

From Workload to Wellness: How Time Availability Shapes Family Healthy Lifestyle in Working Mothers

Yulian Sri Lestari

Islamic Guidance and Counseling Study Program, Datokarama State Islamic University

yuliansrilestari@uindatokaramapalu.ac.id

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the effect of working mothers' workload on family healthy lifestyle, with time availability as a mediating variable, particularly in relation to food quality. A quantitative approach was used, employing multiple regression analysis with SPSS. The sample consisted of 250 working mothers who met the following criteria: working at least 30 hours per week, having a spouse and/or child living in the same household. The results revealed that workload had a significant negative effect on time availability ($\beta = -0.268$; $p = 0.000$), and time availability had a significant positive effect on food quality ($\beta = 0.575$; $p = 0.000$). However, the direct effect of workload on food quality was not significant ($\beta = -0.040$; $p = 0.494$). This indicates that workload affects food quality indirectly through limited time availability. The findings emphasize that time management is a key factor in maintaining a healthy family lifestyle, especially among working mothers facing dual roles. Partner support and workplace flexibility play essential roles in helping mothers balance domestic and professional responsibilities effectively.

1 INTRODUCTION

A mother's role in family life is not limited to caregiving, but also encompasses being the primary manager of the household, particularly in fulfilling the family's nutritional and dietary needs. In many cultures, including Indonesia, mothers are viewed as the individuals who best understand the family's food preferences, nutritional requirements, and standards of hygiene and food safety. This knowledge is typically shaped by direct experience, emotional responsibility, and daily interactions with all family members. However, shifts in social and economic dynamics—marked by the increasing participation of women in the workforce—have gradually altered this role. When mothers also serve as primary breadwinners, their time and energy are divided

between external work obligations and domestic responsibilities, including preparing meals for the family.

Data from Statistics Indonesia (Florina & Abdullah, 2023; Santika, 2023; Septiawan & Wijaya, 2021) show that the female labor force participation rate continues to increase, with more than 53% of working-age women being actively employed. Among them, the majority are mothers with children who still require close attention to their dietary and nutritional needs. This illustrates the dual burden faced by working mothers, who function both as professional workers and household managers. Such circumstances increase the overall workload, physically, cognitively, and emotionally.

Literature on workload highlights its serious consequences on family eating behaviors. A study in the United States found that children of mothers with long working hours consumed more soda, fast food, and spent more time watching television, despite being more engaged in structured physical activity (Datar et al., 2014). In Indonesia, workload has also been linked to breastfeeding motivation; although exclusive breastfeeding intentions remain high, physical and emotional exhaustion often hinders optimal lactation practices (Ulya et al., 2020). These studies confirm that increased working hours affect mothers' time allocation, which in turn influences food quality, physical activity, and children's nutritional status.

This situation is exacerbated by the romanticization of motherhood, which remains deeply rooted in cultural expectations. Points out that working mothers are often stigmatized as inattentive to their children, lacking cooking skills, or being too busy to manage household affairs (Afiah & Rofah, 2021). Conversely, stay-at-home mothers are considered more ideal due to their availability for household and childcare tasks. In reality, such romanticization adds psychological pressure on working mothers who are already striving to balance their roles and time. This creates a new form of vulnerability among women—expectations to perform perfectly in both roles without sufficient structural support. Romanticized perceptions such as “a real mother must always be in the kitchen” have created new stigmas against working mothers, who are often seen as less attentive, lacking culinary knowledge, or tending to leave their children in the care of grandparents (Afiah & Rofah, 2021). This stigma adds psychological pressure that intensifies

work–family conflict. In the context of maternal health, studies on remote monitoring reveal that while technology can enhance a sense of safety, women still prefer face-to-face contact due to the emotional closeness it provides (Niela-Vilen et al., 2020). This highlights the significant value of direct interaction in family health domains, which is difficult to replace with third-party involvement.

