

Parenting Self-Perception During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Are There the Differences Between the Full-Time Working Mothers, Flexible-Time Working Mothers, and Housewives on It?

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Abstract

Covid-19 Pandemic had brought various changes in human life, including in education and work. During the pandemic, students underwent a distance learning system. Work from Home (WFH) and Work from Office (WFO) were also applied to working people, including working mothers. The objective of this study is to examine the differences in parenting self-perception between full-time working mothers, flexible-time working mothers, and housewives. Parenting self-perception is divided into four dimensions, namely investment, competence, integration, and satisfaction, and were measured using The Self-Perceptions of the Parental Role (SPPR). There were 174 mothers who were participants in the study spread across cities in Indonesia. The results showed that there were no significant differences in the dimensions of investment, competence, integration, and satisfaction in all three types of mothers based on their employment status.

Keywords: Covid-19 Pandemic, Parenting Self-Perception, Full-Time Working Mothers, Flexible-Time Working Mothers, Housewives

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Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic had brought many changes in human life. One of them was the restriction of mobility of people outside the home. People were asked to stay and do activities from home, such as studying and working.

In Indonesia, in March 2020, the government imposed Large-Scale Social Restrictions (LSSR) (“Indonesia large-scale,” 2022) to impede the movement of people and goods in and out of their respective regions. LSSR also included the restriction on school and work holidays. There were also the limitations to doing worship at mosques, churches, *purah*, and temples, as well as doing public gatherings. Then, in January 2021, the government instructed all governors in Java and Bali to apply the Community Activities Restriction Enforcement (CARE) (“Community activities,” 2022), which specifically limited people at workplaces, schools, restaurants, and shopping centers. There were some levels of the CARE in which the lower the level, would be the more restrictions.

Many restrictions had brought some consequences to the family member. Parents, especially mothers as primary caregivers, had to take on more roles during the pandemic: as a mother and a teacher for their children, a wife for their husbands, and might also as an employee for working mothers. As a mother, she had to take care of their children. She also had to organize and support her children’s learning and teach them since studying was conducted from home (Agostinelli et al., 2022). As a wife, she had to take care of her husband and do some household chores. As an employee, she had to complete assigned work, attend meetings, and sometimes time to work at home exceeded their working hours in the office. The various roles they had required mothers to be able to integrate their roles well. The ability to integrate them could make mothers feel positive and satisfied in life, and it is expected to affect parenting satisfaction (Comer & Stites-Doe, 2006; Vieira, Ávila, & Matos, 2012). Otherwise, the inability to integrate them could make mothers feel distressed, and it is expected to affect their parenting dissatisfaction.

In addition to the mothers, pandemics also affected the children. A study from Sun et al. (2022) found that the pandemic could increase child behavior problems. These problems could bring parenting stress, which over time would yield maternal distress and parenting incompetence. The feeling of incompetence could emerge because mothers felt unable to handle the child’s problems.

The pandemic also made parents need to make adjustments and adaptations in parenting. This could be due to the changes triggered by restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic, which had promoted parents to learn new strategies and forms of parenting (Weeland, Keijsers, & Branje, 2021). Generally, someone who considered her role as a mother important would invest more time and energy to learn to be an effective parent (MacPhee, 2019), including during this pandemic.

Feeling of parenting competence, parenting satisfaction, ability to integrate various roles, as well as how important the role as a parent for the mother is linked with parenting self-perception. Parenting self-perception refers to how a person perceives him/herself in the role of a parent (Delvecchio, Riso, & Salcuni, 2016). Meanwhile, MacPhee (2019) defined it as how they evaluate their own parenting and why they parent the way they do. There are four domains of parenting self-perception; they are competence, satisfaction, investment, and integration/role balance (MacPhee, Benson, & Bullock, 1986). At length, parenting self-

perception includes how the parent evaluates his/her ability in the parenting role; how the parent perceives the quality of positive affects, such as happiness and satisfaction, associated with the parenting role; how much time and effort the parent invests in becoming a good parent; and how well parent can integrate their various roles (for examples, role as a parent, spouse, employee).

The present study examined the differences in parenting self-perception between full-time working mothers, flexible-time working mothers, and housewives. A full-time working mother is defined as a mother who works full-time outside the home before the pandemic, and during LSSR and CARE went through Work From Home (WFH) and/or Work From Office (WFO) systems. Flexible-time working mother is defined as a mother who works part-time or a mother who has flexible hours in work between home and outside the home, and that has been going on since before the pandemic. Meanwhile, a housewife is a mother who cares for her family and manages household chores as her main occupation. The differences in the mother's work status were expected to affect the mother's parenting self-perception. It was because the pandemic had brought changes in routine, parenting the children, and the workplace, especially for working mothers, as well as the emergence of child behavior problems and role addition for mother, which could have an impact on the mother's perception of competence, satisfaction, investment, and integration/role balance. Thus, the research question asked is "Is there a significant difference among full-time working mothers, flexible-time working mothers, and housewives on parenting self-perception?". Participants of this study had at least one child who attended elementary school or kindergarten. This is because children at that stage still need more guidance and monitoring from parents (Papalia & Martorell, 2021), including in studying school lessons, thus adding to the role of mothers as teachers, especially during pandemics due to the implementation of Study From Home (SFH). It was different from teenagers who were already independent in studying or infants and toddlers who generally had not attended school so that mothers did not need to be "schoolteachers". To collect data, Self-Perception on Parenting Role (SPPR) was used for assessing parenting self-perception (MacPhee et al., 1986). The SPPR consists of 4 dimensions: competence (6 items), satisfaction (5 items), investment (5 items), and integration/role balance (6 items), with response weights for each item, are 1, 2, 4, and 5.

