Effectiveness of Intervention Programs Addressing Work-Family Conflict Among Working Mothers: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Work-family Conflict (WFC) is a significant issue for working mothers, affecting their well-being and family dynamics. This review aims to evaluate the effectiveness of various interventions to reduce WFC. This study using a systematic review was conducted with the PICO framework. Studies were selected based on criteria including working mothers with children (infancy to school age), full-text availability, English language, and publications from 2014 to 2024. The risk of bias was assessed using the JBI Critical Appraisal Tools, and the results were synthesized through a narrative synthesis. Out of 258 articles screened, 5 studies met the inclusion criteria. The review found that interventions such as Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), time management training, multimedia education, resilience training, stress management, and self-reflection effectively reduced work-family conflict (WFC), thereby improving both mental health and work-family balance. The main limitation of this review is the small number of included studies and variability in methodologies. Future research should focus on integrating diverse interventions and exploring long-term effects. The findings highlight the role of Occupational Health Nurses (OHNs) in supporting working mothers in managing work-family conflict (WFC).

INTRODUCTION

The dual role of worker and caregiver within the family is a significant challenge for women, particularly in modern society. Women are expected to fulfill professional demands in the workplace while also carrying out domestic responsibilities, including managing the household and attending to family members (Husain, 2021; Siahaan, 2018). The imbalance between these roles often leads to Work-Family Conflict (WFC), a phenomenon increasingly common among working women. Work-family conflict (WFC) occurs when the demands of work and family responsibilities conflict, creating physical and emotional stress that can impact women's psychological well-being and life balance (Chung et al., 2023; Trógolo et al., 2022). Societal and cultural expectations also contribute to this burden, placing women in the complex position of managing both roles simultaneously without compromising either (Haslam et al., 2015; Wijayanto et al., 2022).

Greenhaus et al. (1989) defined Work-Family Conflict as role conflict when demands from work and family conflict with each other, significantly when work interferes with family roles. Frone et al. (1992) extended this concept by pointing out that conflict can occur in two directions, namely Work-Family Conflict and Family-Work Conflict. Work-family conflict (WFC) occurs when work impedes family functioning, whereas family-work conflict (FWC) occurs when family responsibilities interfere with work, such as absence from work due to family emergencies. These two types of conflict indicate a mutual interaction that can affect the life balance of working mothers.

Work-family conflict (WFC) has a significant impact on psychological distress, family satisfaction, and job satisfaction of mothers (Sankar, 2024). WFC causes chronic stress, fatigue, and depression that worsens the quality of life of working mothers (Naibaho et al., 2019;

Ratnaningsih & Idris, 2024). This condition can affect family dynamics, including child development and the quality of interpersonal relationships within the family (Dukhaykh, 2023). In addition, the tension arising from this role conflict can also affect the couple's relationship, leading to poor communication and decreased satisfaction in the relationship. Therefore, WFC is not only detrimental to the individual but can also affect the structure and harmony of the family as a whole.

Some interventions that have been implemented to reduce work-family conflict (WFC) in working mothers include flexible working hours, workplace support programs, counseling, and stress management training (Lawson et al., 2016; Nguyen et al., 2023). However, research on the effectiveness of this program is not always consistent. Some studies show mixed results in terms of significance. This suggests that the success of the program depends on the context, implementation, and individual characteristics of the participants. The methodological designs used in the studies vary. Some studies used randomized controlled trials (RCTs) to provide stronger causal evidence despite cost and implementation constraints. On the other hand, some studies used quasi-experimental designs, which are more flexible and affordable, although they have potential confounding variables that may affect the validity of the results. This diversity of methodological designs suggests that further research is needed to integrate different approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence the effectiveness of support for working mothers.

