



The Coping Stress Differences among Work from Home and Work from Office Individuals

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Abstract. Working from home and working permanently in the office (work from office) have their problems. These differences indeed lead to different responses in coping with stress. This research aims to analyze the differences in coping with stress in individuals who experience work-from-home and work-from-office periods, as well as analyze coping strategies during the work-from-home period. This research uses a quantitative method, using a t-test. The sampling technique uses purposive random sampling, with the characteristics of the population being married and having children, working in agencies either from home or the office. Data collection techniques used a stress coping scale and an open questionnaire regarding identifying feelings and problems that arise, expressed via Google Forms. Quantitative analysis is carried out using t-tests and descriptive analysis. Based on the Mann-Whitney test, the Mean Rank or average group ranking was obtained, namely for work from home, it was 95,15, and work from office was 94.54 with a significance value of $(0.947) > 0.05$. The quantitative research results show no difference in coping with stress between individuals who experience the work-from-home period and during the work-from-office period. Meanwhile, the results of the descriptive analysis show that the most dominant feeling during the work-from-home period is anxiety, anxiety, or worry (40.74%), while the problem most frequently experienced by respondents is difficulty dividing their time between office work and homework (26.45 %). In general, coping strategies overcome feelings of worry by conveying hobbies (23.28%), while coping strategies overcome problems during the work-from-home period by interacting online (26.45%) and doing good time management (17.98%).

Keywords: Coping Stress; Work from Home; Work from Office

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic shook the world and had many victims, including in Indonesia. The government made many preventive efforts against the spread of COVID-19 and attempted to suppress the daily victim rate. One of the popular policies of the government is the work-from-home policy (Holgersen et al., 2021), which applies technologies (Jaiswal & Arun, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic made many individuals work from home (Greer et al., 2023).

Many societies shared their criticisms and responses at the beginning of the applied work-from-home policy. This policy has both positive and negative impacts on employee productivity. The negative impacts include decreased performance and productivity due to lack of supporting facilities, such as computer and internet connection. The other matter is demotivation and increased electricity costs. On the other hand, the positive influence of work-from-home for employees included task flexibility, working hour flexibility, trip cost efficiency, and relieved stress due to traffic jams (Purwanto, 2020). The other arguments about work-from-home were a refreshed working atmosphere for society and anxiety-free from COVID-19 viral spread. This policy allows the community to continue working from home (Holgersen et al., 2021). After the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation got better, but then the situation got worse in the middle of 2021, specifically in July. Therefore, if the same matter occurs in the future, the government could apply the policy.

Work-from-home policy or teleworking facilitates employees to carry out their organizational tasks from distances, such as at houses or home (Mukherjee & Narang, 2023; Abdullah et al., 2020; Messenger & Gschwind, 2016). This situation provides schedule flexibility because of the flexibility of time, place, and working duration (Finn et al., 2020; Carlson et al., 2010). Therefore, every individual can manage his or her time, place, and duration of work. However, although the policy provided flexibility for the employees or individuals, civil servants had to prepare their daily journals (Ashal, 2020). Since the work-from-home policy is identical to online tasks or jobs, any meeting or briefing may apply the exact mechanism (Pratiwi et al., 2020).

Kaluza & Dick (2023) found that teleworking could be a flexible scheduling procedure to facilitate optimum working hours for workers. This flexibility relieves stress because any individual is not bound by tight office schedules (Usman et al., 2023). This policy provided opportunities to work at home and relieve stress due to COVID-19's viral spread and direct contact with other individuals. Implementing technology allows flexible working, although this mechanism may lead to mental health problems for the employees (Oakman et al., 2023). The prolonged COVID-19 pandemic made performance flexibility a new ordinary matter in the post-pandemic situation. In this situation, employees must demonstrate their adaptive skills based on

the working situations effectively, efficiently, and proactively by showing off their skills (Setyarini & Indriati, 2022).

Some jobs and corporations did not apply a work-from-home policy (Holgersen et al., 2021). These corporations required the employees to go to the office for specific reasons. Working from the office might lead to heightened anxiety and stress due to COVID-19 viral infection. This working mechanism might also stress individuals (Jaiswal & Arun, 2022). Moh (2020) also explains that individuals with work-from-office during COVID-19 suffer from anxiety and stress due to their fear of being infected by the COVID-19 virus. That condition worsened when many news reported new COVID-19 clusters, such as the office cluster.

