

Millennial Mothers, Modern Dilemmas: A Work-Family Conflict Perspective in West Java

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Abstract-*This study aims to explore the experience of Work-Family Conflict (WFC) among millennial married women with children in West Java through a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. The research method involved in-depth interviews with seven purposively selected participants, focusing on subjective narratives regarding time-based conflicts, emotional tensions, behaviours, as well as triggering factors such as lack of system support and children's conditions. The results revealed that WFC is experienced in a multidimensional way, with time-based conflict and emotional strain being the main challenges, while the transfer of disciplinary behaviour from work to family was also a significant phenomenon. The findings suggest the need for more flexible organisational policies and psychological support to reduce the impact of WFC. In conclusion, this study provides an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of WFC in millennial women who are married and have children in West Java, emphasising the importance of cultural and social context in the management of this conflict.*

Keywords: work-family conflict, working mom, millennial, married women

I. INTRODUCTION

Work-family conflict (WFC) is a significant phenomenon in management and organizational behavior studies, especially amidst changing modern social and economic dynamics. WFC is defined as role conflict that occurs when demands from work and family roles are mutually incompatible, thereby creating psychological and practical tension for individuals [1]. Married women with children face unique challenges because they often play dual roles as professional workers and primary caregivers in the family. In this context, WFC not only affects individual well-being but also organizational productivity and family satisfaction [2].

The millennial generation, born between 1981 and 1996, shows different characteristics compared to previous generations, such as a preference for work flexibility and individualistic values [3]. However, millennial women who are married and have children often face additional pressure due to strong cultural expectations regarding the role of mothers, especially in developing countries like Indonesia, where traditional norms still influence gender role division. Research shows that women with young children are more susceptible to WFC than men or women without children, due to the intensity of caregiving responsibilities [4]. Although technology offers flexibility, its impact on WFC management in millennial women is still poorly understood. Although many studies have explored WFC, most studies focus

on the general population or use quantitative approaches to measure conflict intensity [5]. Qualitative studies that delve into the subjective experiences of married millennial women with children are still limited, especially in the Southeast Asian cultural context like Indonesia. Previous research tended to ignore specific cultural and social factors, such as extended family expectations or stigma against career women, which influence how millennial women manage WFC.

This gap creates an opportunity to explore rich individual narratives, which can reveal coping strategies, emotional challenges, and the influence of organizational context. A qualitative approach is needed to capture the complexity of this experience in depth. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the experience of WFC in married millennial women with children in Indonesia through a qualitative approach. Focusing on personal narratives, this study will identify how cultural, organizational, and individual factors shape their perceptions and strategies in dealing with WFC. Practically, the results of this study can provide insights for organizations to design policies that support work-family balance, such as work flexibility programs or psychological support. In addition, this research can help individuals understand and manage WFC more effectively, thereby improving their well-being.

Thus, this study has the potential to make significant contributions both theoretically and



practically. By utilizing a qualitative approach, this research will generate a more nuanced understanding of WFC among millennial women in Indonesia, influenced by social, economic, and technological changes. The focus on the West Java context adds unique value, given the strong role of culture in shaping family and work dynamics. The results of this study are expected to be the basis for more inclusive organizational policies and further research in the field of management and organizational behavior.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-Family Conflict (WFC) is a multidimensional phenomenon that has been the focus of attention in various disciplines, including industrial and organizational psychology, sociology, and management. In general, WFC is defined as a form of role conflict where pressures from work roles and family roles are incompatible in several ways [6]. This incompatibility occurs when the demands of one domain (e.g., work) make it difficult to meet the demands of another domain (e.g., family), or vice versa [1].

There are three main dimensions of work-family conflict, which were then widely used in subsequent research [1]: First, Time-Based Conflict Occurs when time spent fulfilling the demands of one role (e.g., long working hours) reduces the time available to fulfill the demands of another role (e.g., raising children). For example, frequent overtime makes a person unable to accompany their child in studying. Second, Strain-Based Conflict arises when tension, stress, or fatigue from one role (e.g., high work pressure) affects the quality of performance or interaction in other roles. For example, a mother who is exhausted after working all day may become more irritable at home.

Third, Behavior-Based Conflict arises when behavioral patterns or skills required and developed in one role are incompatible or even conflict with behavioral demands in another role. For example, an authoritarian trait that is effective in a managerial work environment may not be suitable for application in interactions with family members.

