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Research Article

Conflict and Harmony in Work and Family: A Bibliometric Perspective on Work-life Balance

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Abstract

This study analyzes publication trends and historical patterns in *Work-Family Conflict* (WFC) literature using bibliometric analysis. Data were obtained from Scopus, Sinta, and Google Scholar using the keywords *work-family conflict, work-life balance,* and *work stress* within the 2020-2025 period. Articles were filtered using *Publish or Perish* in the fields of management, accounting, psychology, and social sciences. The findings indicate that WFC research has evolved from role conflict conceptualization (1990-2005) to organizational and psychological factors (2006-2018), and the impact of technology and the pandemic (2019-present). Publications have increased significantly since 2020, with the highest contributions from the US, UK, Canada, China, and Australia. Leading journals include the *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, and *Work & Stress*. WFC negatively affects employee well-being, job satisfaction, and family relationships, while also increasing turnover and reducing company productivity. Research gaps remain, particularly in developing countries and in exploring hybrid work models and technology. Future studies should examine labor policies and cultural factors to promote sustainable work-family balance.

Keywords

Work-Family Conflict, Work-Life Balance, Work Stress, Employee Well-Being

1. Introduction

Work-Family Conflict (WFC) is a critical issue in the fields of vocational studies and human resource management [1]. In modern life, individuals often struggle to balance work and family responsibilities, leading to conflicts between the two domains. The complexity of work structures, shifts in family dynamics, and evolving social expectations further amplify the urgency of understanding and addressing this issue [2]. Organizations must acknowledge and mitigate the impact of WFC to enhance employee well-being [3, 4], job satisfaction [5], and overall performance [6]. The consequences of WFC extend beyond individuals, influencing organizational effectiveness and the overall work environment.

On a global scale, the role of fathers in work-family conflict has gained increasing attention [7]. Traditional norms that position fathers as the primary breadwinners have undergone significant changes, with fathers now playing a more active

role in family responsibilities [8]. However, cultural and organizational barriers still contribute to conflicts between their roles as employees and family members. Gender bias and societal expectations further complicate this dilemma [9]. Studies reveal that a lack of support from supervisors and colleagues exacerbates WFC in the workplace [10]. However, fostering a more inclusive organizational culture can help alleviate these conflicts and promote greater gender equality at work [11].

This article also employs bibliometric analysis to identify patterns and research developments related to WFC, particularly regarding fathers' roles in work-family balance. A deeper understanding of fathers' perspectives is essential for designing policies that support work-life balance and enhance family well-being on a global scale. Conducting a bibliometric study on work-life balance requires a systematic and precise approach, including selecting appropriate databases, developing a comprehensive search strategy, and employing bibliometric analysis techniques such as citation analysis and network mapping. With a careful and structured methodology, this study can provide valuable insights into research trends, identify gaps that warrant further investigation, and support the development of more inclusive and sustainable organizational policies and practices for managing work-life balance.

This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of existing research on work-family conflict (WFC). Specifically, it seeks to identify key authors, institutions, and publications in this field while analyzing historical patterns in publishing and citation trends. Accordingly, this research aims to address the following key questions:

1. What are the main themes, topics, and trends in the literature on work-family conflict over time?
2. What are the latest publication trends based on year, country affiliation, journal, author, and citation count?
3. What is the significance of work-family conflict for employees and employers?
4. What are the existing gaps in the literature, and what directions should future research take?

2. Literature Review

Research on work-family conflict (WFC) is largely based on role theory. According to [12] a role is shaped by others' expectations regarding behaviors deemed appropriate for a particular position. Role conflict arises when individuals face conflicting demands between their work and family roles, leading to psychological stress. Work-family conflict operates in two directions: (1) work-family conflict (WFC) occurs when work responsibilities interfere with family obligations, whereas (2) family-work conflict (FWC) arises when family activities disrupt workplace performance [2, 13]. J. H. Greenhaus & Beutell (1985)i dentified three types of work-family conflict: time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based conflict. Among these, time-based and strain-based conflict are more commonly used in research due to their stronger predictive validity.

