

## Work Life Balance for Working Mothers Who Have Children with Special Needs

**Farah Dhiya Zahra, Wiwin Hendriani**

Undergraduate Psychology Study Program, Faculty of Psychology Airlangga  
University, Psychology, Indonesia

[farah.dhiya.zahra-2019@psikologi.unair.ac.id](mailto:farah.dhiya.zahra-2019@psikologi.unair.ac.id), [wiwin.hendriani@psikologi.unair.ac.id](mailto:wiwin.hendriani@psikologi.unair.ac.id)

### Article Information

Submitted: 07 August

2023

Accepted: 10 August

2023

Online Publish: 20

August 2023

### Abstract

**Introduction:** Career and family are two important things for adults that are inseparable from each other. People in a relationship in particular need to find a balance, whether they like it or not, to avoid conflicts of interest between work and family. **Objective:** This study aims to describe work-life balance in working mothers who have children with special needs. **Method:** This research wants to find out more about work-life balance in working mothers who also care for children with special needs. This study used a qualitative research method with an intrinsic case study approach and involved two participants. The data collection process was carried out through interviews using credibility techniques, namely member checking. **Result and Discussion:** The results of this study found that the factors that motivated Mrs. LS and Mrs. LL to continue working were because they had the support of their husbands, family, and people around the environment. **Conclusion:** Mrs LS and Mrs LL both realize that it is not easy to live a working life while caring for a child with special needs, but all of that can feel a little easier because there is support from her husband and family in terms of taking care of the house and children's needs.

**Keywords:** Children With Special Needs; Working Mothers; Work-Life Balance;

## **Introduction**

The current era of globalization allows women to work or be said to be professional workers. Career women are women who because of their education, expertise and skills are involved in professional activities in the public sector such as companies and offices (Alifiulahtin, 2017). This situation can be interpreted that not only men are able to work in the public sector, but women as well. Up to 39.52% or 51.79 million people working above the age of 15 are women, according to data from the Central Statistics Agency in 2021. The data also shows that 10.48% of female workers are professionals and technicians, and 8.65% are jobs in the service sector (Rizaty, 2022). In fact, women who have careers outside the home experience more conflict between work and home life than men because women are housewives in addition to their work duties (Anapratwi & Handayani, 2013)

The increasing financial needs of the family are a strong reason why mothers choose to work. This condition places a dual role on working mothers in sharing time related to work and family, so *work-life* balance is very necessary for working mothers to balance time and attention between work and family (Putra, 2021)

This condition shows that a person feels comfortable at work and has enough time for family and work. But in individuals who are undervalued in *work-life balance* will have negative effects, such as feeling bad at work, work matters require more time and attention, so family affairs are not well taken care of (Wardani & Firmansyah, 2021). Women with low *work-life balance* will have poor quality communication and interaction with their children (Apriani et al., 2021)

This phenomenon can be seen in working mothers who start preparing household needs before going to work, and after returning home from work return to take care of household chores (Ramadhani, 2016)

Several previous studies concluded that linking *work-life balance to reduce conflict can occur when people are able to balance work and family affairs* (Az-zahrah, 2021). This situation can be experienced by all working women, including working mothers with special children (hereinafter referred to as Children with special needs).

This means that for many mothers who work and have children with special needs, there is a lot to do. One of them routinely accompanies children through therapy. This condition requires working mothers with special needs to increase focus and time between work and family (Desiningrum, 2017)

The limitations faced by children with special needs not only complicate the child's growth and development stage, but also those who take care of them. Parents, especially mothers, must spend most of their time caring, nurturing, and caring for their children with a history of children with special needs (Anggreni & Valentina, 2015)

This situation is a challenge for working mothers because they have to dedicate their time, energy and mind to work and take care of children and family life. These two areas are top priorities, for example, the obligation to work as a career woman and family life, especially parenting issues, must also be a priority for mothers (Erawati, 2016)

Raising children is not an easy activity, let alone taking care of children with special needs. Children with special needs need special attention to their education, both financially and with other costs (David Wijaya, 2019). Children with special needs need different treatment from children in general, so mothers definitely need enough time to fulfill their parenting and work duties (Hasdianah, 2013)

Especially if working mothers who have children with special needs. The presence of parents is very important in caring for children with special needs, especially mothers, because parents are considered the closest people to their children (Nura & Sari, 2018)

Career and family are two important things for adults that are inseparable from each other. People in a relationship in particular need to find a balance, whether they like it or not, to avoid conflicts of interest between work and family. This role conflict can result in disorders such as depression, emotional and physical exhaustion, and alcohol consumption for individuals (Nohe et al., 2015). For companies, having employees who experience role conflicts can result in absenteeism, affective commitment to the company and *turnover intentions* (Vignoli et al., 2016)

The idea of compensation is at the core of Alfred Adler's theory of personality, which views every human endeavor as a reaction to feelings of inferiority. The theory included in the WLB explains that these efforts are designed to overcome negative experiences in one area through efforts to increase positive abilities in other fields. That is, dissatisfied employees concentrate more on family life than work life, or vice versa (Submitter et al., 2020)

Based on the description of the perspective of the theories above, it can be understood that the theoretical perspective of conflict and compensation can be used to develop the concept of *work-life balance which initially only makes balance by focusing on work-family balance*. But it developed into a concept of balance that is not limited to family members only, but also covers other areas of personal life.