The combination of being a married woman with children and the characteristics of the millennial generation creates a unique WFC dynamic. Currently, many millennial women are at the peak of their careers and at reproductive age. They are a generation facing dual expectations: on the one hand, they are expected to excel at work and take advantage of wider career opportunities than previous generations; on the

other hand, they also face social pressure to build a family and be actively involved parents [7].

The technological aspect is very relevant. Millennials' reliance on gadgets and digital connectivity often blurs the boundaries between work and home [8]. Work emails, instant messages, and phone calls can come in at any time, creating an "always-on" demand that can exacerbate time-based and strain-based conflict. Although technology can offer flexibility (e.g., remote work), without clear boundaries, it can also extend working hours and increase work intrusion into family life.

In addition, millennial values about work-life balance and the desire for flexibility can clash with the reality of work demands, especially in rigid work environments or those that have not adapted to the needs of this generation. When organizations fail to provide adequate flexibility or support, millennial women may experience more intense WFC, which can impact their motivation, retention, and well-being

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach to thoroughly explore the intricate experiences, perceptions, and nuances of individuals grappling with work-family conflict. The primary goal is to achieve a deep, contextual understanding that quantitative methods might miss. To gather rich, subjective perspectives from participants, in-depth interviews will be the core data collection method.

The research design is phenomenology, which is particularly well-suited for this study. This approach aims to uncover the essential nature of participants' lived experiences with work-family conflict, focusing on how they personally interpret and navigate this conflict in their daily lives. By using a phenomenological lens, the researchers can delve into the subjective realities of those affected.

Participants for this research will be chosen using purposive sampling. This deliberate and strategic method allows the researchers to hand-pick individuals who have unique experiences directly related to work-family conflict, ensuring their relevance to the study's objectives. The inclusion criteria for participants are: they must be employed, have family ties (spouses, children, or other significant family responsibilities), belong to the millennial generation (born between 1981 and 1996), and be willing to participate in the interview process. A total of seven participants will be included in the study.



In-depth interviews serve as the main data collection technique. These interviews will be conducted online via video conference platforms. While the average duration is estimated to be around 30-40 minutes, the actual length may vary based on the depth of information shared by each participant. The following is the participant figure in this study:

Table 1
Data of participants

No	Initial	Age (Years)	Length of Married (Years)	Number of Children	Role	Work Experience	Location
1	AH	29	4	1	School Counselor	7	Bandung City
2	AS	30	2	1	Lecturer	5	Bandung City
3	FL	31	5	1	Elementary School Teacher	5	Bandung City
4	SN	30	5	2	Special Education Teacher	2	Majalengka Regency
5	C	30	3	1	Civil Servant	5	Bandung City
6	SL	29	9	2	Civil Servant	3	Bandung City
7	AL	30	3	1	Lecturer	3	Tasikmalaya City

Source: Processed for research (2025)

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Work-family conflict (WFC) experienced by married millennial women with children encompasses various complex dimensions, as outlined in the following thematic table. Table 2 categorizes WFC into four main categories:

Table 2
Categorization of Work-Family Conflict

Theme	Category	Sub-Category (Keyword)
Work-Family Conflict (WFC)	I. Time-Based Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overlap Business travel Commuter Availability
	II. Emotional Tension-Based Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worry Fatigue Burnout Disturbed Sleep
	III. Behavior-Based Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discipline
	IV. Triggers of Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of Support System Child Condition

4.1 Time-Based Conflict

Time-based conflict occurs when time spent fulfilling the demands of one role (e.g., long work hours or job demands) reduces the time available to fulfill the demands of another role (e.g., caring for a family). Participants in this study consistently reported experiencing time-based conflict, which fell into several subcategories:

4.1.1 Overlapping Jobs

Almost all participants revealed that they often bring their office work home, significantly disrupting personal time and family interactions. Participant AL stated, “Yes, very often, especially when office work is done at home. I don’t have a housekeeper or nanny, so I have to share childcare with my husband. So, at home I often steal time to do office work, for example while babysitting or at night after the children are asleep. But yes, time is limited, because I still have to wash dishes, sweep, and mop.” Similarly, FL also often brings work home, although sometimes interspersed with family activities such as shopping for baby food during breaks at school. Participant C also admitted to often bringing office work home, especially during crucial times such as mid to end of the year when reporting. Similarly, SL stated that she has to finish revising letters or *event assignments* at home if she doesn’t finish them at the office.