The Occupational Health Nurse (OHN) is a nurse with specialized expertise in occupational health, focusing on the prevention, treatment, and recovery of health problems related to the work environment (Stanhope & Lancaster, 2021). One of the primary roles of OHNs is to provide interventions that support the physical and mental well-being of workers, including addressing work-family conflict (WFC) issues often faced by working mothers. As an OHN, it is essential to conduct clinical assessments to identify the factors that contribute to work-family conflict (WFC) and its impact on the health of working mothers. With this information, OHNs can design and implement more effective interventions to reduce stress and improve the life balance of working mothers. Therefore, this systematic review was conducted to assess the available evidence on the most effective intervention strategies to address WFC. The results of this review are expected to provide evidence-based recommendations for occupational health nurses (OHNs) in designing health policies and programs that support the well-being of working mothers.

METHOD

Research strategy and feasibility study

This systematic review was conducted by established guidelines for systematic reviews, with reporting adhering to the PRISMA checklist. Study selection criteria were based on a PICO (population, intervention, comparison, outcome) analysis to ensure the relevance and quality of the included studies. Study inclusion criteria included: (1) participants were working mothers with children from infancy to school age; (2) articles used were fully accessible; (3) research articles were published in the last decade (2014-2024); and (4) articles were published in English.

Conversely, studies that did not meet specific criteria were excluded from this review. Exclusion criteria included (1) interventions that did not focus on working mothers, (2) mothers who were single parents, and (3) families with significant health problems. This article selection process ensured that only methodologically relevant studies that met systematic review standards were included in the analysis.

Relevant studies were identified by searching four open databases (Scopus, ProQuest, PubMed, and Springer). Table 1 lists the keywords used in the search. To ensure a comprehensive search, references of key articles relevant to the research topic were also reviewed. The article selection process began with the application of a filter to exclude inappropriate articles. Selected articles were then screened by title and abstract, and full-text screening and critical appraisal were performed.

Table 1. List of keywords

| Database	Keywords
Scopus	("Working Mothers" OR "Working Mom" OR "Women Workers" OR "Female Workers") AND (intervention OR supports OR program OR management OR therapy OR coping) AND ABS ("Work-Family Conflict" OR "Work-Family Balance")
Proquest	("Working Mothers" OR "Working Mom" OR "Women Workers" OR "Female Workers") AND (Intervention OR supports OR program OR management OR therapy OR coping) AND abstract ("Work-Family Conflict" OR "Work-Family Balance")
PubMed	((((((((((("Working Mothers") OR ("Working Mom")) OR ("Women Workers")) OR ("Female Workers")) AND (Intervention)) OR (Supports)) OR (Program)) OR (Management)) OR (Therapy)) OR (Coping)) AND ("Work-Family Conflict"[Title/Abstract])) OR ("Work-Family Balance"[Title/Abstract]))
Springer	("Working Mothers" OR "Working Mom" OR "Women Workers" OR "Female Workers") AND (Intervention OR supports OR program OR management OR therapy OR coping) AND ("Work-Family Conflict" OR "Work-Family Balance")
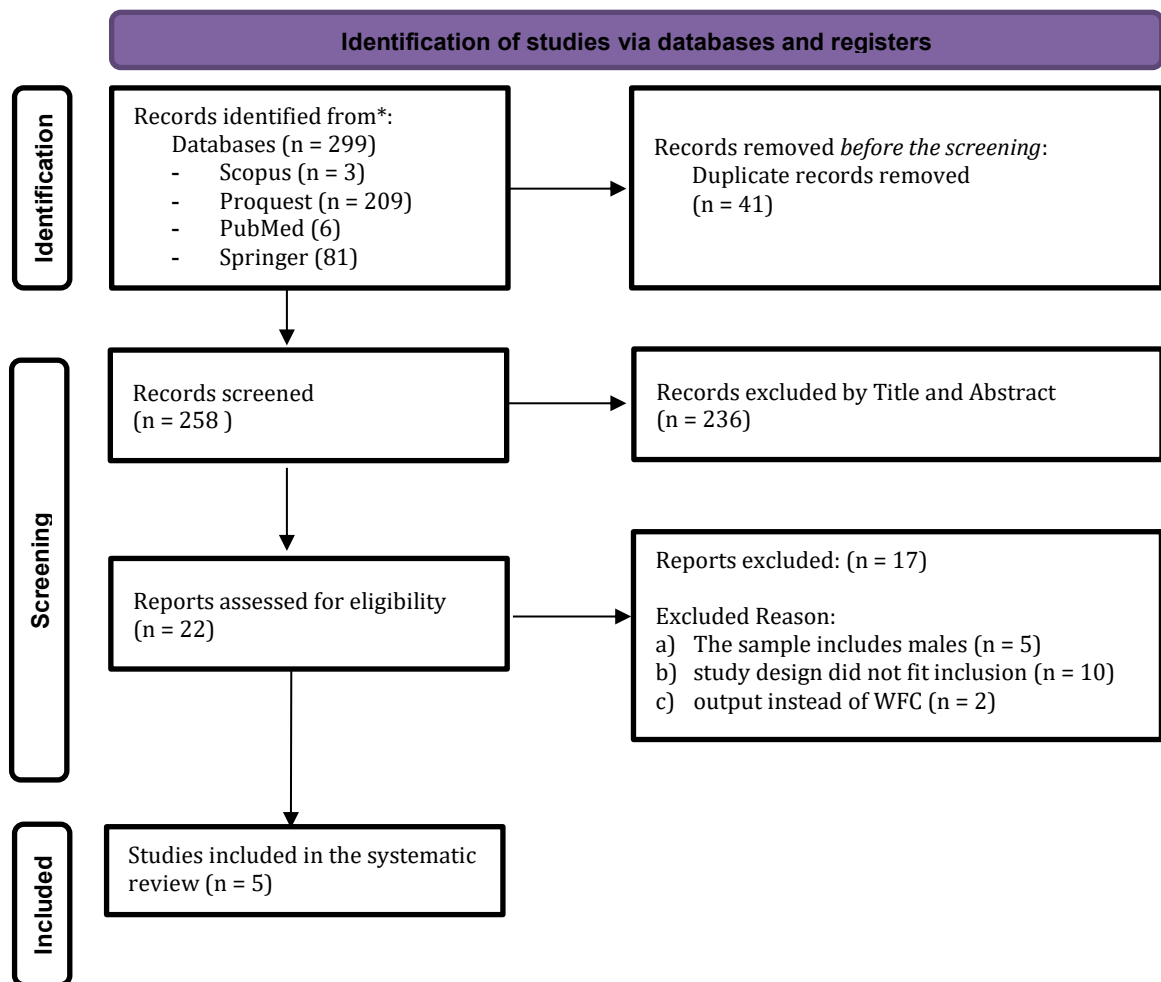
Figure 1. PRISMA diagram