## **Method**

This research uses qualitative research type with instrumental case *study* design. The reason researchers use qualitative research type with instrumental case study approach to uncover *work-life balance* problems in working mothers who have children with special needs, because instrumental case studies are research methods that focus and pay special attention to a case in depth and detail through in-depth information collection and analysis. The instrumental case study type research approach allows researchers to collect different data from different sources, in the form of observation, interviews, or research on certain documents, works and products relevant to the case under study.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **Result**

This study involved two mothers as participants who had children with special needs. The first participant was LS mother, age 47 years, widow status (divorced dead), had one child initials DD, age 22 years, female gender, special needs suffered by DD is

*Down syndrome*. Mrs. LS works as a PAUD teacher in one of the landfills in Surabaya, East Java with a working period of 20 years. Based on data analysis, it is also known that the factors behind Mrs. LS and Mrs. LL continue to work despite having children with special needs.

The reason Mrs. LS keep working is because they want to help their husbands to meet the family economy and DD therapy costs. According to LS's mother and Mrs. LL, it is not easy to divide attention for work and caring for children with special needs. But all of that can feel easy because Mrs. LS have a special notebook to record all the needs needed by DD and also make detailed work schedules to facilitate LS mother's work activities.

### **Discussion**

Every morning Mrs. LS start the activity with morning prayers, taking care of household needs such as cooking and preparing other needs needed by her husband and children. This routine is also done by Mrs. LL as a form of balancing time for work and taking care of the household. Mrs. LS and Mrs. LL can still spend family time in the midst of busy activities in the office. Commitment of LS and Mrs. LL's involvement in work and parenting. The results of this study found that Mrs. LS from the beginning knew and understood the condition of DD who suffered from *Down syndrome* were committed to caring for and paying special attention to DD but also continued to work professionally.

The form of involvement of Mrs. LS in caring for DD and family activities is to routinely check DD's health every month and can also take time to gather with family at home.

The study also found that Mrs. LS and Mrs. LL were happy working and could return home feeling happy. Mrs. LL feels satisfied at work because there are still other activities that can be done besides taking care of children. Meanwhile, Mrs. LS feels comfortable still working and still has enough time to take care of DD.

In line with Sirgy and Lee's opinion (Sirgy & Lee, 2018) that the concept of *work-life balance* as a high level of interaction and engagement and minimal conflict between roles in the domain of work life and life outside work. Mrs. LS and Mrs. LL both realize that it is not easy to live a working life while caring for children with special needs, but all of that can feel a little light when parents who have children with special needs can immediately reconcile with themselves and accept the child's condition. In addition, cooperation with the husband is also needed in terms of childcare.

The stage where individuals can balance their professional commitments and family responsibilities, high work-life balance for the individual (Rahmayati, 2021). Work and family conflicts occur when the demands of work life cause a problem in meeting the demands of life in the family.

Mrs. LS decision to continue working because she had the support of her husband and family. The support of her husband, family and people around the neighborhood is a consideration for LS's mother to continue working while caring for DD who suffers from *Down syndrome*. Meanwhile, the factors that influence Mrs. LL to continue working are

because of their commitment to themselves and parental upbringing which emphasizes that girls when they are married must continue to work and there is support from their husbands. This is according to Hooja and Sen (Sen & Hooja, 2018) that family support is very influential on a person's *work-life balance* level. High family support tends to be associated with a high level of *work-life balance* in a worker.

A study by Sample (2013) entitled "Work-life balance of parents of special needs children" concluded that parents of children with special needs *need more* work-life balance (Sample, 2013)(Sample, 2013). Mrs. LS and Mrs. LL always try to work professionally, since knowing the condition of the child suffering from special needs, the step taken by Mrs. LS and Mrs. LL is to commit to good parenting and work together with the husband to take care of household needs and childcare. In line with research conducted by Fitriyani and Humaedi (Fitriyani et al., 2016), it is explained that working mothers tend to have difficulty dividing time and can have an impact on meeting children's basic needs. These basic needs include physical-biological needs, affection, emotions, and stimulation needs. These basic needs are very important for children, especially for children with special needs.

Based on the explanation above, the reason why Mrs. LS and Mrs. LL continued to work, it is known that both participants received support from their husbands, families and people around their environment. In addition, Mrs. LS and Mrs. LL have their own ways of balancing time for work and childcare. That working women are expected not to let go of responsibilities in the domestic sector, namely as wives who take care of the household and the public sector as workers (Novenia & Ratnaningsih, 2017)

### **Conclusion**

Both participants had different ways of improving *work-life balance*. The first participant, Mrs. LS balanced time and attention to take care of work and take care of children, namely recording children's needs and office work needs in a daily notebook that was used to make it easier for Mrs. LS to carry out activities of daily life.

