



Parenting Stress Among Mothers of Toddlers Under Socioeconomic and Financial Constraints: A Clinical Case Report

Rengga Dewi Rengganis*¹

Pendidikan Profesi Bidan Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

parenting stress; social support; economic hardship; health education; maternal health

Article history:

Received 2026-05-14

Revised 2026-06-12

Accepted 2026-07-17

ABSTRACT

Background: Parenting stress is the psychological pressure parents, especially mothers, feel when struggling to fulfill their caregiving role. It is common among mothers who work while raising children alone without adequate help. Economic hardship is a major trigger, as mothers must divide their energy between earning income and managing the household, especially when husbands provide little financial or emotional support. A history of domestic conflict further adds to this psychological burden. **Purpose:** To describe the dynamics of parenting stress experienced by a mother facing limited economic resources and minimal support from her husband. **Methods:** The subject is Mrs. S, a 40-year-old woman with two children (aged 20 and 5), reporting fatigue, anxiety, and distress from financing her first child's education while raising her second child without her husband's financial support, compounded by a long history of marital conflict (past separation and infidelity). Data were collected through interviews, observation, and the Parenting Stress Scale, followed by educational intervention on stress management and identifying available support systems. Results: After intervention, the strain score decreased from 32 to 22 and the pleasure score increased from 14 to 21; stress category dropped from high to moderate, emotional fatigue complaints decreased, and Mrs. S better recognized available social support. **Conclusions:** Simple, timely education can bring significant clinical improvement in mothers with high parenting stress, even though root problems like economic limitations and minimal spousal involvement remain unresolved. Long-term management should also strengthen social and family support, not just individual stress management.

This is an open-access article under the [CC BY-SA](#) license.



Rengga Dewi Rengganis

Pendidikan Profesi Bidan Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia;

renggadewirengganis@umsida.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Parenting stress refers to the psychological pressure experienced by parents, particularly mothers, when they encounter difficulties in fulfilling their roles as

caregivers. This condition is prevalent among working mothers who must balance professional responsibilities with childcare single-handedly. Mothers generally bear the primary burden of caregiving compared to fathers; consequently, managing these dual roles simultaneously without adequate assistance significantly increases vulnerability to parenting stress.[1]

Economic hardship stands as one of the most frequently identified triggers. Mothers facing financial constraints are more susceptible to anxiety, exhaustion, and psychological distress due to the demanding nature of dividing energy between earning an income and managing a household. This situation is further exacerbated when spouses fail to provide substantial financial or physical support. Existing literature indicates that parenting stress in working mothers typically originates from three main domains: maternal factors (guilt, fatigue, anxiety), child-related factors (age, number of children, health status), and environmental factors (family support system, work environment).[2]

Beyond economic stability, spousal support plays a critical role in mitigating parenting stress. A lack of emotional and financial support from a husband renders a mother more vulnerable to severe stress, which can ultimately impair her caregiving practices. This dynamic becomes increasingly complex in the presence of historical marital distress, such as past separations, paternal absenteeism, or infidelity, all of which contribute to long-term psychological burdens for the mother.[3]

The case presented in this report warrants close examination as it highlights a mother tasked with raising a toddler while simultaneously financing a child in higher education, all within the constraints of a limited economy and a lack of support from both her spouse and parents. Furthermore, her marital history—marked by a period of separation followed by reconciliation, alongside past experiences of infidelity—significantly compounds her experience of parenting stress. The convergence of economic pressure, marital instability, and the responsibility of raising two children with a substantial age gap makes this case highly relevant for further analysis.[4], [5]

This case study aims to illustrate the dynamics of parenting stress experienced by the mother in this scenario, identifying its primary determinants and evaluating the available support systems. Ultimately, this report serves to enhance the clinical awareness of healthcare professionals, particularly midwives, enabling them to better recognize and support mothers facing similar adversities, especially those enduring economic hardship and spousal neglect.[6], [7]

METHOD

This report is compiled using a case study method, with data obtained through direct interviews and observations of the subject, and subsequently organized chronologically according to the sequence of events experienced.[8]

The subject of this report is Mrs. S, a 40-year-old female residing in Pandaan, Pasuruan Regency. Mrs. S has two children: her first child is 20 years old and currently pursuing higher education, and her second child is 5 years old. Mrs. S works while managing the care of her two children under constrained family financial conditions due to a lack of financial contribution from her husband.[9]

The primary complaint presented by Mrs. S is a continuous feeling of fatigue, anxiety, and distress in fulfilling her role as both a mother and the primary breadwinner of the family. This stems from the burden of dividing her time and financial resources between raising a toddler and financing her first child's university education without adequate support from her husband.[10]