The work-from-office choice required the employees to go to work for 35 hours a week. The working hour rate during the COVID-19 pandemic was similar to the working hours suggested by the Central Bureau of Statistics Indonesia. Working from the office fully requires automatic and unavoidable interaction with working colleagues. They also share the same argument about the ideal working hours, between 35 and 40 hours per week, for employees' standard of complete work at the office.

Humans are social creatures who need to interact with other individuals. Therefore, staying home for a prolonged period could stress employees' mental health. This problem may lead to sustainable stress. However, individuals within the direct interaction during the pandemic might suffer from specific panic and fear. The fear of COVID-19 infection and contamination was also observable in the family at home. Many individuals were exaggeratedly worried if they had to go outside and interact with other individuals.

The anxiety of society against COVID-19 was observable both psychologically and physiologically (Septiawan, 2020). Afini (2021) also found two stressors during the COVID-19 pandemic: the primary and secondary stressors. The primary stressor directly correlates to COVID-19, while the secondary stressor correlates to socio-individual activities and life. An effective coping stress strategy must include the capabilities to find social support, promote beneficial activities, apply health protocol, and select related information about COVID-19.

Although working at home could manage anxiety due to inter-individual interaction and prevent COVID-19 infection, society found that the applied policy stressed them. They found that working from home was separate from household chores. They had to care for their house, nurture their children, accompany them to learn online, and do office jobs.

Setiawan & Fitrianto (2021) found that working from home provided high flexibility but could have been more effective due to the internet connection and distance factors. The community needed help managing the office task business and domestic things simultaneously. This matter led to severe problems and could trigger stress for the community. Employees of the

service sector reported the stressful situation. However, the workers in the manufacturing sector reported a stressful situation in the future. Rianto (2021) argues that working from home provides new potential problems, such as limited working instruments, including poor signal conditions, to support online activity.

By referring to these conditions, problem management requires a coping stress strategy. Coping refers to cognitive and behavioral efforts to dominate, tolerate, and elaborate on internal and external demands and conflicts (Ali et al, 2022). Putra & Setiatin (2021) explain that coping strategy responds to stressful situations. Maryam (2017) explains that coping behaviors are individual transactions to manage various internal and external demands that suppress individual life. Therefore, the coping strategy could overcome various conditions that make individuals suppressed and burdened by the current resources. In this case, individuals who worked at the offices had a high possibility of infection from inter-individual contact. This matter led to high anxiety.

On the other hand, individuals who worked from home had more flexibility to manage their schedules. They also found that the situation was safe from the infection risk. The WFH policy could also minimize the virus spread. Therefore, different coping strategies will always exist to manage the problems encountered by individuals. Research about coping strategies during the pandemic full of pressures, anxiety, and trauma found the importance of effective strategies to manage the situation. A coping strategy is essential for individuals to promote work-from-home or work-from-office mechanisms. A coping strategy could relieve the unexpected stress (Nissa et al., 2022).

Connor-Smith & Flachsbart (2007) and I & I (2010) divide coping stress strategies into problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping strategies. Problem-focused coping refers to a directed action to solve problems. On the other hand, emotion-focused coping refers to efforts to modify emotional functions without directly changing the stressor. Based on this argument, coping stress refers to individual efforts to manage or minimize stress beyond their capability or resources with problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies.

Coping with stress strategies, both problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping, can help manage individual problems. On the other hand, based on the strengths and drawbacks of working from home and working from the office, coping stress strategies may vary for specific situations. Coping with stress refers to an individual strategy to relieve personal stress. Working from home limited the interaction and was a suggestion from the government to reduce inter-individual interactions. This policy was implemented through telework. Work from the office refers to an individual situation with uncertain conditions that promotes working activities from the house. Thus, they must work at the office.

Based on the conditions, the researchers determined the differences between individual coping stress strategies for those working from home and those working from the office. This research determined the coping stress strategies of the respondents, whether the strategy was emotional or problem-focused. This research was essential to encourage individuals to survive the work-from-home period excellently or work-from-office period without any anxiety. Although working from home might bring many challenges, individuals could apply excellent coping stress management to maintain productivity and balance their jobs and domestic tasks. The same matter applies to those working in the office. They might also encounter various challenges while interacting with other individuals, but they could cope with their anxiety toward COVID-19's viral spread.