Furthermore, the research before found that a mother's employment status influences her parenting style. Working mothers tend to adopt different approaches to discipline, communication, and daily decision-making compared to stay-at-home mothers (Hasin et al., 2019). These parenting styles also affect eating habits, consumption patterns, and the quality of food consumed by the family. When a mother's time becomes increasingly limited, cooking responsibilities are often delegated to domestic helpers, other family members, or commercial food services. In such situations, many mothers report dissatisfaction with the meals prepared by others, citing poor hygiene, incorrect seasoning, unsuitable taste for children, or excessive reliance on processed ingredients—factors that collectively lower the overall quality of family meals. Theoretically, workload can be understood through the lens of work psychology, which posits that when job demands exceed an individual's capacity, adaptive functioning—including time and role management—begins to decline (Tentama et al., 2019). For working mothers, workload is not merely about job volume at the workplace but also about how professional demands affect the time available for domestic activities, including preparing nutritious meals. Time availability itself is a crucial resource in family management. When mothers have sufficient time,

they can plan meals more effectively, ensure nutritional diversity, and maintain hygiene and food safety. However, when time is constrained due to work demands, the quality of meal planning and preparation tends to decline. This results in reduced food quality in terms of variety, nutritional content, and cleanliness.

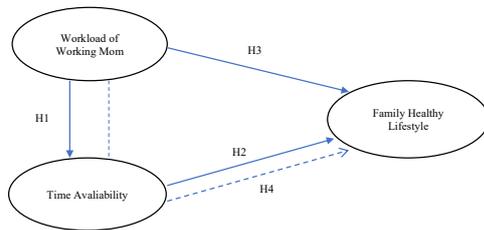
The phenomenon that mothers are the individuals who best understand the family's nutritional needs is not an unfounded claim. In daily practice, most decisions related to grocery shopping, daily meal planning, and hygiene standards in food preparation are made by mothers, both as primary caregivers and household managers. A study before found that maternal nutritional knowledge and self-efficacy significantly influence the quality of meals served to school-aged children (Wut Yee Phyo, Ohn Khin Khin, 2021). Similarly, research in Japan confirmed that a mother's employment status is closely linked to children's food consumption patterns, with working mothers often facing challenges in ensuring balanced nutritional intake due to time constraints (Mori et al., 2021). However, empirical studies in Indonesia that directly link maternal workload with time availability for family health activities and its impact on food quality remain scarce. Most existing research focuses more on parenting aspects or the economic effects of maternal employment, without integrating these variables into a comprehensive framework. This research seeks to address that gap. Using a quantitative approach, this study investigates the relationship between mothers' workload, time availability for health-related household activities, and the resulting quality of family meals.

National statistics also highlight the urgency of this research. According to the 2018 Basic Health Survey (Harbuwono et al., 2018; Hustrini et al., 2022; Titaley et al., 2019), the prevalence of malnutrition and undernutrition among school-aged children remains high, at 17.2% nationally. One contributing factor is the lack of balance and variation in household food consumption. In families with working mothers, the challenge of providing healthy food is even greater. Dependence on fast food, fewer shared mealtimes, and limited cooking time at home are major contributors to this issue.

Research in this area is thus highly relevant to inform public health policy, especially in increasingly complex urban family contexts. This study is expected to offer new insights on the importance of supporting working mothers through policies such as flexible working arrangements, provision of healthy meals at workplaces, family nutrition education, and increased participation of spouses or other family members in household food management.

Therefore, this study not only aims to statistically examine the relationships between variables but also to promote a paradigm shift regarding the role of mothers in modern families. The responsibility for providing healthy meals should not fall solely on mothers—it must become a shared responsibility supported by social awareness, policy interventions, and collective commitment.

Figure 1. Hypothesis and Research Model



This study model examines the effect of the workload of working mothers on the family's healthy lifestyle by considering time availability as a mediating variable. The proposed hypotheses include: H1, that the mother's workload affects time availability; H2, that time availability influences the family's healthy lifestyle; H3, that the mother's workload directly affects the family's healthy lifestyle; and H4, that time availability mediates the effect of the mother's workload on the family's healthy lifestyle.

2 METHOD

This study is an online survey with a quantitative approach using a cross-sectional analytical design. Google Forms was used to collect research data. The population in this study was students of UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya aged 18-23 years. The sample size was 174 subjects, determined using Lemeshow's two-proportion formula. The sampling technique used was accidental sampling. The data analysis used was univariate and bivariate. Univariate analysis was used to determine the frequency distribution of the research variables, while bivariate analysis was used to determine the relationship between ultra-processed food consumption, physical activity, and sleep duration with anxiety in young adults using the Chi-square test. The strength of the relationship in this study was determined using the Odds Ratio (OR) measure.

