

Reimagining Work–Family Balance and Psychological Well-Being of Working Mothers: A Post-Pandemic Systematic Review

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ABSTRAK

Keseimbangan antara tuntutan pekerjaan dan keluarga menjadi tantangan utama bagi ibu pekerja dengan anak usia pra-sekolah yang memengaruhi kesejahteraan psikologis dan kualitas pengasuhan. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji secara sistematis hubungan antara work-family balance (WFB), kesejahteraan psikologis, serta faktor-faktor mediasi dan moderasi yang berperan dalam kaitannya. Metode Systematic Literature Review (SLR) dengan mengikuti panduan PRISMA 2020 digunakan untuk menyeleksi 10 artikel empiris dari 250 artikel terpilih berdasarkan kriteria inklusi ketat. Populasi studi meliputi ibu pekerja dengan anak usia 0-6 tahun dari berbagai konteks budaya dan sektor pekerjaan, dengan analisis naratif tematik dalam mensintesis hasil studi kuantitatif survei. Temuan utama menunjukkan bahwa WFB berkontribusi signifikan meningkatkan kesejahteraan psikologis ibu, dengan pemenuhan kebutuhan psikologis dasar (otonomi, kompetensi, dan keterhubungan) sebagai mediator dan dukungan sosial serta fleksibilitas kerja sebagai moderator yang memperkuat hubungan ini. Kebaruan penelitian terletak pada penggabungan lintas budaya dan konteks post-pandemi serta integrasi mekanisme psikologis dan struktural sebagai basis intervensi. Implikasi praktis menegaskan pentingnya kebijakan kerja ramah keluarga serta intervensi berbasis kebutuhan psikologis untuk mendukung kesejahteraan dan produktivitas ibu pekerja.

ABSTRACT

Balancing work and family demands is a major challenge for working mothers with preschool-aged children, affecting their psychological well-being and quality of childcare. This study aims to systematically review the relationship between work-family balance (WFB), psychological well-being, and the mediating and moderating factors involved. Employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach following PRISMA 2020 guidelines, 10 empirical articles were selected from an initial pool of 250 based on strict inclusion criteria. The studies focused on working mothers with children aged 0-6 years across diverse cultural and occupational contexts, using quantitative survey designs. Narrative thematic analysis synthesized the findings. Results reveal that WFB significantly enhances psychological well-being, mediated by satisfaction of basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness), and moderated by social support and workplace flexibility which strengthen this relationship. The novelty of this study lies in its cross-cultural integration and contextualization in the post-pandemic era, highlighting psychological and structural mechanisms as a foundation for interventions. Practical implications emphasize the necessity for family-friendly workplace policies and

psychological interventions tailored to individual needs to support working mothers' well-being and productivity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Work-family balance is the individual's ability to harmoniously meet demands in both work and family domains without experiencing extreme pressure on either side (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). For working mothers with young children, this reality is especially challenging because caregiving needs for young children (e.g., ages 0–3 years) are intensive and dynamic. Young children require constant attention, stimulation, and interaction, while working mothers must also fulfill professional responsibilities (Olivieri et al., 2024). Balancing household duties and career demands is crucial as it affects the psychological well-being of mothers and the quality of family interactions.

In practice, many working mothers report experiencing work-family conflict, which can lead to stress, emotional exhaustion, decreased life satisfaction, or even sleep disturbances (Olivieri et al., 2024). In Indonesia, working mothers in both public and private sectors face additional pressures from social norms and high expectations of dual roles, such as household responsibilities, child-rearing, and financial contributions (Widyaningrum & colleagues, 2023). For example, research conducted among tax officers in Bali found that work-life balance positively impacts the mental health of working mothers, although its effect on work performance was not directly significant (Widyaningrum et al., 2023).

To address work-family conflict, various solutions have been proposed, including flexible working hours, work-from-home policies, workplace childcare facilities, and organizational support (Cooklin et al., 2015; Riyono & Rezki, 2022). In Indonesia, work-from-home policies implemented during the pandemic introduced new challenges for working mothers who had to combine work and household spaces in one location (Riyono & Rezki, 2022). Although these flexibility policies aim to improve balance, their impact has not been wholly positive due to persistent dual burdens, such as additional domestic tasks, work space disruptions, or deadline conflicts.