The marital history of Mrs. S reveals long-standing conflict. Mrs. S was separated from her husband for approximately 5 years when her first child was 5 years old, later reconciling when the first child was around 9 years old. When the first child was in the 8th grade of junior high school, Mrs. S discovered that her husband was having an affair. Since then, the husband has no longer played a role in raising the first child. Regarding the second child, the husband still maintains a minimal role, though limited as he only returns home after Maghrib (dusk) and has never disclosed any financial income or expenditure to Mrs. S.[11], [12]

Data collection was conducted through direct interviews with Mrs. S as well as observations of her daily and emotional state. In addition, a Parenting Stress Scale was utilized as a simple assessment tool to evaluate the level of parenting stress experienced by Mrs. S. Based on the interview results and the scale, Mrs. S demonstrated a high level of parenting stress, primarily driven by economic difficulties, a lack of spousal support, and a history of prolonged domestic conflict.[13], [14]

As a form of intervention, Mrs. S was provided with basic education on parenting stress management and was guided to identify available support systems in her immediate environment. Following the delivery of this educational intervention, a follow-up interview was conducted to evaluate any changes in how Mrs. S copes with the pressures of fulfilling her maternal role.[15]

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section Following the provision of psychological education on parenting stress management, Mrs. S demonstrated an improvement in her condition. This shift was evident from a reduction in complaints of emotional exhaustion—which she had previously experienced almost daily—as well as an enhanced ability to identify individuals in her immediate environment who could serve as sources of both practical and emotional support. A comparison of Mrs. S's condition before and after the intervention is summarized in Table 1.[16]

Table 1. Comparison of Mrs. S's Parenting Stress Condition Before and After Intervention

Observed Aspect	Before Intervention	After Intervention
Strain Dimension Score (Parenting Stress Scale)	32	22
Pleasure Dimension Score (Parenting Stress Scale)	14	21
Parenting Stress Level Category	High	Moderate
Frequency of Emotional Fatigue Complaints	Frequent (almost daily)	Reduced (2-3 times per week)
Ability to Recognize Sources of Social Support	Low	Improved

Based on Table 1, notable changes were observed in Mrs. S's Parenting Stress Scale scores across both the strain dimension and the pleasure dimension of her parenting role. Prior to the intervention, Mrs. S was categorized as having a high level of parenting stress. Following the educational intervention and support sessions, her parenting stress category decreased, indicating an improvement in how Mrs. S perceives and copes with the pressures of her maternal role.[17]

The improvements experienced by Mrs. S align with several previous studies indicating that providing education and guidance can help reduce parenting stress levels in mothers, even though economic constraints and minimal spousal support remain critical factors that require ongoing attention. The reduction in parenting stress for Mrs. S most likely occurred because she began to realize that she does not have to face all these pressures alone, and she has started learning to recognize the support systems actually available in her surrounding environment, despite the continued limitations in support from her husband.[17], [18], [19]

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that the reduction in parenting stress in this case has not fully resolved the root issues faced by Mrs. S, namely financial limitations and her husband's minimal involvement in the household. Therefore, long-term management should ideally focus not only on individual stress management but also on efforts to strengthen the social and family support networks around Mrs. S, ensuring that the parenting burden is not borne entirely on her own. [20]

Discussion

This case of Mrs. S highlights a clinically important presentation due to her highly favorable response to a simple educational intervention regarding parenting stress management, despite the root issues of financial constraints and minimal spousal support remaining fully unresolved. This is evident from the decrease in scores within the strain dimension—moving from a high category to a lower one—as well as an increase in scores within the pleasure dimension, indicating that Mrs. S has begun to perceive the positive aspects of her maternal role rather than just its burdens. This change provides valuable insight into current clinical practice, particularly demonstrating that even uncomplicated interventions can yield a substantial impact when delivered at the appropriate time. Compared with previous studies, the findings are generally consistent in demonstrating that timely and appropriate management

can lead to significant clinical improvement in mothers experiencing parenting stress. However, certain differences may be explained by variations in maternal characteristics, the severity of the domestic conflicts experienced, and the intervention approaches utilized, considering that not all mothers share a history of marital conflict as prolonged and severe as that of Mrs. S.[21]

The outcomes observed in Mrs. S may be attributed to several possible mechanisms, including a more effective management of emotional distress following the education, a more adaptive psychological response to the dual burden of being both a mother and the primary breadwinner, and her adherence to the guidance provided during the counseling sessions. The reduction in the frequency of her emotional exhaustion complaints—from an almost daily occurrence to a less frequent basis—indicates that Mrs. S has begun to employ better strategies for managing daily pressures. Furthermore, her enhanced ability to identify social support networks in her immediate environment played a crucial role, given that she previously felt compelled to bear the entire burden alone. These findings reinforce the importance of early detection of parenting stress indicators and comprehensive management in helping mothers achieve an optimal psychological state.[22]