Conflict occurs when there is a misalignment of goals, leading to behavioral disagreements within individuals, groups, or organizations [14]. Workplace conflict emerges when employees disagree due to opposing interests, personalities, beliefs, or ideas [2]. It can manifest in various ways, including lack of cooperation, verbal insults, intimidation, anger, poor work quality or delayed tasks, project failures, and more.

Research on work-family conflict (WFC) is largely based on role theory. According to [12], a role is shaped by others' expectations regarding behaviors deemed appropriate for a particular position. Role conflict arises when individuals face conflicting demands between their work and family roles, which can lead to psychological stress. Dual-role conflict refers to a form of inter-role conflict where pressures from work and family are incompatible with each other [2]. Work-family conflict is the incompatibility between role expectations due to differing demands from work and family, leading to role pressures that contradict each other [15]. Other researchers define work-family conflict as a situation in which employees struggle to balance work responsibilities and family obligations, making it difficult to distinguish whether work interferes with family life or vice versa [16].

Work-family conflict was defined by Greenhaus and Beutell in 1985 as a type of interrole conflict (conflicting pressures arising from an individual's multiple roles) in which work and family responsibilities are incompatible in terms of time and performance [17]. This type of conflict is described as a role conflict in which work and family roles cannot be performed simultaneously in certain situations. This phenomenon is often observed among female employees who juggle dual roles—managing both their professional responsibilities and family obligations.

Work-family conflict arises due to an imbalance in managing work and family responsibilities [18]. It is believed that the amount of time spent at work directly reduces the time available for non-work activities, such as household responsibilities. Work-family conflict occurs when individuals dedicate their time and effort solely to fulfilling professional obligations, leaving only limited time for family responsibilities, which in turn creates difficulties in managing both [9]. Other researchers argue that work-family conflict occurs when participation in work and family roles is incompatible [19]. Consequently, increased participation in one role makes it more difficult to participate in the other, leading to pressure and tension between work and family domains.

Based on these definitions, work-family conflict can be summarized as a situation in which individuals experience conflict due to their dual roles in both work and family domains. The concept of work-family conflict has received significant attention in the literature due to its impact on various individual outcomes. Several scholars have explored the negative consequences of this conflict, which are explained through various theories, including the following:

From the table above, it can be concluded that psychological and physical strain can arise due to expectations related to work and family roles. The principles of Role Theory are influenced by classical management principles, such as the unity of command and chain of command principles [12]. The fundamental reasoning behind this theory is that if an individual receives instructions from more than one supervisor for the same role, it can lead to confusion. Conflict experienced within a single role leads to intra-role conflict, which is a form of role conflict. Meanwhile, conflicts between different roles result in work-family conflict. Role Theory also suggests that different roles generate stress, including role overload, role conflict, and role ambiguity, all of which contribute to tension [12]. Varying expectations within a role can lead to intra-role conflict. When pressure in one role replaces pressure in another, it can result in inter-role conflict. The accumulation of expectations from different roles can further increase feelings of overload in both roles [20]. However, some studies have found contrasting results, indicating that performing multiple roles simultaneously can actually enhance physical well-being [21].

Spillover Theory suggests that work and family domains influence each other in both positive and negative ways, affecting tasks, time, emotions, stress, behavior, and attitudes [22]. This theory distinguishes between:

1. Work-to-Family Conflict (Work Interferes with Family) - When work-related stress disrupts family commitments.
2. Family-to-Work Conflict (Family Interferes with Work) - When family responsibilities hinder work performance [23].

Unlike Role Theory, which primarily focuses on conflict, Spillover Theory highlights crossover effects between work and family roles, helping explain how one influences the other.

Self-Discrepancy Theory explains that psychological distress arises from the gap between an individual's self-perception and reality, leading to unhappiness, anxiety, and guilt [24]. Social Identity Theory suggests that individuals conform to social group norms, with their role intensity depending on relationships and shared goals [25]. Strong identification with a role increases commitment, requiring more energy and time [26]. Social Exchange Theory states that relationships function through a system of rewards and costs. When benefits exceed costs, relationships are perceived positively; otherwise, they become negative [27].

Van Bezouw et al. (2021) explored the relationship between social exchange theory and work-family conflict, emphasizing that work-life benefits positively influence Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). Employees feel a sense of obligation to put in extra effort in exchange for additional family-related benefits, highlighting the significance of social exchange dimensions.

