



## ONLINE MOTHER ACTIVISM BETWEEN SUPPORT SYSTEM AND TOXIC ENVIRONMENT

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### Abstract

*Women's activism on social media in forming positive movements and providing support to others is now easier to realize. This happens because social media provides a new space for women's activism to be able to see further the situation of fellow women in other places even though their duties are almost the same. Furthermore, household tasks that are often assigned to women can be carried out more pleasantly because they have a strong support system. The circle of support that has brought about many changes is actually needed by women in carrying out their duties for their mental health. This study uses qualitative methods with in-depth interviews. The results of this study show that women, especially mothers, who are members of the community, are able to use social media in forming an environment that supports each other in positive activities.*

**Keywords:** *online activism, social media, support system.*

### INTRODUCTION

Internet as a form of technological progress has supported the way humans communicate more easily in recent years. Its appearance provides a different space in conveying the message. This system places humans in a new environment which of course presents a new culture. New media as another name for internet technology has become a powerful facility in growing communication between humans today.

Communication through this new medium turned out to have the ability to produce messages in a short time. The sender and recipient of the message do not seem to need a long time in the activity of exchanging messages. In fact, messages can also be shared with multiple recipients. On the other hand, the recipient can also reproduce the message and redistribute the message to other recipients.

The ease of exchanging messages has been used by the people of Indonesia. Various layers of society use this social media to expand the network so that the managed messages can attract as many recipients as possible. This opportunity became the power of social media in forming an online community which then gave rise to a movement in it.

This opportunity can be used by all circles of society to interact in order to generate new ideas. This idea is then transformed into the idea of forming togetherness in a community that has the same goal. Through this community both men and women are able to convey their ideas.

This is in line with Manuel Castell (2010), the acceleration of the flow of information technology, especially on social media, has provided a broad means for people to express their attitudes, not only in the form of new social movements but also as a controller of behavior. This tool opens wide to those who need space to express both their opinion and hope to be heard by many people.

This happens usually to someone who feels unable to talk to other people freely. Thus, he tries to find a way out in order to still be able to convey what he feels. These symptoms are closely related to a state of stress due to lack of understanding in managing it. Furthermore, from the survey results, the stress level of residents in big cities, especially mothers, increases every year (Wulan, 2017). The survey results according to research from the observations of Endang Mariani Rahayu, a social and cultural psychologist at the University of Indonesia, said that 49 percent of all women have stress levels that continue to increase compared to men, which is only around 39 percent over the last five years. This happens because of household domestic affairs, and the demands of children at school and relationships with partners. Meanwhile, the stress of mothers in the area is caused by economic problems.

The problem of housewives as stated in previous research is that they spend at least 98 hours working a week with a workload that is 2.5 times larger than other professions. Furthermore, the average housewife only has 1 hour 7 minutes of free time for herself. Meanwhile, 40 percent of housewives think that their work never ends. This fact is compounded by the unfavorable economic conditions. This unsupportive situation also causes negative emotions in the form of worry, sadness, anger, stress, and depression (Fadhilah, 2021).

Open communication to anyone she deems comfortable is one of the efforts in solving the problems faced. Lazarus and Folkman in their book *Conflict and Stress Management* stated that at least problem focused coping and emotional focused coping are strategies to deal with stress. One of the efforts to tell the problem to the closest and trusted person is a solution in overcoming excessive emotions (Ekawarna, 2018).

Problem focused coping is an effort to overcome stress by changing the situation that causes problems and the environment that causes stress. For example, if a mother feels pressured at work because she always thinks about her child at home, then she can change her job while still making money but she can be close to her child at home. Emotional focused coping is an effort to overcome stress by regulating emotional responses by adjusting to the impact caused by situations that are considered stressful. For example, always think positively when communicating openly to those who are considered to be able to help find a way out of the problems being told.

The online community formed through the internet gives mothers the freedom to exchange experiences. The exchange of experiences through stories can be very helpful for mothers who are having trouble finding solutions to the problems they are facing. The large number of members in the online community may also be facing the same problem or even they have gone through this period so they can contribute suggestions.