Data extraction and synthesis

A total of 258 articles were identified through the initial literature search and screened based on the established inclusion and exclusion criteria. Of these, 22 full-text articles were downloaded for further evaluation. Following a thorough quality and relevance assessment, 17

articles were excluded from the analysis due to noncompliance with the predefined methodological criteria, including inappropriate study design, irrelevant sample, or insufficient data for analysis. The detailed flow of the article search process is illustrated in the Figure 1 PRISMA diagram.

The articles that were selected for inclusion in this analysis consisted of three randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and two quasi-experiments. According to the explanation provided by Webb & Roe (2007), if there are discrepancies in the methodology of the studies reviewed, systematic reviews do not need to be combined to obtain an average estimate. Consequently, the data from this systematic review was synthesized through narrative interpretation.

Risk of bias assessment

The quality assessment of the selected studies was conducted using the JBI Critical Appraisal Tool for Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) and quasi-experimental research designs developed by the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI). The RCT appraisal tool comprises 13 questions that evaluate internal validity, control of bias, and traceability of research results. In contrast, the quasi-experimental study appraisal tool contains 10 questions that assess aspects such as the appropriateness of design, control of variables, and implementation of the intervention. The assessment results, derived from these two tools, revealed that the five articles included in this systematic review exhibited good methodological quality, characterized by low to moderate levels of risk of bias. Notably, all selected studies met the eligibility criteria for inclusion in this review, thereby providing a robust foundation for concluding the effectiveness of interventions in reducing Work-Family Conflict (WFC) in working mothers. This methodological rigor ensured that only studies with appropriate methodologies and reliable results were used for further synthesis in this systematic review.