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) identified three types of work-family conflict:

1. Time-based conflict - Occurs when time spent fulfilling one role prevents engagement in another, leading to an inability to balance work and family responsibilities.
2. Strain-based conflict - Results from stress in one role affecting performance in another, manifesting as anxiety, irritability, or physical symptoms like headaches.
3. Behavior-based conflict - Arises when behaviors expected in one role are incompatible with those required in another.

Gutek & Larwood further categorized Work-Family Conflict into:

1. Work interference with family (WIF) - When job demands disrupt family commitments.
2. Family interference with work (FIW) - When family responsibilities hinder work performance.

Work-Family Conflict affects both professional and personal life, leading to stress, reduced job satisfaction, and career stagnation. Organizations must recognize and manage these conflicts effectively to support employee well-being and long-term performance.

3. Materials and Methods

The data for this bibliometric analysis was obtained from articles indexed in Scopus, Sinta, and other indexed publications available on Google Scholar. The keywords used to identify relevant studies based on the title were *work-family conflict*, *work-life balance*, and *work stress*. The reliability and consistency of the data were evaluated by verifying country names and titles, which may have been abbreviated or displayed in different formats.

Google Scholar was chosen as a database for two main reasons. First, it provides a vast number of data sources, including citations and abstracts from books and peer-reviewed journals. Second, compared to Web of Science and Scopus, Google Scholar allows both early-career and advanced researchers easier access to detailed information, literature extraction, and the evaluation of references from relevant publications in social sciences.

4. Results

Based on a bibliometric analysis conducted using the Publish or Perish tool, this study focuses on the topic "work family conflict; work life balance; work stress". The data was sourced from Google Scholar, resulting in the extraction of 200 articles.

Table 1. Citation Metrics using Publish or Perish.

Source	Google Scholar
Papers	200
Citations	1466
Cites_Year	69.81

Source	Google Scholar
Cites_Paper	07.33
Cites_Author	1102.45.00
Papers_Author	138.19.00
Authors_Paper	0,110416667
h_index	16
g_index	34
hI_index	09.48
hI_norm	15
PoP hL, tahunan	4
Indeks hA Fassin	19

The bibliometric analysis conducted using Google Scholar through *Publish or Perish* provides an in-depth overview of research related to *work family conflict, work life balance,* and *work stress.* The data source, Google Scholar, includes a total of 200 analyzed papers, indicating a broad coverage of studies in this field. These articles have collectively received 1,466 citations, reflecting their relevance and impact within the academic community.

The average number of citations per year stands at 69.81, demonstrating sustained academic interest in this research area. Additionally, the average citations per paper is 7.33, suggesting that each publication has made a notable contribution to the development of scholarly literature. The h-index of 16 indicates that at least 16 articles have been cited a minimum of 16 times, signifying the presence of influential studies in the field. Moreover, the g-index of 34 reveals that the top 34 most-cited papers have received at least 1,156 cumulative citations, further highlighting the significance of these contributions.

Furthermore, additional impact indices such as the *hl_index* (9.48), *hl_norm* (15), and *hA Fassin* (19) provide deeper insights into the distribution and longevity of citations. The *hl_index* reflects the sustained impact of publications over time, while the *hl_norm* normalizes the citation distribution to account for variations in research output. The *hA Fassin* index further refines the measure of academic influence within the field.

Overall, this analysis indicates that research on *work family conflict, work life balance,* and *work stress* has a significant academic impact, with extensive coverage and meaningful contributions to the field. However, it is important to note that this data is solely derived from Google Scholar, and variations may exist across other academic databases. A complementary analysis using additional sources such as Scopus or Web of Science could provide a more comprehensive perspective.
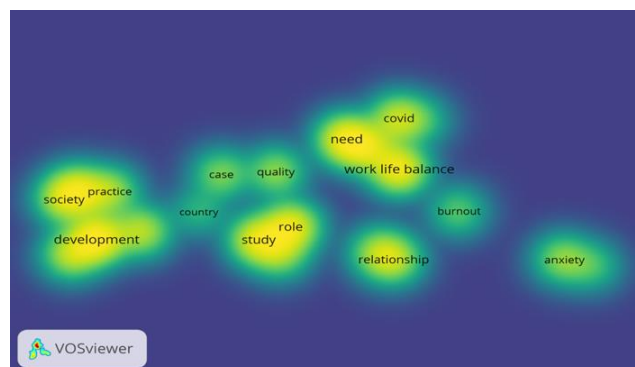

Figure 1. Density Visualisation. Source: Image processed from Vosviewer in 2024.