This statement is relevant to research [9] which explains that time-based conflict in work-family conflict refers to the struggle to manage time between work responsibilities and family obligations, and this often results in bringing work home, which affects personal time and family interactions. Another research also confirm that bringing work home leads to limited family interactions and increased stress, thus impacting their overall health [10].

4.1.2 Business Travel

Business travel significantly impacts time spent with family. Participant C mentioned frequent business trips, sometimes as many as four times a month, lasting 2-3 days each, especially in the middle to the end of the year. This prevents her from monitoring his child’s development at home, *golden age* and not witnessing important moments. Business travel significantly correlates with work-family conflict (WFC), as evidenced by various studies that explore the dynamics between professional obligations and family responsibilities.

The relationship is complex, involving reciprocal influences where increased travel can lead

to heightened WFC, which in turn may contribute to emotional exhaustion and psychological health issues over time [11] [12]. Business travel significantly impacts work-family conflict (WFC), with the frequency of travel being a key determinant, especially for parents and those with dependent children, where higher travel frequency correlates with increased WFC [13]. Furthermore, limited control over travel schedules exacerbates this conflict, making it harder for individuals to manage their professional and personal lives effectively [12]. Notably, gender differences play a role, as women with children often experience a more pronounced rise in WFC due to business travel compared to their male counterparts [13].

4.1.3 Commuting

Time spent commuting to and from work significantly reduces family time. FL revealed that her commute time was two hours, resulting in her arriving home tired and late. This time constraint caused by her long commute directly reduces interaction and quality time with her family.

Longer commuting times are a substantial contributor to WFC because they act as a significant work-related demand that eats into valuable family time [14]. Beyond just time, the stress of extended commutes can take a serious toll on an individual's well-being. For instance, research indicates that commutes of 120 minutes or more are strongly linked to a higher likelihood of experiencing anxiety and insomnia [15]. This highlights how the daily journey to and from work isn't just about travel, but also about its profound impact on personal and family life, as well as mental and physical health. Flexible work arrangements offer a powerful solution to mitigate the negative effects of commuting on WFC, primarily by empowering individuals to better manage the boundaries between their professional and personal lives [14].

Specifically, working from home has proven particularly effective in decreasing WFC, especially for parents. This is largely due to the elimination of commuting time and the significant increase in schedule control it provides, allowing for a more harmonious integration of work and family responsibilities [16]. Conversely, while commuting is often viewed as a stressor, some studies suggest it can also serve as a buffer against work-to-family conflict by providing a physical separation between work and

home life, allowing individuals to mentally transition between roles [17].

4.1.4 Availability

Participants felt they had to be readily available to their office or superiors due to rapidly changing policies or requests. Participant C stated, *"Yes, it has to be. Because changes can happen in minutes or seconds, right? The difference... Especially with officials nowadays, they're constantly ranting every day... I mean, if they say 'A' in the media, then we have to follow suit, right?"*. This demand for availability adds pressure on personal and family time. Although the above findings indicate clear time-based conflict, some literature suggests a different perspective. The assumption that time spent on work and family roles is interdependent, research findings indicate that role time does not significantly impact performance and satisfaction in either work or family roles.

This research highlights that working women can meet the demands of both roles without experiencing significant time conflict. This perspective suggests that the emphasis on time alone may overstate its impact, and that other factors such as workload and level of organizational support may have a more pronounced effect on work-family dynamics [18]. The rise of digital labor platforms often fosters an "always-on" culture among platform workers, leading to heightened WFC due to the constant expectation of contact outside traditional work hours [19]. Paradoxically, the very flexibility these platforms promise can intensify the pressure to remain perpetually available, thereby exacerbating the struggle to balance work and family responsibilities [19].