RESULTS

A systematic review was conducted to examine the effectiveness of interventions for work-family conflict among working mothers. Five articles that met all inclusion criteria were selected for inclusion in the review. The characteristics of these five studies are summarized in Table 2, including information on study design, sample size, and intervention type. The studies included in the review employed a variety of methodological designs, including randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and quasi-experimental designs. This approach enabled the evaluation of different types of interventions. The sample sizes within each study ranged from small to large, thereby providing a comprehensive overview of the working mother population. The interventions applied in these studies encompassed approaches such as Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), time management training, multimedia education, resilience training, and stress management. Despite methodological differences and heterogeneity in the interventions, all studies demonstrated that these interventions can effectively mitigate work-family conflict (WFC) and enhance the well-being of working mothers. These findings provide a basis to conclude that appropriate interventions can help working mothers better balance the demands of work and family.

Table 2. Characteristic of study

Authors, year of published	Study design	Intervention type	Participants	Measurement	Results
(Ejikeme et al., 2024)	RCT	Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy	119 Female worker	Work-Family Conflict questionnaire (W-FCQ) (Carlson et al., 2000)	- Interventions were effective in reducing WFC levels. - Sustained interventions are required to maintain low levels of WFC.

Authors, year of published	Study design	Intervention type	Participants	Measurement	Results
(Hander et al., 2021)	Quasi-experimental	Two Days group-treatment - Workshop WFC - Management stress (Yoga) - Self reflection	24 health workers (85.7% female) with children 0-18 years old	- AGE - TS-WLB - KIDSSCREEN	- Most participants found the intervention very helpful in coping with WFC. - Participants reported better ability to handle conflicts between work and family roles after the program. - There were improvements in self-efficacy, work-life balance, and quality of life-related to children's health.
(Noroozi et al., 2023)	Quasi-experimental longitudinal study	Multimedia Education provided to Participants, Co-workers, Supervisors, and Spouses	120 married women workers in the health sector from two cities in Iran.	Work-Family Conflict questionnaire (W-FCQ) (Carlson et al., 2000)	The intervention was effective in reducing WFC scores at one month and six months after the intervention.
(Peykar et al., 2023)	RCT	- Time Management Training - Resilience Training	132 female nurses	The WFC questionnaire for Iranian married women (Bagherzadeh et al., 2016)	- Both interventions were shown to be effective in reducing WFC scores, and both demonstrated similar resilience. - However, WFC scores increased again during the one-month follow-up.
(Ifelunni et al., 2023)	RCT	(*Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, REBT*)	69 female teachers in primary schools	Work-Family Conflict questionnaire (W-FCQ) (Carlson et al., 2000)	The intervention demonstrated efficacy in reducing the WFC Score. This effectiveness persisted until the subsequent follow-up assessment.

DISCUSSION

The results of this review suggest that a range of interventions, including Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), time management training, multimedia education, resilience training, stress management techniques, and self-reflection, are highly effective in reducing Work-Family Conflict (WFC) in working mothers. These interventions aim to enhance internal capabilities, including mindset, emotional intelligence, and personal beliefs, while also focusing on effective stress management and cultivating social support.

Interventions designed to foster positive mindset changes through Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) were conducted by Ejikeme et al. (2024) among female workers and by Ifelunni et al. (2023) with female primary school teachers. Both studies demonstrated that REBT effectively mitigates work-family conflict (WFC) issues. The efficacy of REBT interventions can be attributed to their emphasis on cognitive restructuring, wherein irrational thoughts are replaced with more rational and adaptive beliefs, enabling individuals to balance better the pressures associated with work and family responsibilities. However, Ejikeme et al. (2024) underscored the importance of ongoing support to sustain the long-term benefits of REBT, ensuring a proper equilibrium between professional and familial obligations. This assertion aligns with the findings of King et al. (2024), which indicate that interventions of extended duration are generally more successful in preserving the positive effects of REBT.