Many studies have investigated the coping stress strategy. The researchers found that coping stress strategies became a specific norm during the post-COVID-19 period. This indicated that most respondents found working at home brought them a sense of security. Moh (2020) found that individuals with self-adaptive skills and excellent condition management could avoid stress and turn the stress into positive energy for productive and creative things. Afini (2021) found that stress management included seeking support, promoting health protocol, and selecting and doing useful activities.

The previous studies were different from the current research. Abdullah et al., (2020) investigated the employee perception of the benefits and drawbacks of working from home. Moh (2020) and Afini (2021) found that stress management during the COVID-19 pandemic became an action. This research focuses on the differences in the applied coping stress strategies of individuals who work from home and those who work from the office. This research also determined the differences between the respondents' applied coping strategies, both emotional-focused and problem-focused coping strategies.

Methods

This quantitative research is centered around two crucial variables: the dependent and independent variables. The independent variables, which are the working locations (home or office), and the dependent variable, coping stress, are the key elements of this study. The research delves into the differences in coping with stress between individuals working from home and those working from the office, with a specific focus on coping strategies during the work-from-home period.

The researchers conducted the research in Semarang. The inclusion criteria or research characteristics were a population of married people who have children, work for institutions with work-from-home mechanisms, or work at the office. On the other hand, the exclusion criterion

was only those filling out the given scales instead of the open questionnaire. The applied sampling technique was purposive random sampling, considering the determined population characteristics. The applied data collection technique for coping with stress is the Brief Resilient Coping Scale, BRCS.

On the other hand, the researchers shared the opened questionnaire with Google Forms. The BRCS scale is a one-dimensional scale with four items. The reliability test of this scale obtains a value of 0.76, indicating its capability to adaptively reveal the coping stress tendency. The opened questionnaire helps determine the applied coping stress strategy during the work-from-home period.

Then, the researchers analyzed the data quantitatively with the N-gain test. Before examining the hypotheses, the researchers applied a prerequisite test to determine the data's normality and homogeneity. The researchers descriptively analyzed the results of the opened questionnaire about coping stress strategies by collecting, reducing, displaying, and concluding the data. The researchers screened the obtained data by reducing the data and grouped them based on similar answers about the applied coping strategy by the respondents. Then, the researchers displayed the data by determining the categories systematically about the applied coping strategy. Eventually, the researchers concluded the analysis results based on the reduced data and adjusted the results based on the research objectives.

Results

The research data, meticulously collected from 207 respondents who willingly shared their responses via Google Forms, forms the basis of our findings. The researchers encountered a high level of cooperation, with only one respondent expressing reluctance to fill out the scales, and seven who did not complete the instruments. As a result, the data of these eight respondents were excluded for further analysis, ensuring the integrity of our findings. This left us with a robust sample of 189 respondents, among whom 143, or 75.66%, reported working from home, while 46, or 24.34%, worked from the office. Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the respondents.

Table 1.
The general descriptions of the respondents

Aspect	Remarks	Frequency	Percent (%)
Ages	The Generation Z/post millennial generation (<21 years old)	5	2.64%
	The Generation Y/millennial (21 - 40 years old)	97	51.33%
	The Generation X (41 - 60 years old)	87	46.03%
Sex types	Female	137	72.48%
	Male	52	27.52%
Total children	1	70	37.04%
	2	81	42.86%
	3	34	17.99%
	4	4	2.11%
Ages of the children	Having no children	9	2.60%
	Children younger than 1 year old	41	6.069%
	2-5 years old	87	20.231%
	6-10 years old	99	28.901%
	11-15 years old	76	21.965%

The table shows that most respondents are the millennial generation, generation Y, with a percentage of 51.33%. Of 189 respondents, most participating members are female respondents, with a percentage of 72.48%. The data about the child ages of the respondents show most respondents have children aged between 6 and 10 years old (28.901%) and 2 and 5 years old (20.231%). On the other hand, most respondents had one or two children, 70 respondents (37.04%) and 81 respondents (42.86%).

