict occurs in working mothers with the main causes being time constraints and difficulty controlling emotions when tired.

Based on the studies above, there is one recent study that was conducted during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic by Kara et al. [14]. Since 2020 in March, Indonesia has been in a critical situation with the COVID-19 pandemic. Until now the COVID-19 pandemic has not been fully resolved, especially in Indonesia itself, there is still no clarity regarding the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, and it does not even rule out the emergence of a new variant of the COVID-19 virus in 2022 [15].

[16] COVID-19 is a type of disease caused by a virus and can be transmitted between humans very quickly, it can be through the air, saliva, physical contact, and so on. From the spread of the virus, a situation called a pandemic has occurred, and many aspects of life have been affected, one of which is work. Based on data obtained from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) which was confirmed directly by the Ministry of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia, it was stated that there were 29.12 million working-age adults affected by the COVID-19 pandemic [17].

However, even during the COVID-19 pandemic that occurred in Indonesia, the people must still go to work. Of course, female workers, especially mothers who already have children, have to face quite a big challenge, which is continuing to carry out their work during the COVID-19 pandemic by adjusting to existing changes. Since the onset of COVID-19, the work system has been carried out online at home, known as Work From Home (WFH). Savic [18] defines WFH as a term for workers who do their work online at home. The WFH work system also involves female workers. Female workers are closely related to the term dual role, especially for those who are married and already have children.

WFH has a fairly high vulnerability for working mothers who have preschool-age children. Kompas [19], revealed that the majority of mothers who work and have children voice their opinions regarding the difficulty in dividing roles between work and taking care of preschool children at home, who have to go to school online. This is also proven in research conducted by Kara et al. [14] regarding Work-Family Conflict that occurs in mothers who work in the academic field as teachers. In the study, it was stated that most of the female teachers who had children and

worked WFH did not have much time to balance between playing with children, taking care of household chores, and carrying out their work duties as teachers.

However, a study conducted by Kara et al. [14] only focuses on participants in the academic field and has not researched participants with other professions. Other professions need to be reviewed considering that each profession has a different workload and work expectations [20]. Take, for example, employees of private companies. Brock [21] defines private company employees are individuals who work in privately owned business companies or individuals and non-government institutions.

The professional foundations of employees of private companies are important and need to be investigated, among others: First, the existence of a WFH work system that occurs in all companies, including private companies. Widaningsih et al. [22] stated that all sectors in private companies have a high vulnerability to the impact of the implementation of the WFH work system. This shows that employees of private companies are mostly involved in the WFH work system and it is important to research possible Work-Family Conflicts. Second, the working hours of private employees are formal and not flexible. With the WFH working system in the private company sector, the working hours can be more than eight hours a day. [23] stated that people who work WFH tend to find it difficult to adjust and set work time limits when they are at home. This certainly has the possibility of Work-Family Conflict that occurs in employees of private companies.

Third, especially female workers who already have children will feel the impact much more significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is evidenced by Kompas [24] which stated that a significant impact on private-sector employees in Indonesia, especially female workers, has decreased mental health conditions by 40%. With a fairly large impact on female workers, it is important to research Work-Family Conflict with a focus on mothers working in private companies.

Furthermore, COVID-19 does not only affect working people but also affects the education system. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, all teaching and learning activities have been carried out online at home. The online school system involves teaching and learning activities from home using video conferences. The research of Kara et al. [14] found no discussion of Work-Family Conflict related to the role of mothers in assisting children who go to school online. Assistance is critical in running schools online, especially for preschool-aged children. Preschool-age children are in the age range of three to six years old, and is a phase where children have more critical curiosity as well as a phase where children encounter new environments such as kindergartens (Papalia & Martorell) [2]. This is certainly a challenge for parents, especially mothers who assume multiple roles at once.

Mothers have a significant role in helping children attend classes online, especially for preschoolage children. In this case, the mother assists both from the start of the class to the end, explaining again, and helping with assignments and materials that have been submitted by the teacher online [25]. The pre-school age is the age that involves learning while playing because that age is a transitional period for children to get to know school for the first time. The assistance provided by mothers during online schooling can be in the form of helping children with task difficulties, explaining material that children do not understand, and seeing children's responses to material explanations delivered by school teachers [26]. Of course, this is a big enough challenge for

mothers who have to keep working while accompanying their children to go to school online at home.

Erickson [27] the role of child mentoring and preschool care is indeed mostly carried out by a mother. This is a challenge for working mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This phenomenon will be interesting to study regarding the description of the Work-Family Conflict of private working mothers, who have pre-school children and conduct online schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on personal communication made by the author, there was a gap for mothers working for the private sector to the situation before and after the COVID-19 pandemic regarding the assistance of pre-school children who go to school online.