From a clinical perspective, this case provides practical implications for enhancing the awareness of healthcare providers, particularly midwives, toward mothers facing economic adversity and a lack of partner support. It emphasizes the necessity of targeted interventions and continuous monitoring rather than a single educational session. Nevertheless, this report has limitations, including its single-case design and limited generalizability; hence, the results obtained may not necessarily represent the general condition of other mothers. In conclusion, this case offers important lessons regarding the effectiveness of timely interventions in reducing maternal parenting stress, while simultaneously highlighting the need for further research with a larger sample size to strengthen the evidence base and guide healthcare practices for mothers in similar circumstances in the future.[23], [24], [25]

CONCLUSION

The case of Mrs. S demonstrates that parenting stress experienced by mothers can be triggered by multiple factors simultaneously. These factors range from financial difficulties and a lack of spousal support to a long history of domestic conflict. Following the educational intervention on managing parenting stress, Mrs. S's condition showed significant improvement. This is evident from the decrease in strain scores and the increase in pleasure scores on the Parenting Stress Scale, as well as a reduction in complaints regarding emotional exhaustion. Mrs. S also became more capable of recognizing the social support within her environment that could actually help alleviate her burden. Nevertheless, this educational intervention has not fully resolved the root causes of her issues, namely financial constraints and the husband's minimal involvement in parenting. Therefore, long-term management needs to focus not only on individual stress management but also on strengthening the social and family support systems around Mrs. S. This case provides a crucial lesson for

healthcare providers, particularly midwives, to be more sensitive in detecting and supporting mothers facing similar conditions. Additionally, further research with a larger sample size is necessary to strengthen the scientific evidence regarding the effectiveness of this intervention.

BIBILIOGRAPHY

- [1] P. P. Rusu, O. S. Candel, I. Bogdan, C. Ilciuc, A. Ursu, and I. R. Podina, "Parental Stress and Well-Being: A Meta-analysis," *Clin. Child Fam. Psychol. Rev.*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 255–274, 2025, doi: 10.1007/s10567-025-00515-9.
- [2] C. K. M. Lo, M. Chen, Q. Chen, K. L. Chan, and P. Ip, "Social, Community, and Cultural Factors Associated with Parental Stress in Fathers and Mothers," *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2023, doi: 10.3390/ijerph20021128.
- [3] F. Li *et al.*, "From child social impairment to parenting stress in mothers of children with ASD: The role of parental self-efficacy and social support," *Front. Psychiatry*, vol. 13, 2022, doi: 10.3389/fpsyt.2022.1005748.
- [4] A. Babore, C. Trumello, T. Brandão, A. Cavallo, and S. M. Bramanti, "Maternal Cancer and Perception of Child Psychological Adjustment: The Role of Mother's Anxiety, Depression, and Parenting Stress," *Cancers (Basel)*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 1–10, 2023, doi: 10.3390/cancers15030910.
- [5] C. Mazzeschi, C. Pazzagli, G. Radi, V. Raspa, and L. Buratta, "Antecedents of maternal parenting stress: The role of attachment style, prenatal attachment, and dyadic adjustment in first-time mothers," *Front. Psychol.*, vol. 6, no. SEP, pp. 1–9, 2015, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01443.
- [6] S. Mohebi, M. Parham, G. Sharifirad, and Z. Gharlipour, "Social Support and Self - Care Behavior Study," no. January, pp. 1–6, 2018, doi: 10.4103/jehp.jehp.
- [7] S. C. Flaherty and L. S. Sadler, "Parenting Stress Among Adolescent Mothers: An Integrative Literature Review," *West. J. Nurs. Res.*, vol. 44, no. 7, pp. 701–719, 2022, doi: 10.1177/01939459211014241.
- [8] S. Dong, Q. Dong, H. Chen, and S. Yang, "Mother's Parenting Stress and Marital Satisfaction During the Parenting Period: Examining the Role of Depression, Solitude, and Time Alone," *Front. Psychol.*, vol. 13, no. March, pp. 1–10, 2022, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.847419.
- [9] D. L. W. Lam, W. W. S. Mak, and B. C. L. Yu, "A brief mindfulness- and compassion-based parenting programme delivered via instant messaging: Results and implications from two randomised controlled trials on reducing parental stress," *Appl. Psychol. Heal. Well-Being*, vol. 17, no. 6, pp. 1–28, 2025, doi: 10.1111/aphw.70094.
- [10] A. Alhomsy *et al.*, "Financial Hardship and Psychological Distress During the Pandemic: A Nationally Representative Survey of Major Racial-Ethnic Groups in the United States," *Heal. Equity*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 395–405, 2023, doi: 10.1089/heq.2022.0197.
- [11] S. Ryu and L. Fan, "The Relationship Between Financial Worries and Psychological Distress Among U.S. Adults," *J. Fam. Econ. Issues*, vol. 44, no. 1, pp. 16–33, 2023, doi: 10.1007/s10834-022-09820-9.
- [12] L. J. Samuel *et al.*, "Financial Strain and Child Health: Measures and Evidence From a Systematic Literature Review," *AJPM Focus*, vol. 4, no. 4, p. 100337, 2025, MJMR: Medivara Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, Volume 1, Issue. 1, 2026, pp. 48-54