4.2 Strain-Based Conflict

Emotional tension-based conflict arises when tension, stress, or fatigue from one role affects the quality of performance or interactions in another role. Participants in this study frequently reported experiencing emotional tension as a consequence of WFC:

4.2.1 Worry

Worry about childcare is a significant source of stress. Participant AH stated, *"Yeah, definitely, definitely bothers you, because, you know, sometimes as a mother, you know, like there's a little bit of fear, and then, as people say, yeah, sometimes, for example, yeah, uh, more, like, we don't feel better, you know, being a mother, actually, yeah, for my*



child, like that. But, you know, we know our own child's character, you know, like. Can the nanny be, like, as good as we are to our child, right?". AS also often thinks about her child while on campus, worrying if her child is fussy because she's still young and left behind. C also feels disturbed and anxious because of this worry. This finding is consistent with research which found that working mothers who use part-time nanny experience the highest levels of stress, indicating significant concerns about childcare arrangements compared to those who rely on family members [20].

4.2.2 Fatigue

Physical and mental fatigue are very prominent effects. AH felt *"tired, tired alone"*, and had to wake up before dawn to cook because no one was cooking at home. AS also felt *"drained of energy, yes. Drained of energy by household chores and office work"*. FL postpones work until the child is asleep and feels *"I'm really tired of being stuck in a cage, like that, you know. Hmmm. Yes, really tired, annoyed, like that. If you're already annoyed, 'Ah, that's enough, ah, just sleep, that's it."* SL even feels his life *"I'm so tired, your life is like... wake up, work, come home from work, sleep. Come home from sleep, eh, come home from sleep, work. Just keep working, working, working, like that, yeah. Just dream about working, like that... Yes, even in my dreams."* Also admitted that sometimes work is not handled because she is too tired and chooses to sleep.

Research found that WFC is linked to job stress, which in turn contributes to emotional fatigue [21]. This suggests a cascading effect where conflict leads to stress and ultimately fatigue. High levels of social support can alleviate emotional fatigue and improve psychological well-being, particularly for female workers facing WFC [22]. This indicates that support systems are crucial in managing the effects of work-family conflict on fatigue.

4.2.3 Burnout

Extreme levels of exhaustion and prolonged stress can lead to *burnout*. AH explicitly stated that she experienced *Burnout* made her feel lazy towards her husband and less enthusiastic about everything. AL also expressed her feelings severe burnout, *"No nanny, no maid, my child needs therapy, I feel completely drained. On campus, I feel worthless, I have no achievements, because my focus is on home. I once thought about seeing a psychiatrist, because I*

was so stressed. I even cried, because I wanted to be ambitious and productive, but I couldn't."

WFC is creating inter-role conflicts where responsibilities at work and home interfere with each other. This leads to mental pressure, feelings of inadequacy, and ultimately burnout, as individuals struggle to meet expectations in both domains [23]. This conflict arises from competing demands of work and personal life, leading to higher emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment, ultimately elevating burnout rates, increased job intensity and reduced work-life support, ultimately affecting overall well-being and satisfaction in both work and family life [24][25].

Long working hours significantly contribute to work-family conflict, which in turn exacerbates burnout levels among employees. Research indicates that as working hours increase, the likelihood of experiencing work-family conflict also rises, leading to heightened risks of burnout and sleep disturbances. This relationship is particularly evident in high-pressure occupations, such as healthcare, where long hours and emotional demands create a cyclical pattern of stress and conflict [15] [26]. Studies show that employees facing high work-family conflict report significantly higher levels of burnout, emotional exhaustion, and poor mental health [26] [27].

4.2.4 Disturbed Sleep

Stress and anxiety caused by WFC also affected participants' sleep quality. AL reported that he had been unable to sleep well for several days, possibly due to stress, and his mind was constantly preoccupied with homework and work. AH also experienced sleep disturbances and felt restless *"I went to the psychologist, but I really couldn't sleep"*. WFC casts a long shadow over an individual's well-being, with sleep disturbance emerging as a significant and widespread consequence. Studies reveal that a substantial portion of the population struggles with this issue, with approximately 35.40% of males and 39.95% of females experiencing sleep disturbances directly linked to WFC [28].

The impact of poor sleep extends beyond mere discomfort; it plays a critical mediating role in the relationship between WFC and burnout. This means that inadequate sleep doesn't just happen alongside WFC; it actively intensifies the negative effects of WFC on an individual's mental health and overall well-being [29]. Furthermore, longitudinal studies



consistently demonstrate that both time- and strain-related WFC are associated with ongoing sleep complaints over extended periods [30]. It's also important to acknowledge demographic variations in how WFC affects sleep quality. Research suggests that the impact is particularly pronounced in males and dual-income families, underscoring the necessity for targeted interventions that consider these specific demographic factors to effectively address sleep disturbances stemming from WFC [31].