A person's feelings of anxiety, sadness, and anger every time they interact with other people or when nothing positive is obtained from these interactions can indicate a toxic people situation. Science of People says that toxic people seem to like controlling other people's lives. Furthermore, toxic people like to accentuate and prioritize themselves. They even show a narcissistic attitude, always have a negative view and make the situation pessimistic or gloomy. Furthermore, they like to create drama by finding out what's wrong with something easily jealous and judgmental, even like to manipulate or lie. Thus, they also often ignore the feelings and views of others and always feel right for themselves (Kirnandita, 2019).

People who are around a mother's environment certainly have backgrounds that are not always the same. Unfortunately, not all of them realize that this background has a value that will definitely carry over in their daily lives. So sometimes someone gives a negative value to a mother if the mother does not match the values she brings. A mother who feels uncomfortable because she is always criticized and doesn't even get support from people around her, whether from friends, relatives or her own husband, means that she is in a toxic environment. According to a psychologist, Monica Sulistiawati, this must be handled properly so that it will not cause stress so that it leads to emotional instability in the person. While the support system is needed by a mother through the people around her. People who always support by providing appropriate information or constructive suggestions, are not people who always criticize or even impose values that have been believed so far. One example is a mother who has just given birth with busy taking care of her baby will feel happy when enjoying a quiet meal or chatting for a while with friends. According to Monica, this can make a tired mother's condition become energized again, re-charging again and feel more sane.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative method using in-depth interviews and observations to obtain data. Qualitative research which is the main object is humans or everything that is influenced by humans (Indranata, 2008: 4). This study uses two online mother communities Mamashares and Motherhood LYFE. Both are online mother communities that have a high intensity of interaction in exchanging experiences as mothers.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The cases of mothers who feel tired and even lead to endless stress have been studied previously. This has a negative effect that cannot be avoided if it continues to occur and then no solution is found. At first it may be manageable and understandable but if a mother is constantly under pressure from various directions while the solution is only temporary then she will again face a relentless routine that leads to emotional outbursts.

Irna as the founder of the Mamashares online mother community admitted that this community started from the many messages that came personally to her social media accounts. The message then became the beginning of the establishment of a community. The purpose of this community is for mothers to be together in exchanging experiences and carrying out their daily routines as well as providing support as a form of support system that can strengthen one another.

This community chooses social media line to exchange messages among its members. Members of this community are also very intense in exchanging personal experiences on social media. Only at certain times will it be seen how group members respond to each other's problems faced by their members. The busyness of its members is the reason why at certain times this community's social media becomes very active.

Irna further stated that the most crowded time for discussion among members was 20.00-22.00 in the evening. This time is appropriate for mothers who are approaching a break after doing a day's routine. Various domestic tasks that have piled up and problems that arise are poured out in this MamaShares community. This community becomes more dynamic and has closeness because fellow mothers are also able to feel what other mothers are experiencing. One example is that members of this community actually have a house that is close to each other. They meet in this community so that their relationship is getting closer. In fact, this community was formed before the pandemic emerged.

When the pandemic emerged, members of this community still communicated through social media. New problems are always expressed by members of this community. One mother told that at first, communication problems with a partner were an easy thing to do, then during this pandemic it became something that was even impossible. Being at home for 24 hours with her partner and children has become a new habit. Furthermore, she cannot transfer activities outside home to be delegated to others. In fact, almost all of these activities are carried out independently at home. Habits that change completely also change the emotions of a mother who should be able to convey something well into an unstable state. Talking time with her partner becomes an expensive thing because the mother's task at home seems never finished, so the time to talk with her partner becomes a tiring moment. As a result, tasks throughout the day cause time sharing with a partner is often not responded well.

Other mothers also have similar complaints about managing emotions. During the pandemic, mother's duties increase, making it difficult to manage emotions properly. Poor emotional management affects the way they deal with children who are learning online at home. Conditions get worse when the child imitates his mother's emotions. Children become accustomed to seeing their mother unable to manage emotions well. So once again the mother becomes the party who has an important role to be able to control herself. This emotion arises

when a state of exhaustion so that a person is not able to think properly in an unbalanced state. Thus, this condition causes a mother to lose energy and give up.

