

## Parental Stress in Working Mothers with Early Childhood Viewed from Age, Education, and Occupation

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to examine parental stress in relation to age, education, and occupation. The measurement tool used in this research is the Parental Stress Scale. The subjects involved in the study are 200 working mothers with early childhood. Data analysis was conducted using ANOVA. The results show a difference in parental stress based on age, where working mothers aged 20-39 years experience higher academic stress compared to those aged 40-60 years. The study also shows that parental stress is higher among working mothers in the informal sector compared to those working as civil servants, in state-owned enterprises, or in the formal private sector. Additionally, parental stress is higher among working mothers with a high school education compared to those with other educational levels.

**Keywords:** Parental Stress, Age, Education, Occupation, Gender



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## 1. Introduction

Parental stress can be understood as a condition filled with pressure that occurs in the execution of tasks related to caring for and optimizing the growth and development of children (Lestari, 2012). Specifically, parenting stress is defined as a series of processes that lead to unpleasant psychological and physiological reactions arising from efforts to adapt to the demands of being a parent (Deater-Deckard, 2004). Parental stress is depicted in situations filled with tension and anxiety that exceed the parents' capacity, particularly concerning the role of being a parent and the interaction between parents and children. Parental stress leads to the dysfunction of parents in their role of caring for children. It arises from an imbalance between the demands perceived by parents and their ability to care for the child. Additionally, it is exacerbated by the parents' lack of understanding of the issues affecting their child (Rahayu et al., 2019).

According to Berry and Jones (1995), there are two aspects of parenting stress, to be specific pleasure and strain. First, Pleasure (the positive component) in parenting stress brings benefits to parents, including emotional growth and self-development. Second, Strain (the negative component) involves demands on various resources such as finances, time, and energy, as well as restrictions, feelings of shame, and control over these aspects. In this study, the researcher uses the aspects from Berry and Jones (1995), which consist of the two main components mentioned above. This approach is based on the researcher's need to explore how the different impacts of parenting stress affect working mothers.

Global data shows that among productive women, 79% are part of the workforce (Deloitte United States, 2024). Additionally, 72.5% of mothers with children under the age of 18 participate in the labor force (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2022). Research findings indicate that, compared to women who work but do not have children, working mothers are more vulnerable to stress when fulfilling their parenting roles (Gina & Fitriani, 2022; Nurhafizah et al., 2023).

## 2. Literature Review

There are various factors that influence parental stress. Deater-Deckard (2014) mentioned several factors that affect parenting stress, such as the age and gender of the parents and individual differences. Internal factors influencing parental stress include the age and gender of the caregiver, i.e., the parents. Age is also related to the caregiver's experience as a parent, with more mature individuals typically having more experience and more stable emotions. Another significant difference is between fathers as male role models and mothers as female role models. Another factor suspected to have an impact is the occupation of the parents, specifically the mother. Crouter and Bumpus (2001) suggest that the type of job can influence parental stress. Jobs can be categorized into formal and informal sectors. The formal sector includes jobs that must be performed routinely, with salaries provided according to government standards. Meanwhile, the informal sector involves self-employed work done by mothers with minimal capital and simple technology. In addition to employment, the education level of working mothers is related to parental stress (Parkes et al., 2015). Education is categorized

into Primary Education (Elementary and Middle School), High School, Diploma (D1-D3), Bachelor's Degree (S1, D4), Master's (S2), and Doctorate (S3).

The purpose of this study is to determine the differences in parental stress among working mothers based on their age, educational background, and the type of occupation they are engaged in.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1 Research Subjects

The subjects in this study are working mothers with early childhood aged 0-6 years. Data was collected by distributing a Google Form, and responses were obtained from 206 working mothers from across Indonesia.

The majority of the subjects were in early adulthood, aged 20-40 years (190 people or 92.23%), with the remaining (16 people or 7.77%) aged 41-60 years. The subjects' occupations were primarily in the formal sector as civil servants or employees of state-owned enterprises (75 people or 36.41%), formal private sector (74 people or 35.92%), and informal sector (37 people or 27.67%). Regarding education, most of the subjects were graduates of D4/S1 (122 people or 59.22%), D1-D3 (36 or 17.48%), high school/vocational school/Islamic school (23 people or 11.17%), Master's (S2) (20 people or 9.71%), elementary or middle school (3 people or 1.46%), and Doctorate (S3) (2 people or 0.97%).

#### 3.2 Data Collection Method

The measurement of parenting stress used in this study was adapted from the *Parenting Stress Scale* (PSS) developed by Berry and Jones (1995), and translated into Indonesian by Kumalasari, Gani, and Fourianalistyawati (2022). The dimensions of parenting stress consist of two dimensions: *pleasure* and *strain*. The Indonesian version of the PSS scale consists of 15 statement items, with 7 *favorable* items and 8 *unfavorable* items. An example of an item in the *pleasure* aspect is the statement: "I am happy with my role as a parent" and "I enjoy spending time with my child." Meanwhile, an example of an item in the *strain* aspect is the statement: "Having children is a financial burden for the family" and "My child's behavior is often embarrassing or stressful for me." The reliability coefficient using Cronbach's alpha for the total stress score on the PSS is  $\alpha = 0.828$  (Kumalasari et al., 2022). In this study, reliability analysis was conducted. The results of the analysis showed a corrected item-total correlation for the PSS scale of 0.335 - 0.645, with a reliability value of 0.756.

#### 3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

The purpose of this study is to determine the differences in parenting stress based on age, education, and occupation. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25.0 software to perform assumption tests and hypothesis tests. The assumption tests included normality tests and autocorrelation tests. Hypothesis testing was then conducted using ANOVA and t-tests.

