

Research Article

A Cultural Perspective of Housewives' Adaptation to Mental Health Issues Caused by COVID-19

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Abstract. The lockdown situation during the COVID-19 pandemic was a substantial pressure for housewives, especially in terms of the psychological effects. Before the pandemic, housewives in Indonesia took care of their husbands and children as a mother and as a wife. During the pandemic, that role increased: they had to be a teacher for their kids and with the husband they needed to think about the economic factors of income. To maintain their mental health, they needed to have strategies of coping mechanisms. This research aimed to examine the mental health of housewives in Sungai Bawang Culture Village and the process of adaptation from the cultural perspective of Dayak Kenyah Tribe. The researchers used mixed methods approaches. Interviews were conducted with 10 respondents to understand about the cultural perspectives, and the DASS-21 questionnaire and Ways of Coping questionnaire were used to measure the level of stress and coping mechanisms used by 50 housewives. The results of Fisher's exact test showed that culture had an impact on the coping strategies used by the housewives. Most of the housewives used coping strategies to focus on their problems (to overcome the core of the problems or try to reduce the negative effect due to the problems) and most of them did not have stress.

Keywords: COVID-19, mental health, cultural perspective, coping strategies

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1. Introduction

1.1. COVID-19 Pandemic

Corona virus disease appeared in 2019 also known as COVID-19, the disease attacked almost all countries in the world including Indonesia, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic on March 11, 2020 [1]. Many changes happened because of the pandemic COVID-19, both of psychological well-being also the physical health negatively affected by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, changes even occurred in social life generally [2]–[4]. Insomnia post-traumatic stress disorder, fear, frustration, feeling of helplessness and anxiety were the psychological effects most experienced by most people in the world. The COVID-19


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pandemic has been going on for almost the last two years, no one know when this pandemic will end. People are expected to be able to adjust to all changes that occur as a result of the pandemic. Adjustment failure can cause psychological disorder, one of the research's result showed 66% of married women experienced psychological disorders during the pandemic[3]. In Indonesia, most of mothers were responsible for child care, household chores, school activities and responsible on other household matters[5], a study in Italy during the lockdown carried out on mothers especially among working mothers found that they experienced changes in time and quality of sleep also effect their emotional condition, because of their efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in their families [6].

1.2. Adaptation Process

Changes always occur in every process of life, these changes can be a stressor for each individual, it is necessary to adjust to the existing stressors from the psychological side called psychological adaptation. Psychological adaptation is done by providing self-defense strategies (coping) in the hope of surviving in unpleasant situations. Lazarus and Folkman wrote that there are two types of coping, there are problem focus coping (PFC) and emotional focus coping (EFC)[7]. Problem focus coping (PFC) is a coping strategy to deal with problems directly through actions aimed at eliminating or changing sources of stress. PFC allows individuals to make plans and further actions, trying to face all possibilities that will happen to get what has been planned and desired in advance. In the form of coping strategies PFC in overcoming the problem individuals will think logically and try solve problems positively. Whereas, emotional focused coping (EFC) is a strategy to relieve individual emotions caused by stressors (sources of stress), without trying to change a situation that causes stress directly, EFC allows individuals to see the goodness (wisdom) of an event expecting sympathy and understanding from others, or trying to forget everything related to things that have suppressed his emotions, but only temporarily[8].

1.3. Mental Health

The state of a person with mentally, emotionally and spiritually healthy is called to have a mental health condition. World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as not only the absence of mental disorders in a person, but also how well individuals can perform their social functions in society [9]. Many factors affect a person's mental health,

the factors from sociodemographic aspects would affect mental health are including: status of economic, job, age, gender, ethnicity, house composition, marital status, income, religion and employment status [10]. The way a person deals with changes and pressures, especially from psychologic aspects by the previously mentioned factors, requires adjustment or appropriate coping strategies to maintain the mental health condition [11]. Culture-based values, norms, beliefs and knowledge affect a person's health behaviour, therefore the coping strategies used by individuals are also related to cultural factors [10], [12].