This gap is related to the duties and obligations of mothers in caring for preschool children. Before the onset of COVID-19, working mothers were able to balance their time between work and childrearing, because mothers were only tasked with taking their children to school, and the rest would be mostly done by teachers at schools. Therefore, mothers can do other work after taking their children to school, such as taking care of the household, going to work, and so on. Meanwhile, after the COVID-19 outbreak, mothers work much harder because mentoring children to go to school online at home takes extra time for mothers, managing time between going to work and providing full assistance during the child's teaching and learning process [28]. This is one of the reasons for the author's interest in researching the Work-Family Conflict of working mothers related to the specifications of pre-school age children who attend online schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another limitation of the study of Kara et al. [14] apart from not discussing the role of mothers in online school assistance, the study was also not equipped with coping strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lazarus [29], defines coping strategies as a form of individual effort when dealing with stressful and difficult situations, both from emotional assessment, perception, and situation management from the individual itself. The dimensions of the Coping Strategy include: (a) Problem-Focused Coping, which leads to direct problem solving and focuses on actions and thoughts on the environment being faced; (b) Emotion-Focused Coping, namely coping that focuses on managing emotions, either in the form of self-control or acceptance of responsibility and support received from those closest to them. Work-Family Conflict is generally a conflict condition that occurs when there is a stimulus that causes stress and depression. With this coping strategy, it is hoped that Work-Family Conflict can be resolved and minimized properly, especially amid a pandemic situation.

The author's idea regarding coping strategies in Work-Family Conflict that occurred during the pandemic is also based on the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory proposed by Hobfoll in Matthews et al. [30], namely the theory that proposes that Individuals try and strive to manage, also maintain stress from individuals who are feeling pressured and threatened. Therefore, individuals tend to manage it by controlling the individual's own thought patterns and emotions, as well as controlling behavior when dealing with stressful and stressful situations [30]. In line with this theory, efforts to manage and control oneself in difficult situations are called coping strategies.

Coping strategies in Work-Family Conflict amid the COVID-19 pandemic situation will be very useful, especially for working mothers, considering the dual roles performed by mothers tend to be prone to conflict and difficult situations. This is supported by previous research by Aziz et al. [31] which states that coping strategies are proven to be able to minimize and provide an overview

of what to do for individuals who experience Work-Family Conflict. Coping strategies will also be more useful during the COVID-19 pandemic. This statement is supported by research by Finlay et al. [32] claiming that during the COVID-19 pandemic situation, a positive coping strategy is needed, especially in terms of social support to improve mental and physical health, because, with a coping strategy, individuals at least know how to deal with stressful and depressing situations.

Therefore, research related to Work-Family Conflict that is integrated with coping strategies will be very useful and needed at this time, especially for working mothers who carry out multiple roles in the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

Of the many limitations in previous studies, the authors conducted research on the topic, description of Work-Family Conflict, and coping strategies for working mothers as private employees with children aged 3-6 years attending online schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. From the topic of this research, it aims to complement previous studies regarding Work-Family Conflict in pandemic situations in female private workers, have children of pre-school age, and the existence of coping strategies.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative and non-experimental study with Work-Family Conflict and Coping Strategy variables that will be described through a series of questions asked during the interview process. This study involved 10 participants whom are mothers working as a private sector employee in Jakarta, and have preschool-aged children who study online. The demographics of the participants are described in Table 1.

Table 1Participant's Characteristics

Aspect	Category	Total (Participants)
Age	20 - 30 years old	2
	31 - 40 years old	8
Length of Work	1 - 2 years	1
	> 2 years	9
Number of Children	1 - 2 children	7
	> 2 children	3
Age of Online School Children	3 - 4 years	0
	5 - 6 years	10
Use of Domestic Assistant (DA)	DA users	5
	Non-DA users	5

In this research, data were collected on 10 participants through online interviews, which were conducted through the video call zoom application. Interviews were conducted semi-structured, utilizing interview guidelines that had been prepared in advance. The interview guidelines were made based on the theory and dimensions in the theory of Work-Family Conflict and Coping Strategy. (Examples of Work-Family Conflict questions: "Did you experience difficulties during your work and mentoring online school for your children?"). (Examples of Coping Strategy questions: "What do you do when you face a difficult situation that is happening at that time?"). The questions are adopted from the dimensions and theories of Greenhaus and Beauatell [7] and Lazarus and Folkman [33].