4.3 Behavior-Based Conflict

Behavior-based conflict arises when the behavioral patterns or skills required and developed in one role are inconsistent with or even contradict the behavioral demands of another role. This study found a transfer of disciplinary behavior from the work domain to the family domain.

4.3.1 Discipline

Participant AS stated that her children began to understand and be smarter with a parenting style that was *"a bit strict, you know, but no, not like that, uh, what do you call it? Forbidden or strict, really strict, you know, yeah, it's strict, strict discipline, like that."* AL also acknowledged bringing discipline home, setting strict meal and bath schedules for her children. Similarly, C observed that her children became more disciplined, such as with mealtimes. This suggests that behaviors that are effective in managing tasks at work, such as discipline and assertiveness, can be carried over and applied to interactions at home. Individuals facing WFC may exhibit decreased discipline in managing their time and responsibilities, leading to negative outcomes in both work and family settings [32].

4.4 Triggers of Conflict

In addition to the main dimensions of WFC, this study also identified specific triggers that exacerbated conflict in participants:

4.4.1 Lack of Support System

A lack of support, especially from a partner or immediate family, is a significant trigger. AH revealed, *"Because, firstly, as I mentioned earlier, being at home with a toddler. That's not easy, you know. Then, there's work too. But it's like, the support system is lacking. So, I'm really at home, with my mom, but from the moment I come home, I really hold the child."* My husband's long-distance relationship situation is making things worse *burnout* experienced by AH. Family support acts as a vital emotional

buffer against the pervasive pressures of work-related stress. Without this crucial backing, individuals are more susceptible to heightened anxiety and burnout, which can inevitably spill over and negatively impact their family life [33]. Moreover, a scarcity of family support can amplify existing work stressors, such as role conflict and job insecurity, thereby intensifying WFC [34]. This can leave individuals feeling overwhelmed and struggling to effectively balance their professional and personal roles.

The consequences of insufficient family support are far-reaching and detrimental. It's strongly linked to a range of adverse outcomes, including increased feelings of depression and frailty, particularly among vulnerable groups like the elderly [35]. This emotional strain further complicates work-family dynamics, making it even harder to achieve harmony. Disturbingly, research also indicates that individuals with low family support may exhibit increased aggressive behaviors, which can disrupt both work and family environments, perpetuating a cycle of conflict and distress [36].

4.4.2 Child Conditions

Children's health conditions or special needs can also trigger stress and WFC. AH described how a sick child who had difficulty eating or taking medication made her distracted and *"unable to concentrate at school or at work"*. AL also mentioned a child who needed therapy as one of the main causes of her feeling drained and experiencing *burnout*.

Parenting a child perceived as "difficult" significantly amplifies work-family stress, as parents find themselves grappling with the complex challenge of balancing demanding work roles with equally challenging child behaviors [37]. The inherent stress of managing a child's unique needs can escalate to heightened anxiety and mood disorders in parents. This, in turn, creates a detrimental feedback loop, further exacerbating existing work-family conflict [38].

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This qualitative study explored the experiences of Work-Family Conflict (WFC) among millennial married women with children in West Java, identifying WFC as a multidimensional phenomenon. Findings indicate that participants consistently experienced time-based conflict, which involves an overlap between work and personal life, and



significant impacts from business travel and long commuting times. Furthermore, emotional tension-based conflict (*strain-based conflict*) triggers burnout, fatigue, worries regarding childcare, and sleep disturbances.

The study also identified the transfer of disciplinary behavior from the work domain to the family domain (*behavior-based conflict*). Key triggers of conflict include a lack of support systems from family and challenges related to children's conditions or special needs. Based on these findings, the study offers practical and theoretical recommendations. Practically, organizations are advised to implement policies that support work-family balance, such as flexible work programs or psychological support, to mitigate the impact of WFC. Offering work flexibility, such as remote work options, has proven effective in decreasing WFC by eliminating commuting time and increasing schedule control.

Theoretically, this study enriches the organizational behavior literature by providing a specific generational and gender perspective. It is suggested that these findings serve as a basis for more inclusive organizational policies and future research in the field of management and organizational behavior. Future research could explore intervention strategies targeting the identified dimensions of WFC and employ quantitative approaches to measure conflict intensity in a broader population.

VI. REFERENCE

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