Tabel 1. Research Instrumen

No	Variabel	Indicator	Code	Aitem
1	Work-load of Working Mom	Task overload	X1	I feel I have to complete too many tasks in a limited amount of time.
		Fatigue	X2	My job often makes me feel physically or mentally exhausted.
		Job difficulty	X3	I find it difficult to complete all my tasks in one day.
		No personal time	X4	My workload often leaves me with no time for myself.
		Time pressure	X5	Job demands overwhelm me in managing my time.
2	Time Availability	Meal preparation	M1	I have enough time to prepare healthy meals for my family.
		Family activity	M2	I can make time to exercise or engage in physical activity with my family.
		Sleep monitoring	M3	I have free time to monitor my children's sleep and rest patterns.
		Time adjustment	M4	I can manage my work schedule to have time for healthy family activities.
		Health support	M5	I feel that I have enough time to support a healthy lifestyle at home.
3		Nutritious food	Y1	Our family regularly consumes nutritious food.

Family Healthy Lifestyle	Physical activity	Y2	My family members regularly engage in physical activity or light exercise.
	Junk food limit	Y3	We limit consumption of fast food and sugary drinks at home.
	Sleep routine	Y4	Our family has regular and sufficient sleep habits.
	Healthy habits	Y5	We support each other in maintaining a healthy lifestyle every day.

3 RESULT

This section presents the research findings in three main stages. First, a description of respondents'

characteristics based on personal identity and family background. Second, the presentation of descriptive statistical tables for each research variable. Third, the results of regression analysis to test each of the proposed hypotheses in the research model.

Tabel 2. Distribution of Respondents' Marital and Employment Characteristics

Subject Identity	Aspect	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	< 25 years	36	14.4
	25 - 35 years	144	57.6
	> 35 years	70	28.0
	Total	250	100%
Marital Status	Married once	227	90.8
	Married more than once	12	4.8
	Divorced	11	4.4
	Total	250	100%
Number of Children	1 child	122	48.8
	2-3 children	106	42.4
	> 3 children	22	8.8
	Total	250	100%
Length of Marriage	1-5 years	94	37.6
	6-10 years	87	34.8
	>10 years	69	27.6
	Total	250	100%
Occupation Type	Government employee	103	41.2
	Private sector employee	44	17.6
	Entrepreneur	27	10.8
	Freelancer	10	4.0
	Others	66	26.4
Total	250	100%	
Working Hours/Day	< 4 hours/day	44	17.6
	4-8 hours/day	120	48.0
	> 8 hours/day	86	34.4
	Total	250	100%

The majority of respondents in this study were within the productive age range, with 57.6% aged 25–35 years, followed by those over 35 years (28%) and those under 25 years (14.4%). Most respondents had been married once (90.8%), with a small proportion having been married more than once (4.8%) or currently separated (4.4%). In terms of number of children, respondents with one child made up the largest group (48.8%), followed by those with 2–3 children (42.4%) and more than 3 children (8.8%). The length of marriage was relatively evenly distributed, with the highest proportion in the 1–5

year range (37.6%), followed by 6–10 years (34.8%) and over 10 years (27.6%).

Regarding occupation, most respondents were government employees (41.2%), followed by private sector employees (17.6%), entrepreneurs (10.8%), freelancers (4%), and others (26.4%) which included housewives, temporary workers, and informal occupations. In terms of daily working hours, nearly half of the respondents worked between 4 to 8 hours per day (48%), while 34.4% worked more than 8 hours, and 17.6% worked less than 4 hours per day.