This community that was founded in October 2017 has a following of more than 1300 members. They were so enthusiastic in finding a common solution to create a support system for mothers in the community, so they not only discussed it on social media but also through face-to-face meetings. Before the onset of the pandemic, this community even held face-to-face meetings. All participants who come to the event certainly have the opportunity to tell stories that are considered important and enjoy the discussion well because it is more focused. During the pandemic, the routine for studying with competent sources has shifted to live social media.

Another community is Motherhood LYFE. This online mother community has different concepts in the material presented. Love Yourself For Eternity is the tagline that they ignite for the sake of Indonesian women in carrying out their daily routines. The fact that women have higher levels of stress and depression is because the tasks they do seem to alternate without stopping with minimal rest intensity. Women's mental health should be paid more attention because it will have a negative effect on themselves and their families of course.

Good mental health will form self-confidence and love for family and the surrounding environment. This is a support system that women need. So the community that was formed in April 2020 chose important issues related to women and focused on empowering women. Because this community is considered to be more helpful to women, their material is also focused on not only issues related to women but also women's empowerment.

This community has a certain day that provides opportunities for its members to motivate women's empowerment and the economy which is called the Sunday Market because it is scheduled every Sunday. In addition to being a community where mothers share experiences and find solutions to every woman's problem, this community locks whatsapp groups every Saturday with the aim that its members can enjoy time with family. On other days such as Friday they held a healthy topic, Thursday discussed business education, Tuesday about parenting topic, Monday about self love. Meanwhile, on Wednesday they give access to members to propose themselves to fill in the topic. On the special day, entitled hearTalk (hear, heart and Talk), community members can present material about their experiences with the aim of getting attention, support, or even generating meaningful ideas and input for fellow community members. Another program from this community is MotherTalk, this program is almost the same with the theme of motherhood but is carried out through IG live.

The themes raised can be about solutions to improve the mother's mood, learning to carry the right way using cloth to avoid the baby blues, or building parenting with her husband. A topic that becomes a mother's daily routine as well as a solution to balance the mother's mood again when she feels tired. These themes are always adjusted to the initial

spirit of this community being built, namely by paying attention to the mental health of mothers.

The Mamashares and Mother LYFE communities both took the same action in an effort to pay attention to the condition of Indonesian women, especially those who have become mothers. This online action is continuously carried out on the basis of building a good support system for mothers. The talk group initiated through social media such as whatsapp and line used by these two groups is an attempt to overcome the stress that is often faced by mothers, namely by applying the emotional focus coping method. Open communication is always done in order to get a solution to the problems of everyday mothers with people who are more skilled or have successfully passed the situation. Furthermore, through Live Instagram they also share problems and find solutions.

Problem focus coping is obtained from this action through an agreement that is usually taken during live Instagram. If it is felt that the problem of one member is very important for action, the community will take action to help find a solution and make it happen. This is an agreement taken by the Mother LYFE community to their members. In accordance with the spirit that continues to be echoed by the community, empowering women is a top priority by building good mental health through the support system in the Mother LYFE community. This method will also provide an opportunity for a mother to recognize a toxic environment that can disrupt their mental balance. Communication within the community and the actions taken are a support to mothers in Indonesia that they still have room to share experiences and find solutions to existing problems.

## **CONCLUSION**

The online community of mothers that is formed at this time is one of the conveniences of communicating that can be done because of the emergence of internet technology. This community feels like an activism of women in a network that is able to reach remote areas to embrace each other in dealing with women's problems. As it is understood that a healthy environment will bring positive energy, so does a movement initiated through a community that is able to become a mother's support system in dealing with an unhealthy (toxic) environment. The ability to listen and share experiences has become a routine activity in this online community of mothers. This is done for the realization of mental health that is able to grow a mother's self-confidence, so that she is able to carry out the duties of a mother in a stable emotional state.

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