The network visualization generated using VOSviewer provides insights into the keyword relationships within research on *work family conflict, work life balance,* and *work stress.* The heatmap illustrates clusters of frequently co-occurring terms, revealing key themes and research focal points in this domain.

The central cluster prominently features *work life balance*, which is closely associated with keywords such as *need* and *COVID*. This suggests a strong research focus on the necessity of work-life balance, particularly in response to pandemic-induced challenges. The presence of *burnout* and *anxiety* in adjacent clusters highlights the psychological and emotional toll of work-related stress, reinforcing the link between work-life balance and mental health.

Another significant cluster includes *development*, *society*, and *practice*, indicating a broader discussion on societal and organizational strategies to mitigate work-family conflict. The terms *role* and *study* form another focal point, suggesting the importance of empirical research in understanding the dynamics of work-family interactions. Additionally, the mention of *relationship* implies a research interest in how various factors, such as workplace policies or personal coping mechanisms, influence work-life outcomes.
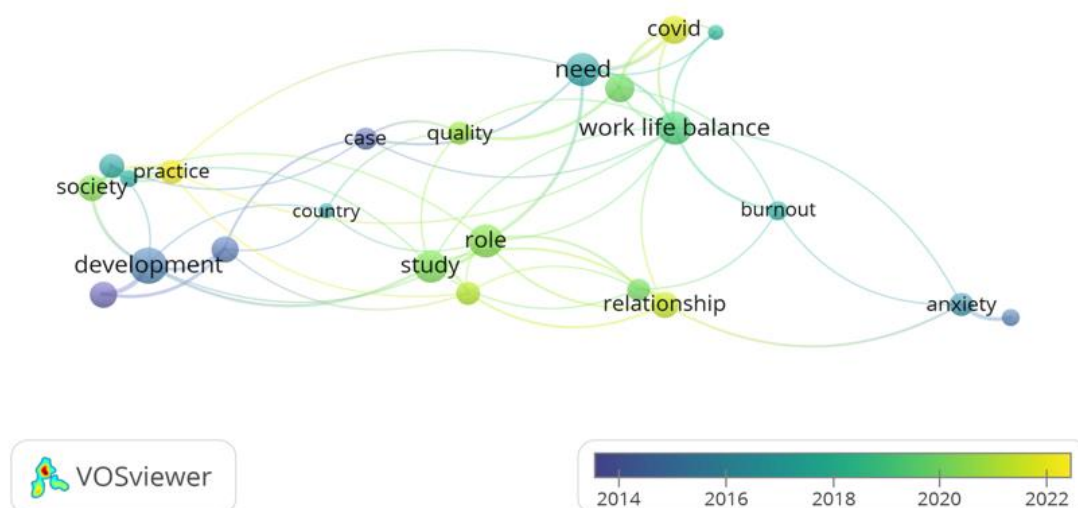
Overall, this network visualization underscores the evolving academic discourse on work-family conflict, with notable emphasis on mental health implications, societal interventions, and the impact of COVID-19 on work-life balance. These findings suggest that future research should continue to explore the effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving employee well-being and organizational support systems.

Table 2. List of articles with the most citations.

No	Cites	Authors	Year	Cites Per Author
1	6	LM Hatfield, JT Johnson	2014	174
2	2	L Conradie, DB Le Roux, DA Parry	2023	106
3	4	TBT Thangal, NI Shafie, NM Yunos…	2021	100
4	5	JE Breedt, B Marais, J Patricios	2023	90
5	24	R Peña-Casas, D Ghailani, S Coster	2018	52
6	5	LA Gordon	2015	45
7	3	A Rayan	2016	43
8	27	E Minero	2017	30
9	170	H Yoshikawa, TS Weisner, A Kalil…	2013	27
10	1	HR Ravhudzulo, C Eresia-Eke	2024	25
11	1	R Chatterjee, SK Acharya	2020	21
12	1	S Rezaei, A Seifizade, A Qorbanpoor Lafmejani	2020	20
13	0	R Nuntana Singtaweesuk, W Thanoi…		19
14	1	S Bonjour, S Diepenmaat	2024	17
15	0	T Carmichael, L Gower	2024	15
16	0	H Chi	2024	15
17	11	S Ryan, J Guthrie	2020	14
18	0	H Atıf Uzun, NH Karaca, İ Diyar, Ö Peker…		14
19	0	N Martinez, TX Katy, A Corrales…	2023	10
20	0	R Halperin-Kaddari, E Katvan	2021	10