2. Methods and Equipment

2.1. Methods

Descriptive study with mix method used in this research, cultural perspective and adaptation process of respondents dug through depth interview for qualitative method. Quantitative method used to know the coping strategies and the stress level, researcher used questionnaire. The population of this research is housewives who do not work, Dayak tribe, can read and write, have children of elementary school age, physically and mentally healthy and willing to be household respondents from 5 RT (Neighborhood Association) areas in Sungai Bawang Cultural Village. Simple random sampling was used in selecting 50 respondents to be involved in filling out the questionnaire, while interviews were conducted with 10 respondents

2.2. Equipment

Measurement of the mental health of housewives using the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scales (DASS-21) questionnaire which contain 21 questions with four answer choices there are; never, sometimes, often and not always. In this research focus of researcher was to measure of stress level. To find the coping strategies used by the housewives, researcher used Ways of Coping questionnaires which including 26 questions with four answer choices there are; not at all, done little, done quite often and very often. The researchers used structured interviews to study the cultural perspective and the adaptation process carried out by the housewives in Sungai Bawang Culture village

TABLE 1: Characteristics of respondents

Variable	(n=50)	f %
Age		
<30	15	30
31-39	19	38
>40	16	32
Last Education		
Elementary School	11	22
Junior High School	18	36
Senior High School	18	36
University	3	6
Coping Strategy		
PFC	38	76
EFC	12	24
Stress Level:		
No Stress	37	74
Stress	13	26

TABLE 2: Coping strategies and mental health

Coping Strategies	Stress level				Total		p value
	Normal		Stress		f	%	
	f	%	f	%			
PFC	34	89,5	4	10,5	38	76	0,00
EFC	3	25	9	75	12	24	
Total	37	74	13	26	50	100	

3. Results

Based on table 1, the characteristics of the respondents in this study were:

The majority of respondents aged 31-39 years were 19 people (38%), the majority of the last education was junior high school with 18 people (36%) and senior high school (36%). The majority of housewives in the Sungai Bawang Culture village had problem-focus solving coping as many as 38 people (76%) and the majority of them had no stress, which was 37 people (74%).

The results of data analysis in table 2 using the fisher exact test obtained *p* value of 0.00 ($\alpha < 0.05$), so there was a relationship between coping strategies and stress levels in housewives in the Sungai Bawang culture village.

4. Discussion

4.1. The Qualitative Analysis

Impact of COVID-19

Researcher did interview to know the changes happen during the pandemi COVID-19 among the housewives, and the results are:

Theme 1: Pandemi do changes the economic condition

“during the pandemi my husband is does not working” (R1)

“the household income is uncertain” (R2)

“I am a tenant of Dayak traditional clothes, because of this covid, people never rented Dayak clothes, the problem is probably because of changing clothes that can spread the virus” (R7)

“Before the pandemic we brought our garden yield to sell to the city, but for fear of getting infected we are now staying at home” (R9)

Theme 2: Pandemi do changes the social life

“we are not able to visit family who lives other places, we can not do activities outside the house” (R2)

“the children are school from home, they can not meet their friend, sometimes I get angry to them because now they are staying at home mostly” (R5)

“before the pandemic, I can meet other housewives in many activities example help neighbors when there is an event, but now we just can text each other because we can not even meet directly”(R8)

Theme 3: Pandemi do changes in increases task as housewives

“I get additional assignments as an educator even though I'm not good at teaching” (R3)

”During covid the children can not go to school f, the task increases as educators at home”(R8)

”The change is gets an additional task as a teacher for children at home” (R10)

The results of researchers interviews with respondents showed that the impact that mostly encountered by housewives in Sungai Bawang Culture village is the family's economic problem, partly because the spouse is no longer working and the restrictions on going out of the house and the area will automatically reduce income. Another impact encountered is that the addition of the role of being a “teacher” for their children.

Adaptation process and cultural perspective

Adaptation is the process of a person adjusting to change, in this study specifically psychological changes. An individual's efforts to overcome psychological changes/pressures (stress) are called coping strategies [16], [17]. There are two types of coping strategies that can be used, namely problem focus coping and emotional focus coping. Problem focused coping is done by finding ways to solve and overcoming existing difficulties, making plans that must be achieved, delaying doing other things in order to achieve something that has been planned, and finally seeking support from people around or people who know more about the problem. Meanwhile, emotional focused coping is more by seeking social support (sympathy and understanding) or it can be said to find reasons to postpone stamping what you want, accepting your situation by surrendering, denying that failed the achieve by forgetting or pretending as if it did not happen and the last way is surrender to God without making any effort [8].