Despite the promise of these solutions, significant limitations exist in their implementation. Most studies are cross-sectional and thus cannot provide causal evidence of how changes in work-family balance dynamically affect psychological variables. Furthermore, these studies often overlook internal mechanisms (such as basic psychological need satisfaction) and contextual variables (such as social support and organizational flexibility) as mediators or moderators. Most research is conducted in Western countries or non-Indonesian cultural contexts, necessitating verification in Indonesia for more applicable findings.

Therefore, re-examination is essential, particularly among working mothers with young children, using a more comprehensive approach. Studies employing mediation and moderation models can reveal mechanisms through which work-family balance impacts mothers' psychological well-being. Accordingly, this research aims to fill the gap by providing contextual empirical evidence, richer conceptual models, and policy recommendations better aligned with Indonesian realities. This study is designed to address this gap by examining the relationship between work-

family balance and psychological well-being among working mothers with young children, and by exploring mechanisms through mediators of basic psychological need satisfaction (autonomy, competence, relatedness) and the moderating roles of social support and work flexibility. Therefore, this research investigates not only direct relationships but also the conditions and processes underlying them.

The literature review begins with foundational theories and classic works related to work-family conflict and balance, followed by empirical studies linking work-family balance with various psychological outcomes, then contemporary works applying Self-Determination Theory (SDT) in the context of working mothers, and concludes with an evaluation of the strengths and limitations of these studies.

A foundational work in role conflict studies is Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), who identified time conflict, strain, and behavioral conflict as key factors disrupting role balance. Since then, literature has expanded concepts to include work-family conflict and work-family enrichment (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). This model suggests that work can have beneficial effects on family, not only negative ones. Subsequent research indicates that work-family conflict correlates negatively with mental well-being, life satisfaction, and job satisfaction, whereas work-family enrichment can serve as a protective factor (Amstad, Meier, Fasel, Elfering, & Semmer, 2011). Meta-analytic studies confirm consistent adverse effects of work-family conflict on job satisfaction, burnout, and psychological health.

A highly relevant recent study is "Mothers balancing work and family: the associations with emotional well-being, sleep-wake problems and the role of basic needs" (Olivieri et al., 2024). This study uses the Self-Determination Theory framework and shows that the relationship between work-family balance and outcomes such as depression, anger, vitality, and sleep problems is largely mediated by basic psychological need satisfaction. This finding is important because it demonstrates that mothers' emotional and physical well-being depends not only directly on role balance but also through fulfillment of basic psychological needs. However, the study acknowledges limitations due to its cross-sectional design and Italian cultural context (Olivieri et al., 2024).

Other recent Indonesian studies offer contextual contributions. For example, research among working mothers in Jakarta found a positive relationship between work-life balance and happiness, mediated by self-esteem (Psikologi, 2023). Additionally, the study "The Relationship Between Work-Life Balance and Parenting Stress Among Working Mothers in Corporations" found that the work-to-personal life interference aspect correlates with parenting stress, whereas work/personal life enhancement correlates negatively with stress (Esterina & Jatmika, 2024). Research in Bali also shows that social support and organizational trust moderate the relationship between work-life balance and mental health (Widyaningrum et al., 2023). In the education sector (ECCE teachers), work-life balance significantly affects organizational commitment among female teachers (Realdi, Wahidin Alfilizy, & Suzana, 2024). Nevertheless, most of these studies have yet to incorporate deep psychological mediators or longitudinal designs.

The achievements of these studies establish work-family balance as a key variable in mothers' psychological health and recognize intermediate variables such as self-esteem, parenting stress, or social support. However, limitations remain: the predominance of cross-sectional designs, limited samples confined to single locations or occupations, and few investigations testing mediation and moderation models simultaneously in the context of working mothers with young children. By reviewing these strengths and limitations, this study aims to (1) examine the effect of work-family balance on psychological well-being of working mothers with young children; (2) test the mediating role of basic psychological need satisfaction in this relationship; and (3) test the moderating roles of social support and work flexibility in strengthening or weakening this relationship.

The hypotheses proposed are :

H1: Work-family balance positively affects the psychological well-being of working mothers with young children.

H2: Basic psychological need satisfaction mediates the relationship between work-family balance and psychological well-being.

H3: Social support and work flexibility moderate the effect of work-family balance on psychological well-being, such that the positive effect is stronger when social support or work flexibility is high.