Tabel 3. Direct and indirect effect

Hypothesis	Relationships	Direct effect		Indirect Effects	
		β	p	β	p
H1	Workload → Time Availability	-	0.00		
		.268			
H2	Time Availability → Family Healthy Lifestyle	.575	0.00		
H3	Workload → Family Healthy Lifestyle	-	0.404		
		0.04			
H4	Workload → Time Availability → Family Healthy Lifestyle			.005	0.008

H1: The Effect of Workload on Time Availability

The results of the simple linear regression analysis indicate a significant effect of working mothers' workload on their time availability for family health-related activities. As shown in the regression output table below, the regression coefficient is -0.268 with a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a negative and statistically significant relationship.

The negative regression coefficient indicates that as a mother's workload increases, her available time for family health activities decreases. In other words, a higher level of work-related and domestic responsibilities reduces the time she can allocate to

preparing healthy meals, exercising with family members, or managing daily home routines. Based on the significance value and direction of the relationship, Hypothesis 1 (H1), which states that workload has a negative effect on time availability, is **accepted**.

H2 : The Effect of Time Availability on Family Food Quality

The results of the simple linear regression analysis indicate a significant effect of mothers' time availability on the quality of food in the family. As presented in the regression output table below, the regression coefficient is 0.575 with a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), which indicates a positive

and statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

The positive regression coefficient indicates that as time availability increases, the quality of food provided in the family also improves. This implies that when mothers have more time to prepare and manage family meals, there is a greater tendency to provide healthier food options. Based on the significance value and the positive direction of the relationship, hypothesis two (H2), which states that time availability has a positive effect on food quality, **is accepted**.

H3: The Effect of Workload on Food Quality

The results of the simple linear regression analysis show that there is no significant effect of working mothers' workload on the quality of food in the family. Based on the regression output table below, the regression coefficient is -0.040 with a significance value of 0.404 ($p > 0.05$). The negative coefficient suggests a tendency for an inverse relationship between the two variables, meaning that an increase in workload tends to be followed by a decrease in food quality. However, since the significance value exceeds 0.05, the relationship is not statistically significant.

Thus, although the direction of the relationship indicates that increased workload tends to be associated with a decline in food quality, this effect is not statistically significant. Therefore, the third hypothesis (H3), which states that workload has a direct effect on food quality, **is rejected**.

H4 : The Effect of Workload on Food Quality through Time Availability

The regression analysis results indicate a significant indirect effect of workload on food quality through the mediating variable of time availability.

As shown in the table below, time availability has a regression coefficient of 0.527 with a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a significant influence on food quality. In addition, the interaction of workload through time availability on food quality yields a regression coefficient of 0.005 with a significance value of 0.008 ($p < 0.05$), confirming the significance of the mediating effect.

These findings indicate that time availability serves as a significant mediator in the relationship between workload and food quality. Although workload does not directly affect food quality (as shown in the H3 results), it still influences food quality indirectly by affecting how much time mothers can allocate to family health activities. Therefore, hypothesis four (H4), which proposes an indirect effect of workload on food quality through time availability, **is accepted**.

4 DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the workload of working mothers has a significant influence on time availability, but does not directly affect the quality of food in the family. These findings reinforce the dual-role theory, which posits that women working outside the home tend to face role conflicts between work demands and family needs, particularly in terms of time management. As working hours increase or job pressure intensifies, the amount of time that can be allocated to domestic activities such as cooking, planning healthy meals, or having family meals becomes increasingly limited (Byrd-Bredbenner & Abbot, 2008; Kirk & Gillespie, 1990; Ozilgen, 2012). From the regression analysis, it was found that workload had a negative effect on time

availability ($\beta = -0.268$; $p < 0.05$), indicating that the higher the perceived workload, the less time mothers have to engage in activities that support a healthy family lifestyle. This aligns with previous findings showing that working mothers often face time conflicts, which lead them to reduce time for cooking or opt for practical solutions such as purchasing fast food (Byrd-Bredbenner et al., 2008).

Furthermore, when time availability increases, the quality of family meals also shows a significant improvement ($\beta = 0.575$; $p < 0.05$). This confirms that adequate time enables mothers to be more involved in healthy family eating activities, including preparing fresh ingredients, cooking in healthier ways, and monitoring children's eating habits. This result is consistent with work–family boundary management approaches, where working mothers actively manage their schedules to maintain healthy family mealtime rhythms (Hendelman-Baavur, 2019; Tan Hwee Boon & Cho, 2024; 양소남, 2011). These boundary management strategies are essential in creating space for quality shared mealtime activities. However, the direct pathway from workload to food quality showed insignificant results ($\beta = -0.040$; $p > 0.05$). This suggests that workload does not directly affect food quality but does so through the mediation of time availability. This highlights time as the key intermediary that bridges the relationship between job pressure and family nutritional outcomes. Therefore, interventions aimed at improving family meal quality among working mothers should focus on enhancing time efficiency and flexibility, rather than solely reducing workload.

