

# **The impact of COVID-19 on working mothers across the globe: Coping with the pandemic through online women's forums**

Olga Zayts-Spence

University of Hong Kong

## Research team:

Zoe Fortune, City Mental Health Alliance HK, and University of Hong Kong

Mariana Lazzaro-Salazar, Universidad Católica del Maule, Chile

Sylvia Jaworska, the University of Reading, the UK

Tse Wai Sum, Vincent, the University of Hong Kong

## **Abstract**

COVID-19 has taken an enormous toll on working mothers who have struggled to sustain full time employment, while simultaneously dealing with the closure of childcare facilities and home schooling. In a recent survey of APAC countries, 43% of respondents (of both genders) in employment referred to childcare situation as one of the main stress factors (Oliver Wyman and CMHA HK, 2020). In this paper, we examine lived experiences of working mothers in popular online women's forums in three countries: Hong Kong, Chile and the UK. Using discourse analysis, we demonstrate striking similarities of the focal themes addressed by the working mothers across the globe, including coping mechanisms and resources, and mental health struggles. We discuss how through sharing their intersubjective experiences, the mothers also defer to the collective expertise of the online communities to make sense of the complex impacts of the pandemic on their professional and family lives, and to derive online support from each other in these testing times.