- doi: 10.1016/j.focus.2025.100337.
- [13] H. Iwasa, Y. Yoshida, and K. Ishii, "Association of Spousal Social Support in Child-Rearing and Marital Satisfaction with Subjective Well-Being among Fathers and Mothers," *Behav. Sci. (Basel)*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2024, doi: 10.3390/bs14020106.
 - [14] A. Haris *et al.*, "Exploring The Psychological Impact, Decision-Making Process, Resilience, Emotional Recovery, and Forgiveness in Wives Affected by Husband's Infidelity," no. September, pp. 516–528, 2025.
 - [15] O. M. Kareem *et al.*, "Single parenthood and depression: A thorough review of current understanding," *Heal. Sci. Reports*, vol. 7, no. 7, pp. 1–9, 2024, doi: 10.1002/hsr2.2235.
 - [16] E. Sattarpanahi, L. Kiani, S. Hesami, N. Salehi, and M. Kavousighafi, "Psychology of Woman Journal," *Psychology Woman J.*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 25–32, 2024.
 - [17] F. M. Zarifullah. Ahmadyar1 , Mahmood. Heidari2* , Mohammad Ali. Mazaheri3, "Applied Family Therapy Journal," *Appl. Fam. Ther. J.*, vol. 6, no. October 2024, pp. 1–10, 2025, [Online]. Available: <https://journals.kmanpub.com/index.php/aftj/article/view/3959>
 - [18] C. Jones, S. Zadeh, V. Jadva, and S. Golombok, "Solo Fathers and Mothers: An Exploration of Well-Being, Social Support and Social Approval," *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health*, vol. 19, no. 15, 2022, doi: 10.3390/ijerph19159236.
 - [19] S. Kikuchi and T. Himeno, "Midwives' perspectives on assessing and managing mothers' distress related to excessive infant crying in Japan: a qualitative content analysis study," *BMC Pregnancy Childbirth*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2025, doi: 10.1186/s12884-025-08278-5.
 - [20] M. Vrankić Pavon, A. Wagner Jakab, and A. Löw, "Exploring relationship satisfaction in mothers of children with disabilities: the predictive role of interparental conflicts and moderating role of dyadic coping," *Front. Psychiatry*, vol. 14, no. January, pp. 1–13, 2023, doi: 10.3389/fpsy.2023.1307827.
 - [21] M. Rawat and S. T. Ojha, "Effect of relationship stress between parents on children ' s behavior Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION," vol. 10, no. 5, pp. 730–755, 2025.
 - [22] S. Molgora, V. Fenaroli, C. Acquati, A. De Donno, M. P. Baldini, and E. Saita, "Examining the role of dyadic coping on the marital adjustment of couples undergoing assisted reproductive technology (ART)," *Front. Psychol.*, vol. 10, no. March, pp. 1–14, 2019, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00415.
 - [23] L. S. Anderson, "Predictors of parenting stress in a diverse sample of parents of early adolescents in high-risk communities," *Nurs. Res.*, vol. 57, no. 5, pp. 340–350, 2008, doi: 10.1097/01.NNR.0000313502.92227.87.
 - [24] I. M. Tavares, H. E. Schlagintweit, P. J. Nobre, and N. O. Rosen, "Sexual well-being and perceived stress in couples transitioning to parenthood: A dyadic analysis," *Int. J. Clin. Heal. Psychol.*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 198–208, 2019, doi: 10.1016/j.ijchp.2019.07.004.
 - [25] V. Reindl, A. Lohaus, N. Heinrichs, and K. Konrad, "Parenting stress, dyadic coping and endocrine markers of stress and resilience in foster and biological mothers," *PLoS One*, vol. 19, no. 9, pp. 1–16, 2024, doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0310316.