The Mean Difference Analysis

Based on the conditions, the researchers determined the differences between individual coping stress strategies for those working from home and those working from the office. Before examining the differences, the researchers examined the normality and the homogeneity. The normality test found that the sample did not come from a normally distributed population because the Sig-value was $< 0,05$. Then, based on the variance homogeneity test, the Sig-value obtained was higher than 0.05. The value indicates that the data variance of coping stress, based on work from home and work from office, is similar.

Our data distribution analysis revealed outliers that disrupted the normal distribution of the data. To address this, we employed the Mann-Whitney Test, a robust statistical method. This test provides a mean rank or the group rank average. The work-from-home group obtained a rank of 95.15, slightly higher than the work-from-office group's rank of 94.54. The resulting significant value (0.947) was higher than 0.05, leading us to accept H_0 . This indicates a significant difference between individuals with work from home periods and those with work from office periods. The detailed results of the Mann-Whitney test can be found in Table 2.

Table 2.
The Mann-Whitney Test Analysis Results

	Work	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Coping Stress	WFH	143	95.15	13606.00
	WFO	46	94.54	4349.00
	Total	189		

The Coping Strategy During Work from Home Period

At the initial stage, the researchers collected the data using Google Forms. The researchers obtained 189 answers about the applied coping strategy during work during the work-from-home period. They included the identification of the respondents' feelings during the work-from-home period or emotional focus coping strategy. The other strategy was a problem-focused coping strategy during work from home. Then, the researchers reduced the 189 data based on the groups with similar statements about coping strategies. From this process, the researchers found these findings:

a. The identification of the respondent's feelings during the work-from-home period

During the work-from-home period, 189 respondents, based on similar answers, were from 9 categories. They were anxious, bored, exhausted, average, happy, sad, being alert, and permissive feelings. Then, the researchers tabulated and made the percentages of the data. The results found that the respondents, during the work-from-home, were mostly anxious. The result was observable in 77 respondents, 41.27%. Figure 1 shows the complete descriptions.