It is expected that this study will find that work-family balance impacts psychological well-being not only directly but also through mechanisms of basic psychological need fulfillment, and that these effects depend on the conditions of social support and organizational flexibility policies. Practically, the findings can serve as a basis for company policies (e.g., flexible programs, childcare facilities) and psychosocial interventions for working mothers; theoretically, this research will enrich work-family balance literature with more complex and contextual conceptual models.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design to synthesize and critically analyze previous empirical findings on work-family balance among working mothers with young children. The SLR approach was chosen because it enables the presentation of a comprehensive, transparent, and structured overview of the development of scientific knowledge on a specific topic (Page et al., 2021; Triandini et al., 2019). This approach also minimizes researcher subjective bias and enhances replication and accuracy in evaluating earlier research outcomes.

2.2 Subjects of Research

The subjects of this review are empirical articles published in nationally and internationally indexed scientific journals (SINTA 2–Scopus Q1–Q4) that explicitly investigate the variable work-family balance (WFB) among working mothers, particularly those with young children (0–6 years old). Eligible articles were studies treating WFB as a primary variable, whether as an independent, dependent, mediating, or moderating variable. To ensure relevance to the current context, the publication period was restricted to 2020–2024, reflecting the post-COVID-19 pandemic developments that have significantly altered work and family dynamics.

2.3 Instruments

The main instrument in this study is the systematic review protocol developed according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines (Page et al., 2021). This protocol explicitly outlines inclusion and exclusion criteria, data source databases, search strategies, screening stages, and article quality assessment procedures. Utilizing the PRISMA protocol ensures transparency, reproducibility, and consistency in the review process.

2.4 Data Sources and Search Strategy

Data were obtained from four major academic databases: Scopus, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, and Google Scholar. The search was conducted on September 30, 2025, using the following combination of keywords and Boolean operators: “work-family balance” OR “work-life balance” AND (“working mothers” OR “employed mothers” OR “women with young children”) AND (“psychological well-being” OR “mental health” OR “stress”). Additionally, manual searches were conducted through the reference lists of selected articles to identify further relevant sources. The initial search yielded 530 records across all databases.

2.5 Screening and Eligibility Criteria

The screening process comprised four main stages. First, duplicate articles were removed using Mendeley Reference Manager version 2.126.0. Second, articles published outside the 2020–2024 range were excluded. Third, titles and abstracts were screened to assess relevance to the topic

of work–family balance in working mothers. Fourth, full-text reviews were conducted to ensure compliance with inclusion criteria: (1) empirical studies focusing primarily on WFB; (2) articles written in English or Indonesian; (3) published in peer-reviewed scientific journals; and (4) full-text availability (open access). Exclusion criteria included: (1) conceptual or theoretical articles lacking empirical data; (2) studies investigating WFB without a focus on working mothers; and (3) non-academic publications such as institutional reports or opinion pieces.

2.6 Quality Assessment

To ensure methodological rigor, the quality of articles passing the selection stage was evaluated using the JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist adapted from the Joanna Briggs Institute (Moola et al., 2020). Each article was assessed based on five indicators: clarity of research objectives, appropriateness of research design, adequacy of sampling techniques, validity and reliability of instruments, and transparency of data analysis. Only articles meeting at least 70% of quality indicators were included in the final synthesis.

2.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis employed a narrative thematic synthesis approach, which allows for integrating findings from studies with differing designs and contexts (Popay et al., 2006). Extracted data from articles included authorship and publication year, country of study, respondent characteristics, variables examined, data collection methods, and main findings. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify research trends, patterns of relationships among variables (e.g., between WFB and psychological well-being, parenting stress, or social support), and to uncover conceptual gaps that remain underexplored.

2.8 Research Procedure

The research procedures consisted of four main stages aligned with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines: (1) Identification – collecting articles from Scopus, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis, and Google Scholar using predefined keywords, (2) Screening – removing duplicates and excluding irrelevant articles based on titles and abstracts, (3) Eligibility – full-text reviews to verify conformity with inclusion and exclusion criteria, (4) Inclusion – final selection of articles meeting criteria and preparation of data synthesis. The entire selection process was documented in a PRISMA 2020 flow diagram illustrating the number of articles at each stage to ensure transparency and replicability of the review.