One intervention that has been reviewed and pertains to enhancing mindset is the Resilience Training conducted by Peykar et al. (2023). The findings indicate that Resilience Training significantly decreased scores related to work-family conflict (WFC) among female nurses. This training program comprises ten sessions that cover critical topics, including effective communication, emotional management, and self-efficacy enhancement. Participants are equipped with skills designed to foster psychological resilience, recognize their limitations, and develop healthy coping strategies in response to the pressures of multiple roles. This conclusion aligns with the research conducted by Hander et al. (2021), which demonstrated that interventions aimed at improving self-efficacy could markedly enhance healthcare professionals' ability to navigate the conflicts arising from work demands and familial responsibilities.

Peykar et al. (2023) combined a resilience training intervention alongside time management training, revealing effective outcomes in reducing work-family conflict (WFC) among participants. This method suggests that enhancing psychological resilience through effective time management enables individuals to balance work and family demands more adaptively. Supporting these findings, a study by Okereke et al. (2023) demonstrated that proficient time management can lower stress levels and boost productivity, ultimately leading to a reduction in work-family conflict (WFC).

In contrast to previous research that primarily examines individuals experiencing work-family conflict (WFC), the study conducted by Noroozi et al. (2023) explores an intervention designed to enhance the social environment of working women. This intervention consisted of web-based multimedia education that addressed the implications of work-family conflict (WFC) and provided strategies for supporting women in reconciling their work and family responsibilities. The findings from this study highlight the significant role that social support, whether from spouses, colleagues, or superiors, plays in enabling individuals to manage their dual roles more effectively (Jia et al., 2020; Noor et al., 2019).

The interventions examined in this review differ significantly from existing interventions, such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). EAPs, which prioritize the provision of support through counseling or other services, have demonstrated limited efficacy over time due to their more reactive nature and lack of integration with the daily lives of working mothers (Bophela & Govender, 2015; Richmond et al., 2017). The distinction lies in the more proactive approach of the intervention under review, which aims to equip working mothers with practical skills and support that can be directly applied in their daily lives, thereby having a greater impact on reducing work-family conflict (WFC).

Therefore, Occupational Health Nurses (OHNs) must take a more active role in designing and implementing support programs that incorporate these diverse approaches. OHNs have the potential to significantly contribute by providing interventions that not only reduce work-family conflict (WFC) but also enhance the psychosocial well-being of working mothers (Horrigan et al., 2013; Mahé, 2021). Furthermore, subsequent research endeavors should consider incorporating

long-term variables, such as the intervention's impact on the well-being of working mothers over an extended timeframe. Additionally, future studies should investigate the role of cultural factors and the work environment in the efficacy of the intervention, given the potential impact of social context on the program's success (Mensah, 2019).

Company management must prioritize the development of a work environment that promotes a healthy balance between work and family life. This can be achieved by offering greater flexibility and support to working mothers. The implementation of flexible policies, such as customizable working hours and remote work arrangements, has been shown to contribute to the reduction of work-family conflict (WFC) and enhance job satisfaction (Kim, 2020; Pilarz, 2021). Implementing a comprehensive, welfare-based policy has the potential to yield long-term benefits for both the company and its workforce.

This is the first systematic review to examine the effectiveness of various interventions addressing work-family conflict (WFC) issues in working mothers. However, the review is limited by the relatively small number of studies available, given the sensitive topic of WFC. Some studies also included limited samples in specific contexts, which reduced the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future research should expand the research sample and include various social and cultural contexts to produce more comprehensive and applicable findings.

CONCLUSION

This systematic review demonstrates that interventions such as Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), Resilience Training, time management training, and social support have a significant positive impact on reducing work-family conflict (WFC). These approaches not only help working mothers improve their self-efficacy and coping strategies but also promote a better work-life balance, higher work productivity, and family well-being. The interventions reviewed in this review emphasize the importance of a multidimensional approach that includes cognitive, emotional, social, and practical aspects. Overall, the findings provide strong evidence that well-designed strategies can reduce the negative impact of work-family conflict.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

Authors' contributions and responsibilities
FLK: Writing original draft, visualization, funding acquisition, conceptualization; **HP:** Supervision and review.

Availability of data and materials
All data are available from the authors.

Competing interests
The authors declare no competing interest.

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