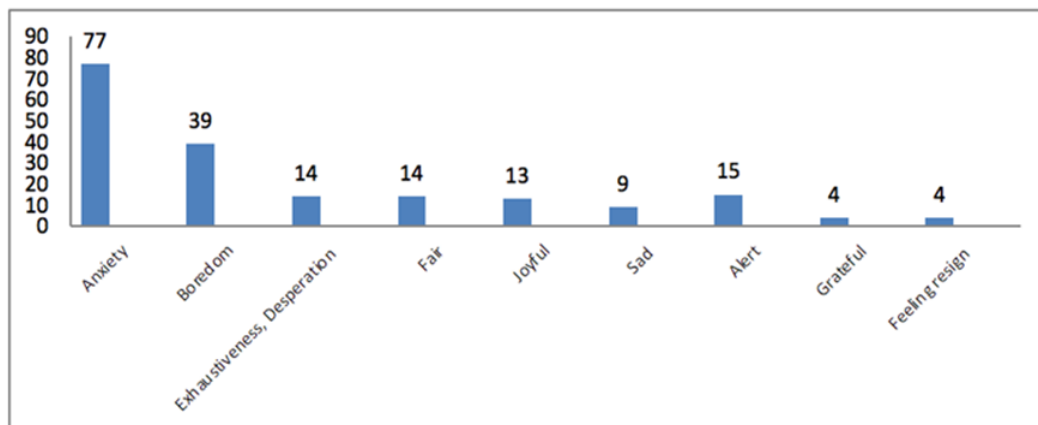


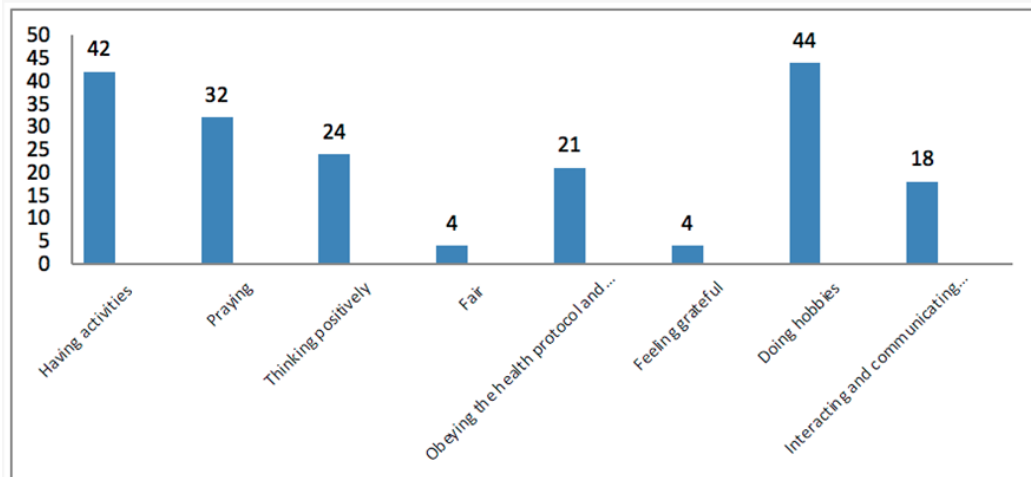
Figure 1. The identification of the respondent's feelings during the work-from-home

b. The emotional focus coping strategy during work from home period

Upon analyzing the responses of 189 participants, the researcher has identified 8 distinct categories of emotional focus coping strategies. These strategies, including maintaining regular activities, prayer, positive thinking, maintaining an average routine, adhering to health protocols, expressing gratitude, engaging in hobbies, and interacting with children, provide valuable insights

into how individuals can effectively cope during the work-from-home period. Notably, the most prevalent coping strategy was found to be expressing hobbies, with 44 individuals (23.38%) adopting this approach. For a detailed breakdown, please refer to Figure 2.

Figure 2. The emotional focus on coping during work from home period



c. The identification of the respondents' problems during work-from-home

Based on the responses, the researchers categorized them into nine problem categories: having time management difficulty, IT problems (limited Internet balance, poor Internet connection), incapability to apply the health protocol, interrupted activity, limited communication, incapability to apply self-adjustment, and fear of being infected by the virus. The researchers found some categorized answers within a group as the respondents without difficulties during the work-from-home period. The results showed that the respondents needed help managing their time between the office and domestic tasks. Fifty respondents, 26.45%, assert the findings. Figure 3 shows the complete descriptions.

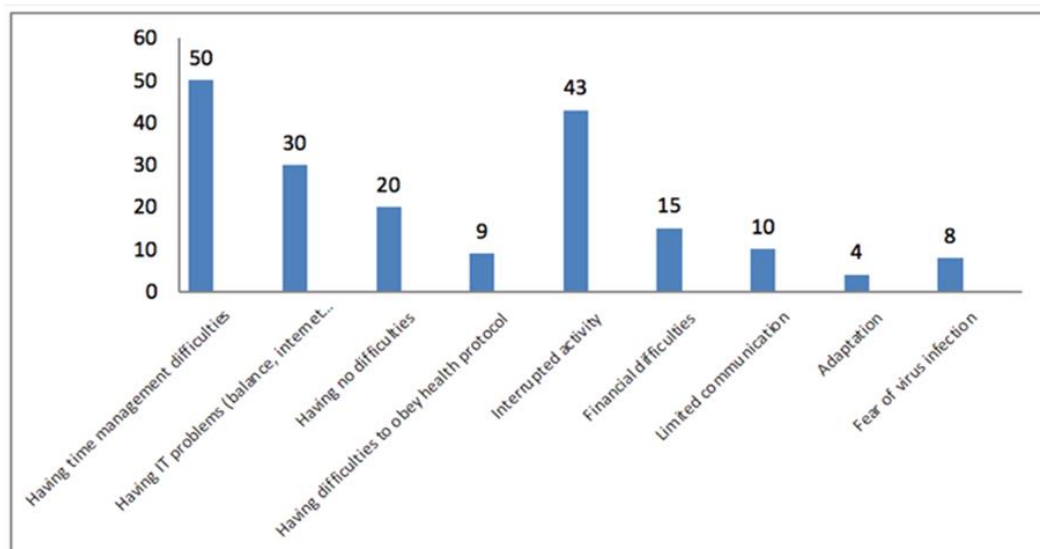


Figure 3. The identification of the respondents' problems during work-from-home

d. The applied problem-coping strategy during the work-from-home period

This coping strategy category, from 189 respondents, had nine categories. They were online interaction, permissive feelings, struggling and praying, using the Internet, time management, being alert and careful, keeping working by applying the health protocol, collaborating with children and husbands, and having activities based on the hobby. Based on the results, the problem-coping strategy during the work-from-home period was mostly by online interaction. This finding was observable in 50 respondents (26.45%). The other finding showed that most respondents, 34 respondents or 17.98%, could manage their time excellently. However, the researchers found that 20 respondents, 10.58%, did not encounter difficulties during work-from-home. Figure 4 shows the complete descriptions.