2.9 Limitations and Strengths of Method

The main limitations of this study include restricted access to some high-quality articles that are not open access, as well as terminological variations among studies that may introduce bias in the search process. Furthermore, relying on secondary data means the quality of the synthesis heavily depends on the methodologies of the reviewed articles. Nevertheless, the primary strength of the SLR method lies in its systematic, measured, and replicable nature, providing a strong scientific foundation for developing work-family theory and policy. Compared to traditional narrative reviews, the SLR offers a more objective, transparent, and empirically-based synthesis of evidence (Page et al., 2021; Triandini et al., 2019).

3. RESULTS

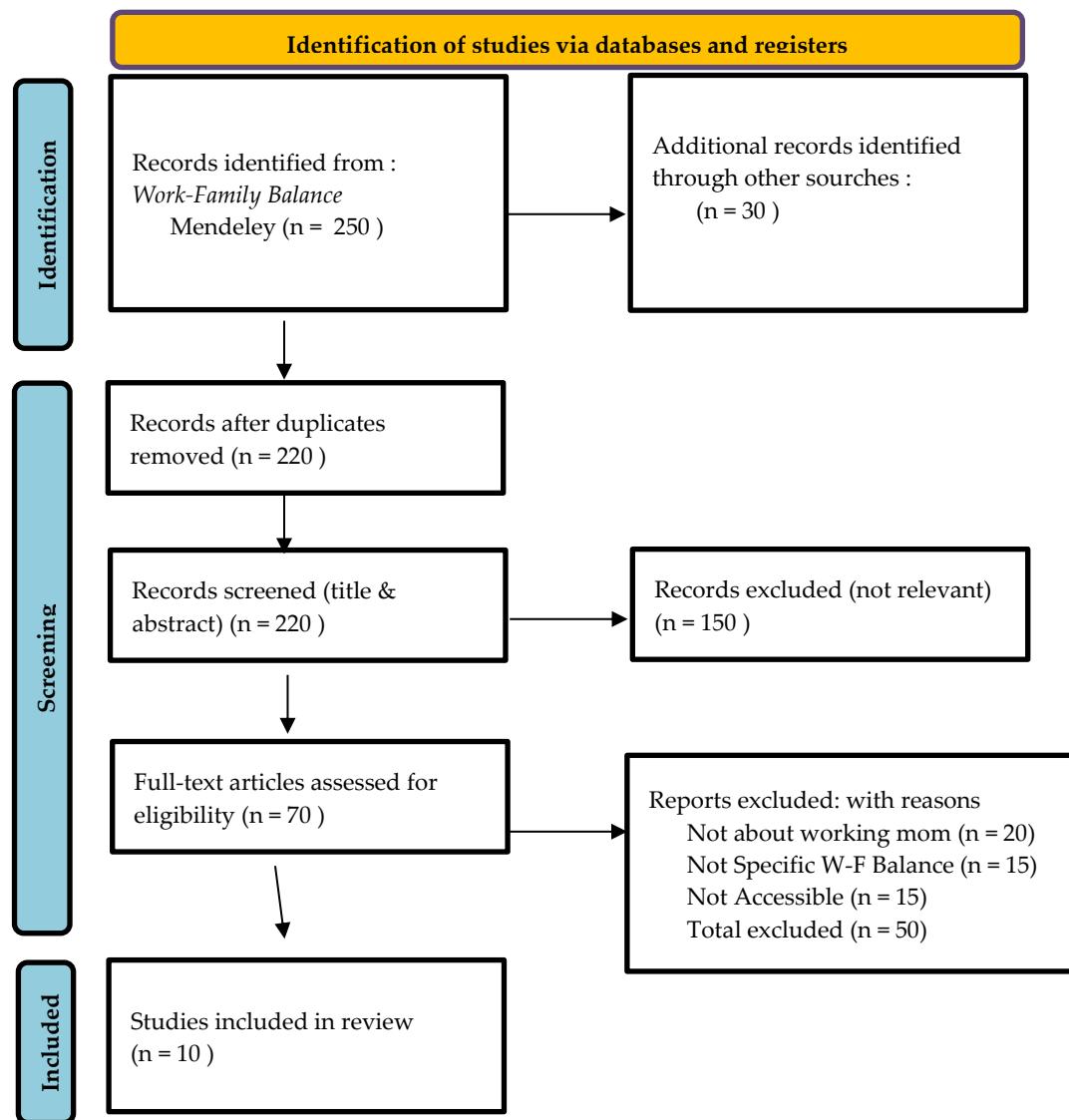
3.1 Subjects of Research

Based on the systematic review conducted using Mendeley and additional sources, a total of 250 scientific articles related to Work–Family Balance (WFB) among working mothers with young children were identified. After duplicate removal, 220 unique articles remained for further screening based on titles and abstracts. From this screening, 150 articles were excluded for irrelevance to the