Conclusion

A general description of participants would be presented first before answering the research question and making a conclusion. By using G*Power version 3.1.9.7 (Faul et al., 2007), it was found that the minimum number of samples needed to reach 80% power for detecting a medium effect, with an alpha level for the test of .05 was 159. This meant a minimum of 53 participants were needed for each group of mothers based on employment status. Based on the data collected, it was obtained 174 mothers; consisting of 57 full-time working mothers, 58 flexible-time working mothers, and 59 housewives. The majority of mothers in the three groups were married with a length of the marriage of more than ten years. Nearly 90% of them also received higher education. They also mostly had two children. For mothers who had more than two children, it was found wide age spacing among siblings. The level of education of children also spread from college to not yet in school, with each mother having at least one child who attended elementary school or kindergarten. Nearly 63% of children, both in elementary and kindergarten, did not need to be accompanied while studying at home. In general, 87.93% of mothers had at least one child in elementary school. Forty-nine percent of children had older siblings, and 52.29% of children were ten-years-old or above.

After testing for normality and homogeneity of variance, statistical analysis was carried out using one-way ANOVA. Based on the analysis it was found that there was no significant difference between full-time working mothers, flexible-time working mothers, and housewives in parenting competence, parenting satisfaction, parenting investment, and integration/role balance. Table 1 below shows the results in detail.

Domain	Source of variance	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Parenting competence	Between Groups	8.239	2	4.120	.198	.821
	Within Groups	3563.169	171	20.837		
	Total	3571.408	173			
Parenting satisfaction	Between Groups	4.194	2	2.097	.226	.798
	Within Groups	1584.334	171	9.265		
	Total	1588.529	173			
Parenting investment	Between Groups	30.204	2	15.102	1.536	.218
	Within Groups	1681.014	171	9.830		
	Total	1711.218	173			
Integration/role balance	Between Groups	75.809	2	37.904	2.151	.119
	Within Groups	3012.881	171	17.619		
	Total	3088.690	173			

Table 1: Analysis of one-way ANOVA

In conclusion, there was no difference in parenting self-perception by employment status. There were some explanations for this result. First, regardless of employment status, the majority of mothers in the study were adult mothers ($M_{age} = 39.67$, $SD = 4.83$) and had higher education. Bornstein et al.'s study (2010) found that adult mothers and mothers with a higher level of education tended to have more parenting knowledge than younger mothers and mothers with a lower level of education. Meanwhile, parenting knowledge was related to parenting competence (Conrad et al., 1992). In future research, the mother's education level can be considered as a moderating variable that may affect parenting self-perception. Second,

this study was conducted when the pandemic has been going on for two years. This condition might make mothers get used to the various new roles they had and were able to integrate all these roles. It was as stated by Lally et al. (2010) that new habits took a range from 18 to 254 days. Another possibility is that people had returned to their routines before the pandemic, such as returning to school for the child and Work From Office (WFO) for the mother. Doing a longitudinal study is expected to be able to find out whether the parenting self-perception among the three groups of mothers remains the same or not. Third, some children were known to be able to learn unaccompanied. When children could learn on their own, mothers did not have to accompany them all the time to study. It could allow them to perform other roles without having many conflicts. Fourth, wide age among siblings might allow the eldest sister/brother to help teach the younger siblings, and it could reduce the burden on the mother in her role as a teacher for her child. In many non-western cultures, older siblings are found often helping or taking care of their younger siblings (Papalia & Martorell, 2021). Fifth, most participants came from intact families. A study by Fine et al. (1986) found that intact families had more family satisfaction than single parents. Sixth, the definition of the employment status of the mother, especially the status of housewife, needed to be described more clearer in the participant data form. It is because the definition used for housewife refers more to full-time mother, whereas in this study, a few housewives were found to be mothers who did entrepreneurship at home, otherwise known in Indonesia as “mompreneurs”. The existence of “mompreneurs” is increasingly spreading during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the implication of this study, it is necessary to consider an intervention program to improve parenting self-perception. Although there was no difference in parenting self-perception between full-time working mothers, flexible-time working mothers, and housewives, and the data also indicated that scores for all four dimensions of parenting self-perception for most of the participants were above the median for the range of possible scores from the SPPR, a few participants still had low parenting self-perception. Intervention is needed because the perception of parenting, as part of parenting cognition will affect parenting practice done by parents (Bornstein, Putnick, & Suwalsky, 2018).

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