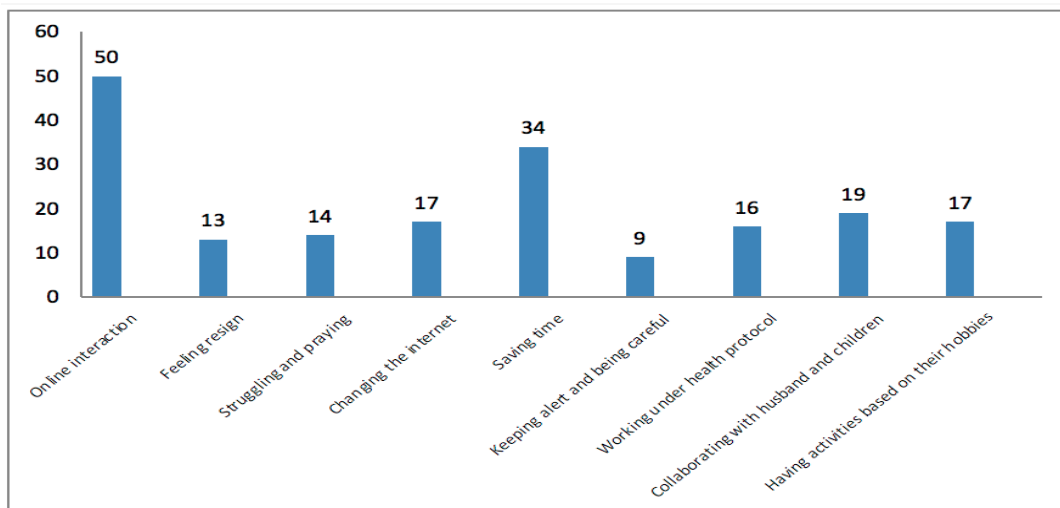


Figure 4. The problem focus on coping during work from home period

Discussion

The research found differences in coping stress strategies between individuals working from home and those working at the office. The result indicates that working at the office or from home requires the respondents to manage their coping strategies. Thus, they could survive the problems and challenges. Elsary & El-Sherbiny (2023), Zhou & Huang (2023), and Nguyen, Pu, Waits, et al., (2023) explain that stress levels are relieved by applying a coping strategy. In this situation, the respondents could manage the coping strategy. The researchers also found that most individuals working from home could manage the coping strategy excellently. This situation aligns with the government's advice and preventive strategy against spreading coronavirus. In July 2021, the government issued the policy of working from home due to the increased covid cases. This policy made many institutions and corporations adjust their WFH policy.

Based on the findings, most respondents were from the millennial generation. This generation is the largest in the world (Tam, 2019). Okros (2020) explains that the millennial generation or Generation Y refers to individuals born from 1980 - 2000. The previous generation before Generation Y is Generation X. This generation refers to individuals born from 1963-1980. On the other hand, generation after generation Y is the post-millennial generation, those born after the 2000s.

The millennial generation is habituated to multitasking matters. Thus, they could settle many tasks at the same time while working at home. The millennial generation's multitasking habit aligns with the capability to operate technology. The millennial generation could do many tasks simultaneously, using a mobile phone or wearing a headset. This generation is familiar with the Internet and digital native generation (Eger et al., 2021; Mihelič et al., 2022). The millennial generation could use instant communication technology like email, SMS, and other social media (Peramesti & Kusmana, 2018). The millennial generation is inseparable from technology because they have been familiar with and capable of using technology since they were children (digital natives) (Agárdi & Alt, 2022).

In this research, the researchers found that excellent coping strategy was correlated to the number of children. Most respondents had only one or two children. This matter allows the respondents to manage their tasks more quickly than those with many children. This condition occurred due to fewer children, which led to an excellent job-family balance. Handayani & Munawar (2015) found that mothers of three children could keep the togetherness quality. Nissa et al., (2022) found that respondents with two children had moderate stress levels during the pandemic.