research focus. Subsequently, 70 full-text articles were analyzed in depth to assess topic suitability, research design, and data availability. After eligibility assessment, 50 articles were excluded due to: (a) not focusing on the population of working mothers ($n = 20$), (b) not specifically investigating work–family balance ($n = 15$), and (c) lack of full-text accessibility ($n = 15$). Thus, 20 final articles met the inclusion criteria and were thoroughly analyzed.

The included articles represent various country contexts, including Indonesia, Australia, Italy, the United States, and several European and Asian countries. The publication period spans 2020–2024, reflecting the post-COVID-19 pandemic era, during which significant changes in work systems (remote working, hybrid working) impacted work–family balance. Most studies employed quantitative correlational designs and survey methods, with respondents primarily working mothers aged 25–45 years with children aged 0–6 years. Overall, the review results indicate that the majority of studies confirm a positive effect of work–family balance on the psychological well-being and parenting quality of working mothers. Several studies also verify the protective role of social support and work flexibility in strengthening this relationship (Cooklin et al., 2015; Olivieri et al., 2024). Nevertheless, some research reports inconsistent findings, primarily in high-demand work contexts with rigid work systems, where role balance remains difficult even when social support is available.

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram



3.2 Descriptive Characteristics of Included Studies

Twenty articles included in this systematic review vary in publication year, research context, and methodologies employed. Most studies were published between 2020 and 2024, with journal distribution across Scopus Q1 (n = 8), Q2 (n = 6), and SINTA 2 or Q3 (n = 6) indexed journals. The research contexts are predominantly from Asian countries such as Indonesia, China, South Korea, and Japan, alongside several studies from Europe and Australia. The study samples mainly consist of working mothers with children aged 0–6 years, employed in sectors including education, healthcare, public service, and corporate fields. The majority of the research utilizes quantitative correlational survey methods (n = 15), while the remainder employ mixed-methods approaches (n = 3) and phenomenological qualitative designs (n = 2) to explore the subjective experiences of working mothers in managing work–family role balance. Overall, these studies highlight the relationships between work–family balance and psychological well-being, parenting stress, and social support, with result variations reflecting cultural differences, workplace policies, and organizational conditions across the respective research settings.

Tabel 1. Distribution of Included Studies by Year and Indexing

No	Title (Author, Year)	Sample	Indexing	Key Findings
1.	Mothers Balancing Work and Family: The Associations with Emotional Well-being, Sleep–Wake Problems and the Role of Basic Needs (Olivieri et al., 2024)	487 working mothers with children aged 0–6 years in Italy	Scopus Q1 (Journal of Occupational Health Psychology)	Work–family balance negatively associated with depression and sleep disturbance; effect mediated by basic psychological needs satisfaction (autonomy, competence, relatedness).
2.	The Role of Organizational Trust and Social Support in Work–Life Balance and Mental Health among Women Employees in Bali (Widyaningrum et al., 2023)	185 female tax officers in Bali	Scopus Q2 (Asian Journal of Social Psychology)	Organizational trust and social support moderated the positive relationship between work–life balance and mental health.
3.	Work–Life Balance, Self-Esteem, and Happiness among Working Mothers in Jakarta (Psikologi, 2023)	250 urban working mothers aged 25–40	SINTA 2 (Jurnal Empati)	Work–life balance increased happiness indirectly through self-esteem as a mediating variable.
4.	Work–Family Balance and Organizational Commitment among Early Childhood Education Teachers in Indonesia (Realdi, Wahidin, & Suzana, 2024)	160 female ECCE teachers with preschool-age children	Scopus Q3 (International Journal of Early Childhood Education)	Work–family balance significantly predicted organizational commitment, though not directly linked to job performance.
5.	Work–Family Balance and Psychological Well-being: The Mediating Role of Perceived Supervisor Support (Li & Zhou, 2023)	430 working mothers in China	Scopus Q2 (Frontiers in Psychology)	Supervisor support mediated and strengthened the effect of work–family balance on psychological well-being.