Source: Data processed in 2025

Table 2 presents a list of the most cited articles on *work family conflict, work life balance,* and *work stress*, highlighting influential studies across various topics.

Figure 2. Network Visualisation. Source: Image processed from Vosviewer in 2024.
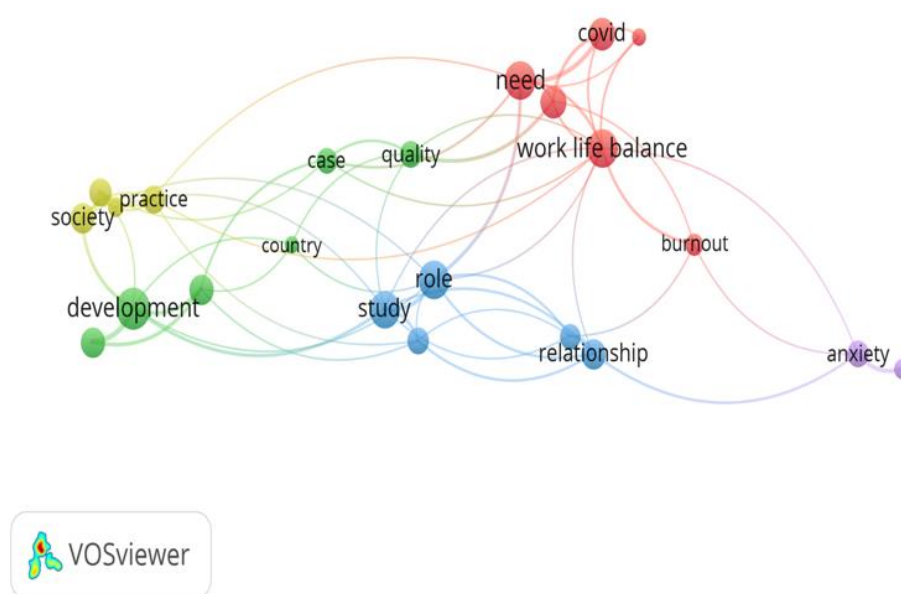
By using the VOSViewer 1.6.19 application, it was found that this bibliometric analysis, visualized using VOSviewer, illustrates the relationships between key topics in the literature on *work family conflict, work life balance,* and *work stress*. The visualization reveals several clusters, each marked by distinct colors, representing themes or topics that frequently co-occur in the literature. Based on the distribution of nodes and colors, four main clusters can be identified Based on the VOSviewer network visualization, four main clusters emerge, each representing distinct themes in the literature related to *work family conflict, work life balance,* and *work stress*. These clusters illustrate the key research focus areas and their interconnections:

1. Psychological and Mental Health Impact (Blue Cluster). This cluster includes keywords such as *burnout*, *anxiety*, and *work life balance*. It highlights the relationship between work-life balance and the psychological effects of work-related stress. The presence of *anxiety* and *burnout* suggests that research in this area has focused on the consequences of poor work-life balance, emphasizing employee well-being and mental health. The timeline color indicates that these issues have been studied consistently over the years, with increasing attention in recent years.

2. Organizational and Structural Factors (Green Cluster). This cluster consists of terms like *role*, *study*, and *relationship*, reflecting the organizational and managerial aspects of work-family conflict. The presence of *role* suggests a focus on role theory, where conflicting roles at work and home create stress. Studies in this cluster examine how organizations, leadership, and workplace culture influence work-life balance.

3. Societal and Policy Considerations (Purple Cluster). This cluster includes keywords such as *development*, *society*, and *practice*, indicating a broader perspective on how societal norms, policies, and economic structures impact work-life balance. Research in this area explores how different countries and cultural contexts address work-family conflict and implement policies to promote better work-life integration.

