

ATTACHMENT OF WORKING MOTHERS TO CHILD BONDING

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REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Introduction – As a working mother, there is a responsibility for work, and her role in the household is often a pressure for mothers. Parents, especially mothers, are the individuals who should have the most time with children so that children become close to their mothers. Close relationships with the mother have a significant influence on the future development of the child. While working mothers, their time spent on children and family tends to be shorter. This will be pressure on the mother that can trigger stress. The mother's poor psychological state will also affect the poor interaction between mother and child. It will produce adverse effects, including poor emotional regulation, theory of mind, empathy, bonding, and attachment. The purpose of this study was to find out about working mothers and their relationship to bonding and attachment with children.

Methods – In this literature review, articles published within the last five years (2019-2023) are used, written in English, are original research, and the research subjects used are humans, namely working mothers who have children aged 0-12 years. Article search using electronic databases in the form of Google Scholar, PubMed, and ScienceDirect.

Results – In this literature review, articles published within the last five years (2019-2023) are used, written in English, are original research, and the research subjects used are humans, namely working mothers who have children aged 0-12 years. Article search using electronic databases such as Google Scholar, PubMed, and ScienceDirect.

Discuss – Working mothers feel that roles at work and home are all important. Where work will make individuals professional and increase their self-esteem, while her role as a mother at home will meet the needs of her central family, her children; this role is fulfilled by providing physical and emotional comfort and security to her children.

Conclusion – Working mothers will increase pressure and stress on mothers caused by many factors, including longer working time, single mothers, lack of financial problems, short maternity leave, and job demands that cause fatigue. These factors will cause poor interaction between mother and child, directly mediating poor bonding and attachment between mother and child. Therefore, balancing the mother's dual roles is essential to form bonds and secure attachments with her child.

Keywords: working mother, bonding, attachment.

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INTRODUCTION

A working mother is a woman who gives birth to a child, is required to return to work, and is responsible for caring for the household and the child.¹ In Indonesia, many women work for various reasons. The situation of working mothers sometimes becomes a dilemma. Many reasons mothers work include financial needs, additional income needs, self-realization desires, and the desire to develop talents, but some work because they are bored at home.²

Data on women's participation in the world of work is significant. Data shows that in 2017, 50.89% of women were employed. While in 2018, women worked as much as 50.7%. Data shows that women's participation rates in the workforce have been relatively stable over the past five years. Of the many women working in 2017, 14.88% were unmarried, 71.49% were married, and 13.64% were divorced. This shows that married women are more than available, while married women or working mothers have a more significant role, especially at home.³

The responsibility for work and its role in the household often puts pressure mothers.² A working mother must divide her time, thoughts, feelings, and energy for both responsibilities. Working mothers experience much stress because of their home and community roles. Work and family go two meaningful ways.⁴ Problems such as work interferes with family and family interferes with work, and both are strongly correlated. In addition to her role as a wife in caring for the house, women also serve as mothers, namely, taking care of their children.³

Parents, especially mothers, are the individuals who should have the most time with children so that children become close to their mothers. All behaviors and parenting styles applied in the family must affect the formation of a child's personality or character. The behavior in question is not only physical but also concerns affection, touch, and emotional bonding between children and parents, especially mothers.⁵

Pregnancy, maternal conduct, and postpartum care are the earliest stages in the development of a mother's strong attachment to her child. A strong relationship between mother and child makes it easier for the mother to care for the child and to keep up a healthy atmosphere where the infant can explore, learn, and develop age-appropriate independence. The interaction is supposedly reciprocal and essential for the infant's best development. Theoretically, mother sensitivity and emotional availability lead to higher levels of bonding because they promote contact and healthy social-emotional development (such as interest, touch, smiling, play, adaptation, and emotion control).⁶ This bonding will create a deeper relationship, namely attachment.

Attachment can occur when individuals have more intimate bonds, such as affection and dependence. This relationship indirectly affects the lives of these individuals. Attachment begins in infancy and occurs gradually, so that it can affect the next stage of the child's development. Mothers are essential in the child's growth and development process, so the expected relationship is a secure attachment.⁷

The attachment that is formed dramatically affects the development of children because a strong attachment is expected to be an easy social creature, have great curiosity about their environment, be willing to learn and develop, the ability to cope with mental stress. Severe disruptions in the attachment process in

children can cause problems in the further development of children.⁵

Early childhood development greatly influences or contributes to a child's future achievements. Therefore, paying attention to the child's development at this age is crucial. Close relationships with the mother have a significant influence on the future development of the child.³

While working mothers, the time spent on children and family tends to be shorter, and children only play or interact with their mothers after work. Working women deal with the challenges of professional life while also attempting to spend adequate time with their children. On the one hand, they try to meet their obligations linked to homework. That condition will be pressure on the mother that can trigger stress. The mother's poor psychological state will also affect the poor interaction between mother and child. It will produce adverse effects, including poor emotional regulation, theory of mind, empathy, bonding, and attachment.^{7,8} Therefore, this literature review will discuss working mothers and their relationship to bonding and attachment with children.