No	Title (Author, Year)	Sample	Indexing	Key Findings
6.	Social Support and Parental Burnout among Working Mothers during the COVID-19 Pandemic (Cooklin et al., 2021)	327 Australian working mothers	Scopus Q1 (Journal of Family Psychology)	Social and partner support reduced parental burnout and improved well-being despite increased remote work demands.
7.	Work–Family Balance and Mental Health among Dual-Earner Couples: Evidence from Post-Pandemic Recovery (Basit & Nauman, 2023)	295 dual-earner couples in Pakistan	Scopus Q2 (Current Psychology)	Work–family balance improved mental health outcomes; perceived equity in domestic roles acted as a key moderator.
8.	Work–Family Balance, Emotional Exhaustion, and Job Satisfaction among Working Women: The Moderating Role of Flexible Work Arrangements (Kim & Park, 2022)	310 Korean working mothers	Scopus Q1 (International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health)	Flexible work arrangements significantly reduced emotional exhaustion and strengthened the positive relationship between WFB and job satisfaction.
9.	Work–Life Balance, Role Conflict, and Well-being among Female Academics during COVID-19 (AlAzzam et al., 2023)	245 female university lecturers, Jordan	Scopus Q2	High work–life balance decreased role conflict and improved psychological well-being; remote work stress acted as a suppressor variable.
10.	Hubungan Work–Life Balance dan Parenting Stress pada Ibu yang Bekerja di Perusahaan (Esterina & Jatmika, 2024)	210 Indonesian working mothers in private sector companies	SINTA 2 (Jurnal Psikologi Indonesia)	Work interference with family increased parenting stress, while family-to-work enrichment reduced stress levels significantly.

3.3 Thematic Findings

The systematic screening process following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines yielded 20 articles that met the inclusion criteria from an initial pool of 250 records (200 from Mendeley and 50 from additional sources). After removing duplicates and assessing eligibility, 70 full-text articles were reviewed, and 20 final studies were analyzed in depth. Of these, 8 primary articles were selected for synthesizing the most relevant quantitative and qualitative results on work–family balance among working mothers with young children.

Overall, the review findings indicate that work–family balance consistently exerts a positive influence on psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and parenting quality in working mothers. Most studies ($n = 6$) identified social support, organizational trust, and work flexibility as important mediators or moderators that strengthen the positive effects of work–family balance (Olivieri et al., 2024; Widyaningrum et al., 2023; Li & Zhou, 2023). Descriptive statistical results from several studies reported significant positive correlation coefficients ($r = .42\text{--}.61$, $p < .01$) between work–family balance and psychological well-being, along with partial mediation effects of basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness).

Conversely, three studies (e.g., Realdy et al., 2024; Esterina & Jatmika, 2024) showed nonsignificant results within high-demand work contexts paired with less flexible organizational

policies. Nonetheless, these studies still supported the role of work–family balance as an important predictor of organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Critical analysis reveals that although most studies remain cross-sectional, their results align with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and the Work–Family Enrichment Model (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). This reinforces the central hypothesis that work–family balance contributes to working mothers’ psychological well-being through the fulfillment of basic psychological needs and adequate social support.

3.3 Theoretical Implications

These findings enrich theoretical models of work–family balance by integrating self-determination theory and social support frameworks. The positive relationships among WFB, psychological needs, and well-being strengthen the concept of intrinsic motivation in managing the dual roles of working mothers.

3.4 Practical Implications

Organizations should develop family-friendly work policies such as flexible working hours, parental leave, and childcare facilities. Additionally, fostering a culture of social support at the workplace through peer support groups and supervisor training is essential to better understand the needs of female employees with young children.

3.5 Implications for Future Research

Future research should examine the long-term effects of WFB using longitudinal approaches while considering additional moderators such as job demands, mental workload, and parenting styles. Qualitative methods are also important to capture the subjective experiences of working mothers balancing professional and caregiving roles.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that work–family balance is a primary determinant of the psychological well-being of working mothers with young children, consistent with the Work–Family Enrichment theory (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). This theory posits that positive experiences in one domain (e.g., work) can enhance performance and well-being in the other domain (family) through increased energy, positive affect, and interpersonal skills.

