

## **The Ripple Effect of Work Family Conflict: Examining Parenting Stress in Dual-Earner Families with School-Aged Children**

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### ***Abstract***

*Balancing work and family life is a significant challenge for dual-earner families, particularly for parents with elementary school-aged children. This study investigates the cross-relationship between work-family conflict (WIF and FIW) experienced by husbands and parenting stress experienced by wives in dual-earner families. Utilizing a quantitative survey design, data were collected from 246 dual-earner couples with school-aged children. The findings reveal that WIF experienced by husbands significantly increases the parenting stress of wives, while FIW experienced by husbands does not show a significant effect. These results highlight the importance of considering the interactive dynamics within dual-earner families and the need for supportive measures to mitigate the negative impacts of work-family conflict on overall family well-being.*

**Keyword:** *Work-family conflict, Parenting stress, Dual-earner families, Work interference with family, Family interference with work, Cross-relationship*

### ***Abstrak***

Menyeimbangkan kehidupan kerja dan keluarga merupakan tantangan besar bagi *dual-earner family*, terutama bagi orang tua dengan anak usia sekolah dasar. Penelitian ini menyelidiki hubungan silang antara konflik kerja-keluarga (WIF dan FIW) yang dialami oleh suami dan stres pengasuhan yang dialami oleh istri dalam *dual-earner family*. Menggunakan desain survei kuantitatif, data dikumpulkan dari 246 pasangan dwi-gaji yang memiliki anak usia sekolah. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa WIF yang dialami oleh suami secara signifikan meningkatkan stres pengasuhan istri, sementara FIW yang dialami oleh suami tidak menunjukkan pengaruh signifikan. Hasil ini menyoroti pentingnya mempertimbangkan dinamika interaktif dalam *dual-earner family* dan perlunya langkah-langkah dukungan untuk

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mengurangi dampak negatif dari konflik kerja-keluarga terhadap kesejahteraan keluarga secara keseluruhan.

**Kata kunci:** Konflik kerja-keluarga, Stres pengasuhan, Keluarga berpenghasilan ganda, Gangguan kerja terhadap keluarga, Gangguan keluarga terhadap kerja, Hubungan silang.

## INTRODUCTION

Achieving a balance between work and family life is a big challenge for many families, especially in dual-earner families where both parents in the family are either breadwinners or working. This is especially true when they have children who are still in elementary school. Parents with elementary school-aged children face various demands, roles, and responsibilities that can lead to stress in parenting. Parents with primary school-aged children face a range of significant pressures, which can impact their well-being. First, as the first stage of education, academic stress is a major factor, where parents must ensure their children get a good education by supporting learning activities at home, such as providing assistance in learning and participating in school activities (El Nokali et al., 2010). In addition, parents often feel burdened by the increasing financial needs along with tuition fees, extracurricular activities, and daily needs of children that are more complex than the lower levels (Ponnet et al., 2016). Emotional and psychological pressures are also challenging, as parents must balance work and family time, often resulting in stress and burnout (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020).

A report from the Pew Research Center (2015) reported that maintaining children's physical and mental health in the midst of a busy routine places an additional burden of responsibility on parents. The combination of these pressures can increase parents' stress levels, so having effective stress management strategies and adequate support from the social environment is important for dual-role parents (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). For parents with elementary school-aged children who also work (have multiple roles in the family), high work demands often interfere with time and drain energy that should be spent on the family. This creates work-family conflict. This conflict can occur in two directions: work interfering with family (WIF) and family interfering with work (FIW) (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Previous research suggests that work-family conflict can have a negative impact on parental well-being, including increased parenting stress (Crain et al., 2014). High parenting stress

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can affect the quality of the relationship between parents and children as well as impact child development (Nomaguchi & Johnson, 2016).

In the context of dual-earner families, wives often face the double burden of managing work and childcare, which can exacerbate parenting stress (Milkie & Peltola, 2014). Recent research by Lim (2024) showed that work-family conflict can affect children's behavioral problems through the mediating role of parental warmth and children's executive functioning difficulties. This suggests that this dual role problem has a considerable impact on individuals and children. However, there is still a research gap in understanding how work-family conflict experienced by one partner (husband or wife) can affect the other partner's parenting stress. This study therefore aims to fill that gap by investigating the cross-relationship between husbands' WIF and FIW and wives' parenting stress in dual-earner families with elementary school-aged children.