The majority of housewives in Sungai Bawang culture village were using problem focus coping (PFC) as many as 38 people (76%), the kind of PFC they used there are:

The coping strategy of housewives in Sungai Bawang Culture village against the impact of Covid-19 are including:

Theme 1 (PFC): Finding ways to solve and overcoming existing difficulties:

"When my husband no longer working, I got the job, before the pandemic I used just a housewife"

"we made our own ways to make us calmer in facing the pandemic, such as making tradisional or special dayaknese's hat" (R2)

"To deal with the economic problems, we did reduce expenses, by growing vegetables in the garden so we do not buy outside" (R3)

"we were planting vegetables and some kind of herbal medicine such as ginger, curcuma, etc as herbal medicine for imunity of my family so we don't have to spend money to buy"(R6)

" because I can't sell my garden products in the market, then I am selling to the neighbors around me" (R8)

"We followed the government's advice not to leave the house too much, so I taught my children to cook, make handicrafts that can be sold to help our economy" (R10)

Theme 2 (PFC): Seeking support from people around or people who know more about the problem

"I often ask for advice from my child's school teacher about my child's studies, and exchange stories and thoughts with other housewives about daily activities" (R7)

Emotional focus coping used by another 12 respondents (24%), as listed below:

Theme 1 (EFC) Surrender to God without making any effort

"I believe that everything can run smoothly, I pray that this situation passes quickly"
(R4)

Theme 2 (EFC) Seeking social support (sympathy and understanding)

" sometimes I talked to neighbors or family over the phone and they have the same problem as me " (R5)

Theme 3 (EFC) Accepting your situation by surrendering

"Yeah, I'm just trying to look on the bright side now I have more time with the kids and more time for making crafts" (R9)

An effective and appropriate coping to deal with problems directly is to use PFC. Problem focus coping is also a coping strategy that is mostly used by women. [7], [18] Farming is the main livelihood for the Dayak Kenyah people who lives in Sungai Bawang Cultural Village, so they are not too worried about meeting basic needs such as rice or vegetables. The Dayak Kenyah community has a view of life, namely "Pemung Tawai" which means "one heart, one mind and one goal" which describes the spirit of togetherness, harmony and mutual cooperation in life. This view of life is applied in everyday life such as planting and harvesting agricultural products together, helping each other when someone is holding an event either at the church or at the Lamin (Dayak traditional house). They also make decisions by holding joint deliberation [19]

The role of women in Indonesia is sometimes marginalized, but the role of the Dayak Kenyah women in Sungai Bawang Culture village does not experience this, they are even able to help the family's livelihood by making handicrafts that can be sold such as Dayak clothes, Dayak hats, Dayak jewelry, Dayak food, garden vegetables. In general, Dayak women have special skills in making handicrafts, this is one of the FBC coping strategies implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic, as shown in the results of the interview.

The Quantitative Analysis

The univariate analysis found that during the COVID-19, older and more experienced mothers could manage psychological stress pandemic better than younger mothers[13]. Other research supported the statement above about age is correlated with stress and more mature self-defense strategies [14], [15]. The bivariate analysis using fisher exact test obtained p value of 0.00 ($\alpha < 0.05$), so there was a relationship between coping strategies and stress levels in housewives in the Sungai Bawang culture village. The use of positive coping strategies helps in one's actions to overcome pressure, this is in

accordance with the results of research by Mesuri et al [20] that someone who has a positive coping strategy will try to overcome the problem by asking people who have more control over the problem and focus on solving the problem. Maladaptive coping strategies will increase stress and cause emotional feelings which, if they arise in excess, will affect an individual's readiness to face the repair phase [21].

5. Conclusion

An individual's response to psychological pressure (stress) is strongly influenced by the chosen coping strategy, negative coping strategies lead to a heavier level of stress, on the other hand positive coping strategies will encourage a person to do positive and good things so as not to experience stress. In this study, the majority of housewives used problem focus coping strategies by seeking help from experts (teachers), exchanging stories with other people and doing things to help overcome problems (farming crops, making handwork) so that the problem will be automatically solved. Even though the strategy used was focused on the problem, it did not mean that we just give up on the problem but try to find solutions to overcome the problem or find solutions to reduce the impact of the problem. The two types of coping strategies mentioned above can function optimally if used under appropriate conditions, problem focused coping is used if the cause or source of the problem is an object or subject that can be modified, while emotional focused coping is more appropriate if the source of the problem cannot be changed, usually associated with feelings or loss of something.

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Conflict of Interest

The researchers have no conflict of interest to declare

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