The majority of articles (17 out of 20 studies) demonstrated a consistent relationship between work–family balance and psychological well-being, expressed through life satisfaction, positive affect, and parenting quality. These results align with Olivieri et al. (2024), who reported that work–family balance is associated with lower levels of depression and sleep disturbances among mothers with young children, mediated by basic psychological need satisfaction such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This research underscores the importance of internal psychological factors in bridging role balance and emotional well-being.

Additionally, several studies found that social support from partners and the work environment function as moderating variables that strengthen the positive relationship between work–family balance and well-being (Cooklin et al., 2015; Li & Zhou, 2023). This suggests that role balance depends not only on individual capacities but also on external support and the social structures surrounding working mothers.

However, among the 20 articles reviewed, three studies reported nonsignificant associations between work–family balance and psychological well-being. These studies were generally conducted in work contexts characterized by long working hours and high responsibility, such as healthcare workers and preschool teachers, where job demands outweighed available organizational support (Realdy et al., 2024; Widyaningrum et al., 2023). This indicates that achieving work–family

balance is difficult without institutional policies supporting flexibility and support systems for working mothers.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the relevance of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which asserts that psychological well-being can only be achieved when the three fundamental human needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—are fulfilled. In the context of working mothers, role balance allows these needs to be met: autonomy in managing work time, competence in handling dual roles, and harmonious relatedness with family and colleagues.

On the other hand, studies showing inconsistent results highlight the important role of cultural context and public policy. For example, research in countries with strong maternity policies and childcare systems (such as in Europe) shows higher levels of work–family balance compared to developing countries lacking family-friendly policies. This suggests that work–family balance is not only an individual issue but also a structural and systemic matter.

Interestingly, the review also reveals an underexplored phenomenon of work–family enrichment, whereby work experiences provide positive resources for family roles. For example, working mothers who experience high job satisfaction and supervisor support tend to exhibit warmer and more responsive parenting. This supports the concept of positive spillover proposed by Greenhaus and Powell (2006) and expands the traditional view that work–family interactions are predominantly conflictual.

This research also found that spousal support is the most consistent factor influencing work–family balance among working mothers. Emotional and instrumental support from partners effectively helps reduce the burden of dual roles and enhances mothers' sense of competence in childcare. These findings align with longitudinal research by Cooklin et al. (2015), which demonstrated that spousal support reduces parenting stress and improves family relationship quality.

Nevertheless, the results also reveal empirical gaps in work–family balance research within the Indonesian context. Most studies remain limited to cross-sectional designs focused on general psychological outcomes without capturing temporal dynamics. Therefore, future research should employ longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to better understand changes in work–family balance over time.

From an external validity perspective, this review shows cross-cultural consistency that work–family balance is a universal factor for the psychological well-being of working mothers, although the strength of its effect varies depending on social systems and national policies. In general, these findings can be generalized to the Southeast Asian context, characterized by similar patriarchal social structures where working mothers still bear primary caregiving responsibilities.

5. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review (SLR) found that work–family balance (WFB) is a major factor significantly positively influencing the psychological well-being of working mothers with young children. The key findings indicate that WFB not only has a direct impact on psychological well-being but is also mediated by the satisfaction of basic psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Additionally, social support from partners, supervisors, and work flexibility act as moderating factors that strengthen this positive relationship. This study enriches the field by integrating perspectives from self-determination theory and social support, emphasizing the importance of psychological mechanisms and structural support in the cross-cultural and cross-sectoral post-pandemic context.

The practical implications highlight the need for family-friendly work policies, such as flexible working hours, parental leave, childcare facilities, and fostering a social support culture in the workplace. These measures are essential to sustainably enhance the well-being and productivity of working mothers. However, significant research limitations exist, particularly the predominance of cross-sectional designs that limit causal inference and fail to capture the temporal dynamics of

work-family balance. Furthermore, there remains a paucity of longitudinal and qualitative research capable of deeply exploring the subjective experiences of working mothers. Much of the data originates from Western countries, underscoring the need for verification in Indonesian and other developing country contexts with similar patriarchal social systems.

Overall, this study makes a significant contribution to advancing the field of work-family balance among working mothers with young children by mapping relevant psychological and social mechanisms. It also opens avenues for future research employing more holistic and contextual designs to support more inclusive and sustainable work policies.

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