Generally, the feelings while working from home were anxious, worried, and hesitant (Kubo et al., 2023). The pandemic led to anxiety for females regarding economic aspects, such as low salaries or job terminations (Dewi & Rahayu, 2020; Gashi et al., 2023). This feeling appears because WFH requires simultaneous task settlement while having domestic activities. Some individuals could keep their focus while working at home (Žiedelis et al., 2022). The working situation at the office is different from the situation at home. In most cases, the situation at home is not supportive of working. Working in limited situations at home requires environmental support to keep the environment conducive (Ariyani, 2020). Moreover, most corporations encountered severe impacts due to the pandemic. Thus, they had to terminate the employee's employment status. Eventually, these individuals suffered from anxiety, worry, and permissive matter (Solichin & Noviana, 2023).

Regarding emotional-focused coping, most respondents tried to express themselves via their hobbies. Most respondents expressed or did the hobbies while having leisure time. Wahyuni

& Prasetyaningsih (2020) explain that leisure time helps manage stress by relieving anxiety levels and the stress hormone and changing one's mood to be more positive. The promoted activities while expressing their hobbies could make the individuals forget the burden of the job. The activity could also develop positive thoughts.

Moreover, during the pandemic, individuals might stay at home for a longer time and feel bored. Thus, they spend their time doing their hobbies. In some cases, hobbies may increase an individual's earnings or income. Thus, they can run the home industrial business. Oktaviani et al., (2024) explain that the home industry helps individuals express their hobbies and earn additional income with less capital.

Most respondents needed help managing office work and domestic tasks during work from the office. Mustajab et al., (2020) explain that when individuals are at home for work, they may encounter interruptions while promoting other tasks, such as multitasking. Therefore, individuals cannot focus on office tasks because of different situations between the home and the office. Besides that, the individuals had to work from the office during the intense pandemic. This matter influenced the mental health. The respondents might feel afraid and anxious about being infected by COVID-19. They were also afraid that they transmitted the disease to their families. Vitniawati & Jamiyanti (2021) argue that individuals working from the office may suffer from mental and emotional changes. This matter also influences productivity. This matter decreased the immunity and increased the risk of being infected by COVID-19. This mental condition interrupted the individuals, who could not manage their domestic and office things (Ayar et al., 2022; Somasundram et al., 2022).

Regarding problem-focused coping, most individuals interacted online and managed their time excellently (Cho et al., 2023; Obiefuna et al., 2023). The online interaction allowed the respondents to share news, share problems, and say something to the respondents' close friends. For the respondents, this action made them find they were not alone. They could also manage their time excellently by facilitating the individuals to work on the tasks systematically, effectively, and efficiently. Kholisa (2012) found that excellent time management could lead to effective performance. Contradictory, poor time management worsened the effectiveness and performance.

This research found that most respondents had difficulties managing their time for office and domestic things. However, they could settle the problems. Something difficult does not mean that individuals cannot settle their problems. A percentage of 48.15% of respondents had excellent coping strategies. Those strategies, such as time management and spouse collaboration, could help the respondents settle the challenges. This research has some limitations, such as the undetected coping strategy, the things to do for the employees with work-from-home status, and

the coping strategy of the employees in the office.

Conclusion

The researchers observed distinct coping stress strategies among those working from home and those working from the office. While the difference was not significant, it was still discernible. This was largely due to the fact that a majority of our respondents were millennials, who are known for their tech-savviness and ability to juggle multiple tasks. They also had fewer familial obligations, which allowed them to adopt effective coping strategies. In general, most respondents employed emotionally focused coping strategies, such as engaging in hobbies, to alleviate their anxiety. On the other hand, problem-focused coping strategies were evident in their use of online platforms for interaction and their efficient time management.

Based on the findings, the researchers recommended some parties. Firstly, the employees must keep making efforts to manage their anxiety and problems during the work-from-home period. Secondly, the organization should develop empathy for employees to survive work-from-home. Thirdly, all family members, especially the husbands, must collaborate and encourage excellent job and family time management to organize domestic matters, including nurturing the children. The researchers recommend that future researchers investigate the specific coping strategies of employees at home or office, as well as the family support and organizational support, to promote the coping strategy.

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