

A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE STRESS EXPERIENCED BY WORKING MOTHERS

Zakirova Oyniso

Senior Lecturer

University of Digital Economics and Agrotechnologies

Annotation. *This paper examines the significant stressors faced by working mothers and their impact on mental health, parenting behaviors, and professional well-being. Through a systematic literature review, key factors such as work-family conflict, role overload, workplace policies, and social support systems are analyzed. The study highlights how chronic stress affects parenting quality and child development while also influencing career growth and overall quality of life. The findings emphasize the need for comprehensive support mechanisms, including flexible workplace policies, mental health initiatives, and personal coping strategies. By integrating individual and institutional approaches, sustainable solutions can be developed to support working mothers effectively.*

Keywords: *Working mothers, stress, work-family conflict, parenting, mental health, coping mechanisms, workplace policies, role overload, burnout, work-life balance, employee well-being.*

Thesis. The stress experienced by working mothers has profound implications for their mental health, parenting behaviors, and overall quality of life. Balancing professional responsibilities with familial duties presents significant challenges that can lead to emotional exhaustion, reduced psychological well-being, and impaired work performance. High levels of stress in working mothers can lead to symptoms of depression and irritability, further impacting their parenting behaviors (Noriza et al., 2023). This systematic literature review examines the primary sources of stress affecting working mothers, including work-family conflict, role overload, inadequate social support, and workplace demands.

Chronic stress has been linked to heightened risks of anxiety, depression, and burnout, as well as negative impacts on parenting quality and child development (Limbers et al., 2020).

Work-family conflict is one of the most significant stressors experienced by working mothers. The need to simultaneously fulfill professional obligations and caregiving responsibilities often leads to time constraints, emotional strain, and psychological distress. Work-family conflict arises when professional and domestic obligations compete for time and energy, creating emotional strain and tension (Allan, Loudoun, & Peetz, 2007; Kadarko, Salleh, & Abdullah, 2016). Many mothers struggle to maintain a balance between meeting job expectations and providing adequate care for their children. The inability to dedicate sufficient time to either domain can result in guilt, frustration, and heightened anxiety. Furthermore, workplaces with inflexible schedules and limited parental support exacerbate these challenges, increasing stress levels among working mothers (Bernhardt & Recksiedler, 2022).

Another key factor contributing to stress is role overload. Managing household responsibilities alongside workplace demands can exceed an individual's capacity, resulting in fatigue, stress, and a pervasive sense of being overwhelmed (Gardazi, Mobeen, & Ali Gardazi, 2016). Working mothers frequently report experiencing burnout due to the constant pressure to perform efficiently in both professional and personal roles. Limited social support from family, partners, and colleagues also intensifies stress levels (Kadale, Pandey, & Raje, 2018). Moreover, inflexible workplace policies that fail to accommodate caregiving responsibilities further exacerbate these challenges.

This review also highlights the impact of workplace policies and organizational culture on the stress levels of working mothers. Work environments that do not accommodate the needs of mothers, such as rigid work hours, lack of maternity leave, and unsupportive leadership, contribute to increased stress (Kadarko, Salleh, & Abdullah, 2016). Conversely, workplaces that offer family-friendly policies, such as remote work options, flexible hours, and on-site

childcare, can significantly reduce the stress experienced by working mothers, leading to improved well-being and job satisfaction (Ferri et al., 2016).

The consequences of chronic stress among working mothers extend beyond individual well-being, affecting family dynamics and child development. High levels of maternal stress have been linked to reduced responsiveness in parenting, lower emotional availability, and increased irritability (Hibel et al., 2012). Children of highly stressed mothers may experience behavioral challenges, difficulties in emotional regulation, and a heightened risk of anxiety disorders (Dr. Satija, 2023; Rönkä et al., 2017). Ensuring that working mothers have adequate support is essential for promoting positive parenting practices and fostering healthy child development.

To mitigate stress, several coping mechanisms and interventions have been explored. One of the most effective strategies is engaging in regular physical activity, which has been shown to reduce stress hormones, improve mood, and enhance overall well-being (Mailey & McAuley, 2014). Exercise not only benefits mental health but also strengthens resilience, enabling mothers to manage stress more effectively. Additionally, workplace reforms that promote work-life balance, such as offering paid parental leave, introducing flexible schedules, and implementing mental health support programs, have proven beneficial in reducing stress among working mothers (Limbers et al., 2020).

Social support networks play a crucial role in stress reduction. The presence of strong family, peer, and community support systems has been associated with lower stress levels and improved overall quality of life (Kadale, Pandey, & Raje, 2018). Mothers who receive emotional and practical support from their partners, extended family, or friends report a greater sense of well-being and satisfaction. Encouraging a culture of shared responsibilities in households and promoting equitable parenting practices can further alleviate stress among working mothers.

The findings of this review suggest that a holistic approach is necessary to address the stress experienced by working mothers. Combining individual coping strategies with institutional support systems is essential for fostering a supportive

environment. Future research should focus on assessing the long-term effectiveness of workplace policies, exploring the role of technological advancements in facilitating work-life balance, and developing tailored interventions to address the unique stressors faced by working mothers across different socio-economic backgrounds.

In conclusion, the stress faced by working mothers is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires targeted solutions. Addressing work-family conflict, implementing flexible workplace policies, strengthening social support networks, and promoting mental health initiatives are crucial steps toward reducing stress and enhancing the overall well-being of working mothers. By acknowledging and addressing these challenges, policymakers, employers, and society as a whole can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that empowers working mothers to thrive both professionally and personally.

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