METHOD

This article uses the literature review method, which will discuss the impact of working mothers on bonding and attachment. The literature used is an article published in the last five years (2019-2023), using English, is original research, and the research subjects used are humans, namely working mothers who have children aged 0-12 years.

Article search using electronic data in the form of Google Scholar, PubMed, and ScienceDirect. The article search method uses a combination of keywords in the form of (working mothers, child bonding or working mothers and bonding with their child), (working mothers-child attachment), (working mothers-child interactions or mother-child interaction on working mothers), and (working mothers stress and bonding with child).

RESULT

The five articles used were articles with quantitative research on working mothers (Table 1). In a study conducted in Western New England, 70 pregnant women with criteria for working approximately 20 hours/week planned to return to work six months after giving birth. They were employed in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs. In the study, an assessment was carried out on Mother-Infant Interaction Quality (responsiveness, detachment, and stimulation of development), Work Hours and Income, Work Hours Discrepancy, Job Autonomy and Time Urgency, Supervisor Support, Psychological Distress, Infant Temperament, and Parity. Maternal responsiveness is thought to be strongly influenced by the number of hours worked each week; mothers who work more hours per week are more receptive while engaging with their infants. The link between occupational autonomy, maternal attentiveness, and the stimulation of infant development is considerably mediated by psychological discomfort. The higher urgency of working time will increase the psychological pressure on the mother, reducing the mother's responsiveness. Lower levels of psychological distress were supported by mothers who reported more freedom at work, and as a result, they provided their children with better responsive care. Low-income mothers are more likely to have poor mental health and negatively affect mother-baby

interactions. Support from supervisors did not reduce the adverse effects of work demands on maternal pressure and the quality of mother-infant interaction.⁹

The survey included children and parents in the U.S., looking at Workplace Flexibility (Schedule flexibility/flextime, Working from home/flexplace, and Part-time employment), household type, income, and parent-child interactions. It was discovered that part-time employment and working from home had statistically significant correlations with the frequency of child enrichment activities. More working hours directly reduce the time parents interact with their children. Mothers who work part-time have more frequent routine times with their children (e.g., bathing, dressing, and putting children to sleep), despite the flexible workplace. Additionally, working single mothers have less time to spend with their kids. For single mothers, who are more likely to experience poor income and financial difficulties, part-time work can heighten stress and present additional hurdles.¹⁰

In addition, a study was conducted on mothers with children aged 6-24 months in Lebanon, which focused on the relationship between the length of maternity leave, the mother's sense of competence, work productivity, and mother-baby bonding. This study explained that shorter maternity leave harmed the mother's mental health, but not the mother's sense of competence and quality of care. There is a link between maternal guilt about parenting and stress, with working mothers trying to balance the two roles and increased responsibilities. In addition, because of financial needs, many working mothers will have higher levels of stress and guilt, causing parental competence and work productivity to decrease. The bad experience of returning to work also affected bonding with her child.¹¹

Additionally, research on working moms was done in the United States with a variety of focuses, such as the length of maternity leave, mother-child connection, and working mothers' attachment to their offspring. The length of maternity leave is said to have a direct effect on the caliber of mother-child interaction, with the shorter the leave, the worse the interaction. The quality of the mother-child relationship has an impact on attachment, which is a key factor in a child's development, and this effect is mediated by the length of maternity leave.¹²

There is also a study in Indonesia with respondents including nurses, doctors, and other health workers in one of the hospitals, and having children aged 4-6 years. It turned out that it was found that working with shift patterns hurt the form of physical and psychological, who had to adapt at work and home. In addition, the demands of work and shift patterns increase stress, where mothers have multiple roles divided between time, energy, and thoughts for work and family. The needs of working as a health worker, mothers must always provide good and excellent health services. The mother also feels fatigued, has physical weakness, and decreased motivation. Togetherness and quality time with the family and kids when mothers get together, as a result lose their effectiveness. Additionally, there aren't many opportunities to cuddle and play with kids. There is a unidirectional association between the effects of working mothers and shift patterns, having a negative value on the emotional behavior of preschool-age children, because there is a lack of interaction between mothers and children.¹³