As such, this study will provide new insights into the dynamics of dual-earner families and how work-family conflict can affect the well-being of all family members. By understanding how the husband's work-to-family interference (WIF) and family-to-work interference (FIW) impact on the wife's parenting stress, this study provides important insights into dual-earner family dynamics.

This study aims to examine the relationship between work-family conflict (WIF and FIW) of husbands and parenting stress of wives in dual-earner families with elementary school-age children. This study provides theoretical benefits by enriching the literature on work-family conflict and parenting stress, especially in the context of dual-earner families with elementary school-age children. Practically, the results of this study can be used as a basis for designing intervention programs that help dual-earner families manage work-family conflict and reduce parenting stress.

In addition, the findings of this study can also serve as input for policymakers in formulating policies that support work-family balance and family welfare. This study also examines the cross-effects between husbands and wives in the context of work-family conflict and caregiver stress. By analyzing how work-family conflict experienced by husbands can affect wives' parenting stress, this study highlights the importance of considering the dynamics of interaction in dual-earner families. The results are expected to provide practical recommendations for reducing caregiving stress through work-family conflict management strategies and increased spousal support.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quantitative design with a survey approach to collect data from dual-earner families with elementary school-aged children. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to measure variables related to work-family conflict and parenting stress in a systematic and measurable way.

### Participants

Participants of this study were married couples who worked full-time and had at least one elementary school-aged child (6–12 years old). The sample was drawn using a purposive sampling technique to ensure that participants met the set criteria. A total of 246 married couples (492 participants) were invited to participate in this study.

### Research Instrument

Data was collected using a questionnaire consisting of several sections:

1. **Demographic data:** information on participants' age, gender, education level, income, and occupation.
2. **Work Interference with Family (WIF):** Measured using a scale developed by Netemeyer et al. (1996), which has been translated into Indonesian and used in several studies (Rizal & Fikry, 2020; Rizal & Fikry, 2020, 2023). The questionnaire consists of 5 items with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).
3. **Family Interference with Work (FIW):** Measured using a scale developed by Netemeyer et al. (1996), which has been translated into Bahasa Indonesia and used in several studies (Rizal & Fikry, 2020; Rizal et al., 2023; Rizal & Fikry, 2020, 2023), which consists of 5 items with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The WIF and FIW scales are incorporated into the Work-Family Conflict Scale. The WIF and FIW scales were filled in by the husband.
4. **Parenting Stress:** Measured using the Parental Stress Scale (PSS) created by Berry and Jones in 1995 and has been translated into the Indonesian version by Kumalasari et al. (2022) with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). This scale was completed by the wife.

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### **Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher contacted the elementary schools to obtain permission and assistance in distributing the questionnaires to parents. The questionnaires were sent offline and online, with 2 schools being given the questionnaire packets directly (which were already printed) and the other 2 schools using the survey platform, Google Forms. Each questionnaire package consisted of one package to be completed by the husband and another package to be completed by the wife.

### **Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS statistical software version 25.0. The analysis conducted was linear regression analysis to examine the relationship between husband's WIF and FIW and wife's parenting stress.

### **Research Ethics**

This study was approved by the ethics committee at the university where the researcher is affiliated. All participants were given clear information about the purpose of the study, the procedures, and their rights as participants, including the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. The data collected was kept confidential.

### **Results and Discussion**

This study aims to look at the relationship between work-family conflict experienced by husbands in terms of work interference with family (WIF) and family interference with work (FIW) and the level of parenting stress experienced by wives in dual-earner families who have elementary school-age children. The results of the statistical analysis provide significant insight into how these conflicts affect family dynamics.