Prior to conducting the interview process, the researcher built a good rapport with the participants, with the aim of building a comfortable atmosphere to provide information that the participants had. After that, the researcher gave verbal and system informed consent related to the agreement

to conduct the online interview process as well as a statement that there was no coercion from any party to carry out this interview process. After the participants agreed to the informed consent, the interviews were conducted online via video call. Finally, when the interview process has been completed, the researcher closes by saying thank you for the opportunity and time that has been given. Usually, the researcher will ask for permission to contact participants again via Whatsapp chat, if there is data and information that is lacking during data collection.

After that, all the data that has been obtained will be analysed using data analysis techniques in the form of thematic techniques. Braun and Clarke, in Heriyanto [34] define thematic technique as a way to analyse data to find patterns and themes through the data obtained. The data obtained in the form of verbatim from each participant. In the thematic technique, the first thing to do is to understand the data in depth, the do coding or give code to each answer if it will be included in a particular theme, then determine the theme and sub-themes through the verbatim results obtained, finally carry out an overview starts from general to specific.

The theme is made based on the dimensions of the theory and consideration of the data obtained from each participant. Example of a time balance theme: "yes ma'am, it's really hard for me to share time, sometimes when I'm in an online meeting when suddenly my child asks about their online school material at the same time, I don't understand what the teacher is explaining, so I can't focus on work like in the office". An example of the theme of individual feelings: "Wow madam, since online school, I've also been WFH too, every day I get angry shouting at my children, because I get confused when I'm doing work but I can't leave my kids alone doing online school." Other themes such as stress releases: "I usually just stay in my own room, take ablution, pray, dhikr and think alone for 10-15 minutes".

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained using thematic techniques are listed in Table 2 below.

 Table 2

 The Work-Family Conflict Result

Domain	Subdomain	Total Participants
Time-Based	Work more than 8 Hours a Day (Overtime)	5
	House Chores	4
	Prioritizing Work (Meeting, Deadline)	4
	Prioritizing Child's Online School (Material, Assignments and	3
	Understanding)	
Strain-Based	Irritability	7
	Guilt	5
	Worried	4
	Sad	3
Behaviour-Based	Treated as a Housewife	2

Table 2 contains description of the Work-Family Conflict that occurred in 10 participants. From the results of interviews and data obtained by most of the participants, it was revealed that the biggest difficulties and obstacles were related to time and strain. The views expressed by participants that describe the existence of Work-Family Conflict include:

[&]quot;I find it very difficult to divide my time since WFH and children online school. Especially if the schedule clashes" (IE.1)

[&]quot;According to my child, since I've been working at home, I've turned into a tiger or a gorilla haha. Because not to mention I have a meeting that requires me to be on the mic and on the

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cam, and if the child isn't supervised, then he might not go to school, don't listen to what the teacher says, instead they will play" (IE.2)

"Wow, I can scream every morning when I prepare my children for online school, because the morning entry coincides with my absence for WFH. It's amazing, so I feel like it's easy to get carried away with emotions like that. Because every morning my emotions go up and down every day because it is so hectic" (IE.4)

"I once was physically tired, everything was not finished, even when children were taught in online school, they just won't understand. I'm so emotional, that I can't be angry anymore. So, I cried in front of the children, like I was confused, why is it so hard to be a mother and a teacher at the same time as a staff." (IE.3)

"Once, I was at a condition when I was at the lowest point, I felt like I wanted resign when I saw my child. Since my child is doing online school and I'm WFH has made my guilt double. Because you can't be like a housewife who can maximise her time with her children. It seems like I'm really wrong when I'm taking care of work but the child doesn't hold." (IE.2)

Meanwhile, the results of the Coping Strategy description obtained are described in Table 3 below.

Table 3

The Coping Strategy Results

Domain	Subdomain	Total (Participant)
Problem-Focused	Planful Problem Solving	3
	Seeking Social Support	3
Emotion-Focused	Self-Controlling	5
	Accepting Responsibility	2
	Distancing	1
	Positive Reappraisal	1
Religion	Worship and Pray	1

Based on Table 3 above, participants can show more than one Coping Strategy description for each participant. However, overall, most of the participants used Coping Strategy that focused on emotions, specifically on Self-Controlling. In addition, there is an update found in a small number of participants in the Coping Strategy, which is the discovery of coping the form of being religious in one particular religion. The views expressed by participants that describe the Coping Strategy carried out as follows:

"Usually when it's really crowded, I'm really emotional, I try to be alone for 10-15 minutes. I went to my room, sat there thinking and controlling my emotions so they won't hit the kids." (IE.1)