DISCUSS

First, it was explained in the results that there was an unexpected relationship where mothers who worked longer per week had higher levels of responsiveness to their babies. This can be because when the mother is at home, the mother will interact with her child in a quality manner to compensate for the time they spends outside the home while working, and there is also the possibility of the mother having a good parenting style for her child.⁹

It was found that the urgency of working time will increase the psychological pressure on the mother, causing maternal responsiveness to the baby. One of the reviews by Perry-Jenkins and Gerstel (2020) also explains that there are adverse effects of the urgency of working time that lead to discrimination, where high urgency is associated with more depressive symptoms among workers or can be said to be "unfriendly." This also extends to autonomy in the workplace, where greater autonomy supports lower levels of psychological distress. This is also supported by a review by Perry-Jenkins and Gerstel (2020) that the autonomy in question is using initiative, independent thinking, and judgment in the workplace. Authority, job autonomy, and decision-making will result in better mental health among new parents, better family relationships, and better cognitive outcomes in children.¹⁴

Flexible mothers' work, such as working at home for a flexible time, will have more opportunities to interact with their children to form a good bonding attachment. This is also by the research of Kassamali and Rattani (2014), where mothers with flexible jobs find it easier to go home to care for their children, take them to school, provide primary care, etc. Flexible work provides opportunities for secure attachment, nor do mothers directly break physical ties with children as soon as they return to work.¹⁵

Single mothers are said to have less time to interact with their children. This situation follows interviews conducted by Agnafor et al. (2019) on working single mothers; it was gathered that most single mothers work long hours and have low incomes. Such work leads to more frequent and more prolonged separation from infants and their young children, thus distancing bonds and attachments with their children. Single mothers do not get enough time to breastfeed and form a close attachment to their babies and children.¹⁶

Ineffective mother-child attachment and bonding are also correlated with the length of maternity leave; the shorter the maternity leave, the worse the mother-child bond. This is also under previous reviews, where mothers who get less than 12 weeks of leave will increase the incidence of maternal depression. With each additional week of leave, there was a considerably lower chance of developing postpartum depression symptoms. Both the mother and her child may suffer grave consequences as a result of postpartum depression. Untreated postpartum depression in mothers can result in unhappiness, anxiety, and a severe lack of interest in the child. This can lead to poor mother-baby attachment. The worst thing about the symptoms of postpartum depression can develop into a desire to hurt yourself or the child.¹⁷

Table 1. The working mother's relationship to bonding and attachment with her child