#### **The Relationship Between Husband's WIF and FIW on Wife's Parenting Stress**

The results of the regression analysis showed that work interference with family (WIF) experienced by the husband had a significant influence on the wife's level of parenting stress ( $B = 0.303$ ,  $t = 2.266$ ,  $p = 0.024$ ). This result means that every one-unit increase in WIF experienced by the husband can increase the wife's parenting stress score by 0.303 units. This finding is consistent with work-family conflict theory, which states that work interference with family can increase stress and decrease family well-being (Chen & Hou, 2021; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Hwang & Jung, 2020). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) suggested

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that work-family conflict occurs when role demands in one domain (work) interfere with the ability to meet demands in another domain (family). In the context of dual-earner families, husbands who experience disruptions in their work and impact on the family can cause wives to experience additional pressure, especially in terms of childcare and household management.

High parenting stress in wives can affect various aspects of family life, including the quality of relationships between spouses and interactions with children. According to studies by Crain et al. (2014), Leong & Juhari (2022), and Yoo (2022), high work-family conflict in either spouse can lead to increased stress and dissatisfaction in the relationship, which ultimately has a negative impact on children's well-being. This is in line with the finding that a husband's work disruption that impacts the family can increase pressure on the wife, specifically on the caregiving role.

In contrast, there was a different result that Family Interference with Work (FIW) experienced by the husband did not show a significant influence on the level of parenting stress of the wife ( $B= 0.239$ ,  $t=1.632$ ,  $p = 0.104$ ). This suggests that although the interference of family problems affecting work experienced by the husband may affect his performance at work, it does not directly increase the parenting stress experienced by the wife. According to Bianchi & Milkie (2010), although FIW can impair work performance, its impact on home life is not always immediately apparent. Bianchi and Milkie (2010) state that FIW is often more focused on its impact on productivity and performance at work, and its direct effects on family dynamics may be more hidden or indirect.

This finding is also supported by other studies that show that the impact of FIW on family well-being is not always consistent and can be influenced by various contextual factors, such as social support, stress management strategies, and job characteristics (Ni et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2024). For example, a study by Yang et al. (2024) found that job satisfaction and work engagement can moderate the negative effects of FIW on family well-being, while Ni et al. (2023) showed that workaholism may exacerbate the impact of FIW.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The results of this study enrich the literature on work-family conflict and parenting stress by showing that there are complex dynamics in how these conflicts affect family members. The findings confirm that work-family conflict experienced by husbands can affect



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the psychological well-being of wives. Work-family conflict theory states that conflicting roles between work and family can lead to psychological distress and stress, which in turn can disrupt family functioning (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). This research adds important insights by showing that the effects of work-family conflict are not only limited to the individual experiencing the conflict directly but also to their spouse (Hammer et al., 1997; Leong & Juhari, 2022; Yucel & Borgmann, 2022).

A recent study by Bilodeau et al. (2023) showed that work stress experienced by parents during the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on depressive symptoms and parents' concerns for their children's mental health. This confirms that work stress can have far-reaching consequences that include the well-being of the whole family. In addition, Lim (2024) found that work-family conflict can affect children's behavioral problems through mediating the role of parental warmth and children's executive functioning difficulties. This study is in line with the finding that work-family conflict can have far-reaching effects on other family members.

### **Practical Implications**

From a practical perspective, this research suggests that companies and organizations need to pay attention to the work-family balance of their individual employees as well as the impact on their families. Work-family balance programs that include support for spouses can help reduce parenting stress caused by work-family conflict. For example, work flexibility, family leave, and mental support that includes spouses can reduce the stress burden experienced by dual-earner families (Allen et al., 2013). In addition, it is important to raise couples' awareness of the cross-impact between work and family conflicts. Couples can work together to manage workloads and family responsibilities, as well as seek professional help if needed, to reduce caregiving stress and improve overall family well-being (Voydanoff, 2005).

The mindful parenting approach suggested by Moreira (2019) can be applied to help parents manage parenting stress more effectively. Mindfulness training programs can help parents improve self-awareness, emotion regulation, and better parenting skills, which in turn can reduce the negative impact of work-family conflict. In addition, Yang et al. (2024) emphasized that job satisfaction and work engagement can also play a role in reducing work-family conflict and improving family well-being.





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