4. Pandemic and Emerging Trends (Yellow Cluster). The presence of *COVID* in this cluster suggests recent research trends focusing on how the pandemic reshaped work-life balance. The shift to remote work, increased work demands, and changing employee expectations are key themes. The *need* keyword in this cluster indicates discussions on the necessity for new workplace policies and flexibility in response to global crises.

The bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer demonstrates that research on work-family conflict, work-life balance, and work stress is multifaceted. It encompasses psychological well-being, organizational dynamics, societal policies, and emerging challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. The integration of these clusters suggests that addressing work-life balance issues requires a holistic approach, involving mental health interventions, workplace policies, and broader social support mechanisms.

Overlay Visualization in VOSviewer is used to analyze and visualize the relationship between different elements in bibliometric data, such as keywords, authors, journals, or countries. The key purpose of Overlay Visualization is to display additional information over a map or network to provide a deeper understanding of the data and its patterns.

Source: Image processed from Vosviewer in 2025

Figure 3. Overlay Visualisation.

The Overlay Visualization in VOSviewer provides a time-based perspective on bibliometric data, illustrating the evolution of research topics over time. This visualization employs a color gradient (ranging from purple to yellow) to represent the timeline from 2014 to 2022.

Analyzing the overlay visualization allows us to understand how research trends have developed in the context of *work-family conflict, work-life balance,* and *work stress*. In the early research phase (2014-2016), the focus was primarily on structural and policy aspects, as indicated by keywords such as *development*, *society*, and *practice*. This suggests that research during this period predominantly discussed theoretical frameworks, labor policy implications, and societal perspectives on work-life balance. Topics such as labor policies, organizational structures, and macro-level workforce implications were central themes.

During the intermediate phase (2017-2019), research gradually shifted towards organizational roles and job responsibilities, as reflected by keywords like *role*, *study*, *relationship*, and *quality*. This period saw an increased emphasis on the impact of job roles on employee well-being, with studies exploring aspects such as interpersonal relationships, leadership dynamics, and workplace culture as key factors influencing work-life balance.

In the recent research phase (2020-2022), there has been a strong focus on psychological impacts and pandemic-related issues, as highlighted by keywords such as *work-life balance*, *burnout*, *anxiety*, *need*, and *COVID*. This shift indicates growing attention to mental health, workplace stress, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on work-life integration. The pandemic has accelerated the need for flexible work arrangements, mental health interventions, and employee well-being programs.

Overall, research has evolved from policy and structural discussions to individual and psychological impacts. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly influenced the direction of research, increasing the focus on remote work, mental health challenges, and workplace flexibility. Looking ahead, potential areas for future research include post-pandemic work dynamics, organizational strategies to address burnout and anxiety, and the role of digital transformation in shaping work-life balance. By understanding the evolution of these research trends, scholars can identify existing gaps and future directions that contribute to improved workplace policies, mental health support, and overall work-life integration.

5. Discussion

1. The Evolution of Work-Family Conflict Research: Trends, Impacts, and Future Directions.

Research on work-family conflict has undergone significant development, with key themes evolving over time. In the early stages (1990s to 2005), studies primarily focused on conceptualizing and defining conflicts between work and family roles, as well as understanding how the demands of both aspects affect individual well-being. Dominant topics during this period included dual role theory, work-life balance policies, and the role of gender in work-family conflict. Between 2006 and 2018, attention shifted toward organizational and psychological factors. Researchers began exploring how leadership, corporate culture, and flexible work policies could help mitigate conflicts. Psychological aspects such as work stress, job satisfaction, burnout, and their impact on employee productivity also became increasingly studied. In recent years, since 2019, the influence of technology and the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced new dimensions to work-family conflict research. Remote work, digital presenteeism, and mental health have become prominent concerns. Emerging themes include work flexibility, economic uncertainty, and organizational strategies to maintain employee well-being in an evolving digital era.