"If the conditions are not conducive, sometimes I feel like I want to run and just scream like that. But usually, I go out for a while, look at the plants or just say hello to the neighbours from a distance, usually I'm in the mood again and the anger has subsided" (IE.3)

"Sometimes I just leave it alone, so that the children learn responsibility so that they pay attention when they go to school" (IE.8)

"I prefer to take the positive side, so I can have a lot of time with my children at home. Yes, it's called work, it must be makes you dizzy but I don't take it as a burden." (IE.10)

"When I couldn't help my emotion anymore, I quickly took ablution, continued to pray Duha as usual, then continue the morning dhikr, continued praying to God to strengthen my mental state in this condition" (IE.3)

Based on the results that have been described, it shows that Work-Family Conflict is reflected in working mothers as private employees who have preschool children who attend online schools. Most of the participants showed Work-Family Conflict as described in Strain-Based and followed by Time-Based.

The results of this study have similarities with the results of research conducted by Kara et al. [14], which is Work-Family Conflict on teachers and private employees are both depicted in Time-Based and Strain-Based. Kara et al. [14] used mother working as a teacher as a participant where the Work-Family Conflict is more depicted in Time-Based. Based on the research of Kara et al. [14] Time-Based frequently shows up, as a result of the task of a teacher where when they have to prepare material, especially when they finish giving lessons, they still have to check the homework of each student, after that they have to respond and answer questions that keeps coming from both students and parents, besides that there are also those who have to take part in workshops outside of teaching and learning hours. Furthermore, based on the results of this study, it also shows the results of Work-Family Conflict in private employees seen in Strain-Based and Time-Based, which is caused by overtime resulting in reduced individual sleep hours, as well as a job as the main companion for children to attend online school at home that is very energy and emotionally draining for each individual.

The differences from previous research can be seen in the results of research conducted by the current researchers using different subjects, which is private employees showing Work-Family Conflict which is best described in Strain Based. This is because the task of working as a private employee is indeed not flexible, but since WFH the workload is much heavier than WFO, especially in this study the role of a mother mentoring children in online schooling is taken into consideration. With overtime, such as meeting until midnight, individual don't get enough rest. Alodokter [35], stated that with a lack of rest, the body's condition will naturally produce stress hormones that result in emotional and mood disorders. This is closely related to why Work-Family Conflict is depicted in Strain-Based.

The participants had children who are still young and cannot be left independently. The child's age of each participant is preschool age (3-6 years). The age of the child is also the reason why private employees are mostly categorized as Strain-Based. Preschool age is the transition period from playing to real learning [2]. So it requires companion while online school. This concludes that the frequency of Work-Family Conflict in this study is illustrated in Strain-Based and followed by Time-Based.

Furthermore, related to the Coping Strategy carried out by the participants, most of them showed that the coping used was Emotion-Focused, specifically Self-Controlling. In accordance with the description of the Work-Family Conflict that occurs in the Strain, the fact is that most private employees have tried to do coping that focuses on emotions and self-control. This is based on individual problems related to Work-Family Conflict which lies in the tension of the individual themselves. When private employees cannot leave their workstation and their children need

assistance at the same time, most of the participants found it difficult not to be emotional about the situation. These emotions arose due to all demands and responsibilities occurring at the same time.

In addition, in the Coping Strategy, it was found that there was an update from a small number of participants, where one participant admitted that they were doing religion-based coping. This is supported by previous research which also found religion-based coping which showed that one of the participants was coping in the form of night worship (tahajjud) and praying to Allah SWT [11]. Although in this study only partly showed that there were other religion-based coping strategies, this can be refocused further in the future.

Furthermore, this research still has limitations and shortcomings, such as only examining participants who work as private employees, and have preschool age children (3-6 years). Therefore, for further research, it is recommended for researchers to examine the characteristic of a wider range of participants, including other fields of work such as nurses or doctors who have 24-hour shifts. For doctors and nurses with shifts in working hours, another Work-Family Conflict and Coping Strategy study will be even more interesting.

The results of this study are very applicable in pandemic conditions like today, given that the role of a woman who works and has a family is becoming more apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of the research can also inform women who want to have a family as well as a career, and can provide an overview of how to deal with difficult situations in a better and more appropriate way.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides a broad description with specific participant characteristics, about the description of Work-Family Conflict and Coping Strategy of working mothers as private employees, with children aged 3-6 years attending online schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study illustrates that Work-Family Conflict occurs in mothers who work as private employees during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially those who have children aged 3-6 years and study online. This proves that the role of mothers is very important in a family, especially in assisting children in online schooling, and that time management and emotional control is necessary for working mothers who also provide online school assistance.

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