Mrs. LS often take their children to work for the reason that they can always divide their time and attention for work and also to take care of children. While in the second participant, Mrs. LL balanced time and attention to take care of work and childcare, Mrs. LL admitted that her time was spent more at work because she worked from morning to evening. Mrs. LL can only take care of her child when she gets home from work. Advice for future researchers, in order to further explore how much influence working mothers have on the growth and development process of children with special needs

### References

- Alifiulahtin, U. (2017). *Gender dan Wanita Karir*. Malang: UB Press.
- Anapratwi, D., & Handayani, S. S. D. (2013). Hubungan antara kelekatan anak pada ibu dengan kemampuan sosialisasi anak usia 4-5 tahun (Studi pada RA Sinar Pelangi dan RA Al Iman Kecamatan Gunungpati, Semarang). *Indonesian Journal of Early Childhood Education Studies*, 2(2).
- Anggreni, N., & Valentina, T. D. (2015). Penyesuaian psikologis orang tua dengan anak down syndrome. *Jurnal Psikologi Udayana*, 2(2), 185–197.
- Apriani, A. N. ... Safitri, S. (2021). Gambaran Work-Life Balance pada ibu yang bekerja. *JCA of Psychology*, 2(04).
- Az-zahrah, M. D. (2021). *Hubungan Antara Dukungan Sosial Keluarga Dengan Work-Life Balance Pada Karyawan Wanita Yang Sudah Menikah*. Universitas Mercu Buana Yogyakarta.
- David Wijaya, S. E. (2019). *Manajemen Pendidikan Inklusif Sekolah Dasar*. Prenada Media.
- Desiningrum, D. R. (2017). *Psikologi anak berkebutuhan khusus*. psikosain.
- Erawati, I. L. (2016). *Pendidikan Karakter Bangsa pada Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus dalam Pendidikan Inklusif*. UNIVERSITAS LAMPUNG.
- Fitriyani, F. Humaedi, S. (2016). Peran Ibu Yang Bekerja Dalam Pemenuhan Kebutuhan Dasar Anak. *Prosiding Penelitian Dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 3(1).
- Hasdianah, H. R. (2013). *Autis Pada Anak (Pencegahan, Perawatan, dan Pengobatan)*. Yogyakarta: Nuha Medika.
- Nohe, C. Michel, A. (2015). The chicken or the egg? A meta-analysis of panel studies of the relationship between work-family conflict and strain. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 100(2), 522.
- Novenia, D., & Ratnaningsih, I. Z. (2017). Hubungan antara dukungan sosial suami dengan work-family balance pada guru wanita di SMA Negeri Kabupaten Purworejo. *Jurnal Empati*, 6(1), 97–103.

- Nura, A., & Sari, K. (2018). Kebersyukuran pada ibu yang memiliki anak berkebutuhan khusus. *Ecopsy*, 5(2), 73–80.
- Putra, R. S. (2021). Work life balance pada pejabat wanita yang ada di salah satu universitas di Indonesia. *Ecopreneur*. 12, 3(2), 119–128.
- Rahmayati, T. E. (2021). Keseimbangan kerja dan kehidupan (work life balanced) pada wanita bekerja. *Juripol (Jurnal Institusi Politeknik Ganesha Medan)*, 4(2), 129–141.
- Ramadhani, N. (2016). Implikasi peran ganda perempuan dalam kehidupan keluarga dan lingkungan masyarakat. *Sosietas*, 6(2).
- Rizaty, M. A. (2022). Mayoritas perempuan indonesia bekerja sebagai tenaga penjualan. *Databoks. Katadata. Co. Id.*
- Sample, J. (2013). *Work-Life Balance of Parents of Special Needs Children*.
- Sen, C., & Hooja, H. (2018). Work-life balance: an overview. *International Journal of Management and Social Sciences Research*, 7(1).
- Sirgy, M. J., & Lee, D.-J. (2018). Work-life balance: An integrative review. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 13, 229–254.
- Submitter, G. Tanko, G. I. (2020). Review of work-life balance theories. *Journals and Bello, Zainab and Tanko, Garba Ibrahim, Review of Work-Life Balance Theories (December 31, 2020). Reference to This Paper Should Be Made as Follows: Bello, Z*, 217–227.
- Vignoli, M. Violante, F. S. (2016). How job demands affect absenteeism? The mediating role of work-family conflict and exhaustion. *International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health*, 89, 23–31.
- Wardani, L. M. I., & Firmansyah, R. (2021). *Work-Life Balance Para Pekerja Buruh*. Penerbit NEM.

**Copyright holder:**

Farah Dhiya Zahra, Wiwin Hendriani (2023)

**First publication right:**

KESANS: International Journal Health and Science

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0  
International License