2. Trends in Work-Family Conflict Publications.

In recent years, the publication trend on work-family conflict has seen a significant increase, particularly after 2020. This acceleration was driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, which drastically altered work dynamics. From an international perspective, most research originates from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, China, and Australia. Each country has distinct focuses on labor policies and workplace culture. Leading academic journals publishing studies on this topic include the Journal of Vocational Behavior, Journal of Organizational Behavior, Work & Stress, and the Human Resource Management Journal. Prominent scholars, such as Tammy D. Allen and Jeffrey H. Greenhaus, have made substantial contributions to the field through various empirical and theoretical studies. Highly cited publications often stem from longitudinal studies that examine the long-term impact of work-family conflict on employees' mental health and organizational performance.

3. The Impact of Work-Family Conflict on Employees and Employers Work-family conflict has significant implications for both employees and employers.

For employees, conflicts between work and personal life can negatively affect psychological well-being, reduce job satisfaction, and disrupt family relationships. If not managed properly, these conflicts can lead to stress, burnout, and severe mental health issues. In the long term, they may decrease employee motivation and performance. For employers, work-family conflict can result in increased absenteeism, high turnover rates, and low employee engagement. Organizations that fail to implement flexible work policies often experience reduced productivity due to excessive work-related stress among employees. Conversely, companies that offer work-life balance programs—such as flexible scheduling and psychological support—tend to have a more loyal, productive, and high-performing workforce.

4. Research Gaps and Future Directions

Several gaps in the literature on work-family conflict pre-

sent opportunities for future research. One major limitation is the lack of studies in non-Western contexts. Most research remains concentrated in developed countries, while the influence of cultural factors and labor policies in developing regions, such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America, remains underexplored. Future research should investigate how cultural differences and labor systems in these countries shape work-family conflict dynamics. Additionally, the rise of technology and hybrid work models warrants further investigation. The impact of artificial intelligence (AI) and automation on work-life balance is not yet fully understood, nor is the effect of hybrid work models on employee stress and mental well-being. From a social perspective, gender roles and societal changes remain underrepresented in the literature. More research is needed on how workplace equality policies and shifting gender roles influence work-family conflict, particularly for women working in the informal sector or gig economy. Furthermore, exploring strategies for managing work-family conflict presents a crucial research opportunity. Future studies could examine the most effective organizational interventions, such as parental leave policies, psychological support programs, or individualized flexible work arrangements, in helping employees achieve a sustainable balance between work and personal life.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, work-family conflict research has evolved significantly over the years, reflecting shifts in societal and workplace dynamics. Early studies focused on defining the conflict and its impact on individuals, while later research explored organizational and psychological influences. Recent trends highlight the role of technology, remote work, and the COVID-19 pandemic in shaping work-family conflict. The increasing volume of publications, particularly in leading academic journals, underscores the growing importance of this topic, with contributions from prominent scholars and institutions worldwide. The implications of work-family conflict are profound, affecting both employees' well-being and organizational performance. Companies that fail to address these challenges may face higher turnover and reduced productivity, whereas those implementing work-life balance initiatives can foster a more engaged and high-performing workforce. However, research gaps remain, particularly regarding non-Western contexts, technological advancements, and evolving gender roles. Future studies should explore these areas to develop more inclusive and effective strategies for managing work-family conflict in an increasingly complex work environment.

Author Contributions

Diana Pramudya Wardhani: Conceptualization, Resources, Writing - original draft

Achmad Sudiro: Supervision
Dodi Wirawan Irawanto: Supervision
Djumilah Hadiwidjojo: Supervision

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Biography

Diana Pramudya Wardhani is a doctoral candidate in Management Science at Universitas Brawijaya, Malang. She is an active lecturer at the Faculty of Economics and Business at Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo, where she also serves as the Head of the Accounting Laboratory. Her research interests lie in the field of Human Resource Management (HRM), with a particular focus on work-family conflict and career-related psychological factors. Currently, she is working on her dissertation, which examines the relationship between work-family conflict and fear of success on affective commitment among female police officers in Madiun. Through her research, she aims to contribute valuable insights into how organizational policies and psychological support can enhance the well-being and commitment of women in law enforcement.

Research Field

Diana Pramudya Wardhani: Human Resources Management, strategic Management

Achmad Sudiro: Human Resources Management

Dodi Wirawan Irawanto: Human Resources Management

Djumilah Hadiwidjojo: Human Resources Management