No	Author, Year and Title	Purpose	Design	Result
1.	Herman and Perry-Jenkins., 2020 ⁹ <i>Low-wage Work Conditions and Mother–Infant Interaction Quality Across the Transition to Parenthood</i>	Expand on earlier studies and look at how maternal mental health and the standard of mother–infant connection (in low-income moms) are impacted by working conditions (e.g., job autonomy, time urgency).	<i>Larger longitudinal study</i>	Mothers who put in more hours a week are more receptive to their infants' needs. The mother will feel more psychological pressure as a result of the increased urgency of the workday, which will decrease her receptivity. Greater work autonomy for mothers results in lower psychological stress and improved baby responsiveness. Poor mental health is more prevalent in low-income moms, which has an adverse effect on mother–child interactions.
2.	Kim, J., 2020 ¹⁰ <i>Workplace flexibility and parent–child interactions among working parents in the US.</i>	Focuses on gender, household structure, and income when examining the relationship between three potential sources of workplace flexibility—access to flexible schedules, working from home, and part-time employment—and the frequency of parent–child interactions (such as enrichment activities and daily routines) among parents and young children.	Nationally representative data and a <i>longitudinal design</i>	More frequently occurring child enrichment activities were statistically significantly correlated with working from home and part-time employment. More working hours directly reduce the time parents interact with their children. Mothers who work part-time have more frequent routine times with their children (e.g., bathing, dressing, and putting children to sleep), despite the flexible workplace. Additionally, working single mothers have less time to spend with their kids. For single moms, who are more likely to have poor income and financial difficulties, part-time work can add to their stress and present additional hurdles.
3.	Tohme, P. and Abi-Habib, R., 2022 ¹¹ <i>Correlates of work productivity and maternal competence after having a baby: the roles of mother–infant bonding and maternal subjective experiences</i>	Analyse the relationship between the length of maternity leave, productivity indicators at work, and a mother's perception of her competence in her new parental role. Examining the relationship between mother–child adjustment indicators (mother–baby connection, maternal stress, and parenting guilt) and the duration of maternity leave	<i>Cross-sectional design</i>	Shorter maternity leave adversely affects the mother's mental health but not on the mother's sense of competence and quality of caregiving. There is a link between maternal guilt about parenting and stress, with working mothers trying to balance the two roles and increased responsibilities. In addition, because of financial needs, many working mothers will have higher stress levels and guilt, causing parental competence and work productivity to decrease. The bad experience of returning to work also affected her bonding with her child
4.	Plotka, R. and Busch-Rossnagel, N.A., 2018 ¹² <i>The role of length of maternity leave in supporting mother–child interactions and attachment security among American mothers and their infants</i>	Examines the relationship between the length of maternity leave, mother–child interaction, and mother–baby attachment in America	<i>Longitudinal design</i>	The quality of mother–child interactions is directly influenced by the length of maternity leave; the shorter the leave, the less favorable the interactions are. The quality of the mother–child relationship has an impact on attachment, which is a key factor in a child's development, and this effect is mediated by the length of maternity leave.
5.	Kushandayani et al., 2022 ¹³ <i>The impact of mothers working shift patterns with emotional</i>	Knowing mothers' relationships work with shifting patterns of emotional behavior in pre-schoolers	<i>Cross-sectional correlation</i>	Working shifts has a detrimental effect on one's physical and psychological health. Stress is further increased by the demands of the workplace and shift work, when moms must juggle several responsibilities while allocating time, energy, and thoughts to both work and family. The mother also experiences physical weakness,

*behaviour of
preschool age
children at
RSUD dr Saiful
Anwar Malang.
Jurnal
Keperawatan,
13(2).*

weariness, and a loss of motivation. Togetherness and quality time with the family and kids when mothers get together as a result lose their effectiveness. Additionally, there aren't many opportunities to cuddle and play with kids. Due to the absence of interaction between mothers and children during shift work, there is a one-way relationship between the effects of working mothers and shift work having a detrimental impact on preschoolers' emotional behavior.

In an interview conducted by Kassamali and Rattani (2014), forty-five percent of mothers felt work-related stress, which also affected the attachment relationship with their children. A mother who works from home and prefers to work at night when her daughter is sleeping is used to illustrate this. Although this initially does not happen, when the child wakes up at night, the mother is unable to accompany her because she is exhausted. It is also claimed that if the mother is exhausted, her job may interfere with attachment connections, although this also depends on the mother's disposition once she is at home. It might be a little challenging for some parents to balance jobs, homes, and the kids. For some women, the time when work must go on is a bit stressful since they might not know how to balance things correctly. When this occurs in the beginning, the child will suffer from inattention.¹⁵

Attachment is the basis of trust for children, where children need confidence in completing developmental tasks; besides that, trust is also the basis for the development of children's self-concept. The attachment that is formed dramatically affects the development of children because, with attachment and a strong sense of intimacy, it is expected that children become social creatures who are accessible and have great curiosity about their environment, are willing to learn and

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the review above, it can be concluded that working mothers will experience increased pressure and stress on mothers caused by many factors, including longer working time, single mothers, financial problems, short maternity leave, and job demands that cause fatigue. These factors will cause poor interaction between mother and child, directly mediating poor bonding and attachment between mother and child. Therefore, it is essential to balance the mother's dual roles to form bonding and secure attachments with her child.

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develop, and have the ability to overcome mental pressure. Severe disruptions in the attachment process in children can cause problems in the further development of children.⁵ Working mothers feel that roles at work and home are all-important. Where work will make individuals professional and increase their self-esteem, while her role as a mother at home will meet the needs of her central family, her children; this role is fulfilled by providing physical and emotional comfort and security to her children. Challenges arise when the balance in performing these roles needs to be established. If a balance between responsibilities towards work and motherhood is found, bonding and secure attachment with her child will also work well. When the connection is in this position, both the mother and the child will find it simpler. The feeling of satisfaction that is formed will further allow the child to be more independent, understand, and accept that the mother must also pay attention to other things and will remain by her side. The child will be aware that after they go home, their mother will be there to spend time with them and be there for them if something happens. The child in such a relationship is aware that they are their mother's top priority, and that nothing can alter that.¹⁵

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