## 4. Result and Discussion

### 4.1 Result

The researcher conducted an analysis by testing the differences in parenting stress based on the characteristics of the mothers, which include age, occupation, and highest education. The difference tests were performed using One-Way ANOVA to examine the influence of demographic variables on parenting stress.

**Table 1.** Results of the Demographic Characteristics Difference Test

Demo-graphics	Category	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	Conclusion
Age	20 - 40 years	21.55	3.801	9.363	.003	Significant
	40 - 60 years	18.50	4.147			
Occupation	Formal	20.88	3.824	3.698	.026	Significant
	Civil Servants/ Employees of State- Owned Enterprises					
	Formal Private Sector	20.84	3.460			
	Informal Sector	22.49	4.351			
Education	Elementary/Middle School	17.00	1.000	2.289	.047	Significant
	High School/ Vocational School	23.09	4.252			
	D1 - D3	21.33	4.014			
	D4/S1	21.26	3.679			
	S2	20.55	4.298			
	S3	17.50	2.121			

Based on Table 1 above, the parenting stress score for working mothers with early childhood based on the mother’s age has an F value with a significance level of 0.003 ( $p < 0.05$ ). The parenting stress score for working mothers with early childhood based on the mother’s occupation has an F value with a significance level of 0.026 ( $p < 0.05$ ). The parenting stress score for working mothers with early childhood based on the mother’s highest education has an F value with a significance level of 0.047 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, it can be concluded that the demographic variables of age, occupation, and education of the mother have a significant influence on the parenting stress of working mothers with early childhood.

### 4.2 Discussion

This study was conducted to examine parenting stress in relation to age, education, and occupation. The results of the additional analysis regarding the difference test indicate that there are differences in parenting stress based on the characteristics of the mothers, specifically age, occupation, and highest education.

The differences in the results among the age groups of mothers indicate that mothers in the early adulthood range (20-40 years) show higher levels of parenting stress compared to mothers in middle adulthood (41-60 years). This is consistent with the research by Lestari and Widyawati (2016), which shows that mothers aged 40 and below have higher stress levels compared to mothers aged 41 and above. This is because individuals in early adulthood experience various situational and personal changes in their lives, which can trigger greater opportunities for stressors (Hurlock, 2003). Santrock (1999) also states that early adulthood involves transitional phases in terms of physical, cognitive, and social role transitions, making individuals more susceptible to various sources of pressure, especially for women who have become mothers. One of the changes that occur in a mother's life is the shift in lifestyle patterns, transitioning into the roles of both a wife and a mother.

Furthermore, the relationship between age and individual maturity is explained in the research by Nurjanah (2001). The results indicate that individuals in early adulthood are in a productive age where they can achieve a maximum level of thinking maturity in terms of motor skills and rational thinking. During this productive age, mothers face the demand to balance their time between household responsibilities and self-actualization. In addition to the role demands, younger mothers also find their self-efficacy in parenting practices affected (Ikasari & Kristiana, 2017). The difference lies in the fact that older mothers tend to gain life experience, wisdom, financial stability, and a more responsive family environment (Bornstein et al., 2006). Thus, the diverse demands of activities, both in terms of work and household matters, become unique stressors in the lives of mothers in early adulthood.

The results of the study indicate a correlation between the type of employment and parenting stress. This supports the findings of Crouter and Bumpus (2001), who state that workload and job type can affect parents' parenting stress. This research reveals that mothers with informal jobs experience higher parenting stress compared to those with formal employment. The informal employment sector is generally characterized by self-employment, the use of simple technology, low capital, and relatively unorganized operations. As a result, the informal sector is often associated with small-scale economic activities, low productivity, and minimal profits (Taufiq, 2017). Nazara (2010) states that jobs in the informal sector are typically linked to low wages, high work risks, and minimal protection. Additionally, the relationship between laborers and employers is usually based on verbal agreements or contracts, which are often unwritten. Such types of agreements can disadvantage those in lower positions, namely the laborers (Safaria et al., 2003), making mothers more vulnerable to stress, both in their jobs and in other aspects of life. Additionally, in another study, Nurazizah (2023) explains that mothers in informal jobs face many limitations in terms of time and location, making it challenging to manage their daily tasks of parenting and household responsibilities. The discussion above explains that working mothers in informal occupations are more susceptible to experiencing higher parenting stress compared to those in formal jobs.

Mothers working in the formal sector are evidenced by having higher education compared to those working in the informal sector (Maulida, 2021). This is consistent with the demographic data of respondents, where the majority of mothers have their highest education level at the

diploma/bachelor (S1) level, which results in the finding that parenting stress among working mothers with early childhood falls into the moderate category. Research by Parkes et al. (2015) indicates that the higher the level of education, the lower the level of stress experienced by mothers. Furthermore, Budimarwanti (2008) reveals that lower parenting stress arises from higher education levels among working mothers, which relates to their ability to manage stress when facing difficulties in parenting or household responsibilities. Mothers with lower education levels are at risk of experiencing stress due to their limited ability to seek and understand appropriate information about care and parenting for their children (Fikriyyah, 2018). Thus, mothers with higher education levels are more proactive in solving household and parenting problems they encounter (Supar & Nurrahima, 2015).

There are several limitations in this study. First, the research sample does not adequately represent all provinces in Indonesia, particularly in some regions of Eastern Indonesia, which may lead to underrepresentation. It is hoped that future research can cover a wider range of the 34 provinces in Indonesia with a more diverse sample characteristic. Second, this study is a cross-sectional research with a survey method, which means it cannot depict the issues in greater depth.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and the discussion above, it can be concluded that working mothers who are younger experience higher parenting stress compared to those who are older. Mothers working in the informal sector have higher parenting stress compared to those in the formal sector. Additionally, working mothers with the highest education level of high school/vocational school have higher stress compared to those with higher education and those with basic education.

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