These findings also extend the insights of previous studies that categorized working mothers into various psychographic profiles in their food

decision-making (Byrd-Bredbenner et al., 2008). Some working mothers act as time managers, family diplomats, or meaning creators during meals, depending on the values they hold and their perceptions of their roles in the family (Kirk & Gillespie, 1990). Meanwhile, mothers who are unable to manage work pressure and time effectively tend to delegate food responsibilities to others or rely on fast food, which can diminish the nutritional quality of family meals. Socially, the intensity of a mother's work often reduces the amount of quality time spent with family, as evidenced by studies showing that working mothers have less time for child interaction compared to those who stay at home or work from home (Wardiyah et al., 2023). A mother's absence from routine family meals can diminish children's opportunities to learn healthy eating behaviors and create greater emotional distance within the family dynamic (Andersen, 2017; Rehel, 2014).

This is further supported by research in Indonesia indicating that children with working parents are more likely to experience delays in social development, have lower social interaction skills, and face challenges in environmental (Lightbody & Williamson, 2017; Yucel, 2008). Thus, the time factor affects not only food quality but also the psychosocial dimensions of child development. On the other hand, some mothers demonstrate adaptive capacities in managing work–family conflicts through specific strategies, such as flexible scheduling, family communication, and shared domestic responsibilities with partners or other family members (Tan Hwee Boon & Cho, 2024). These strategies not only help maintain meal frequency but also improve the quality of interaction during mealtime.

In a broader context, studies on working mothers' time use indicate that most of their time is spent on work and childcare, while leisure and health-promoting activities often become neglected (Kim & Hong, 2021). This supports arguments that policy interventions should consider restructuring working hours or providing support facilities such as community kitchens, healthy catering, and time management education programs for working mothers. Other studies also suggest that role conflict experienced by working mothers can affect not only themselves but also their partners and children, both emotionally and mentally (Person, 2013; Sri Tatminingsih, 2022). Mothers who feel overwhelmed by dual responsibilities are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion, which can reduce their motivation to prepare healthy meals or engage in other family activities. Therefore, understanding maternal workload should not only focus on time but also on the accompanying psychological stress.

The concept of family health climate, which underpins the development of food quality indicators in this study, supports the notion that the family's health environment is greatly influenced by the mother's presence in shaping norms, providing resources, and modeling eating behaviors (Niermann et al., 2014). When mothers have the time to actively participate, family food quality improves systematically. These results suggest that strategies to improve food quality in families with working mothers must emphasize adequate time availability—through individual time management, spousal support, or policies that enable work flexibility. Intervention programs such as time management training, simple and quick healthy menu guidance, and family education on the importance of shared

meals are crucial for implementation in working mother communities.

In addition, these findings open avenues for further research to identify additional factors that support time management and their impact on other dimensions of a healthy family lifestyle, such as physical activity, sleep, and stress management. From a holistic perspective, a healthy lifestyle cannot be separated from the social and emotional factors in the life of a working mother. Ultimately, this study underscores that time constraints are a critical link in the relationship between maternal workload and family health. By placing time availability as a key mediator, the findings suggest that efforts to improve family nutrition must involve cross-sectoral approaches, ranging from workplace environments and public policies to support systems within families. A healthy family lifestyle for working mothers is not solely determined by nutritional knowledge, but also by the actual availability of time to apply that knowledge in everyday life.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to examine the influence of working mothers' workload on family healthy lifestyle, by investigating the mediating role of time availability for health-related family activities. The findings from quantitative analysis using a structural model reveal significant insights into the complex dynamics between work demands, maternal roles, and food quality as an indicator of a healthy family lifestyle.

The first hypothesis, which stated that the workload of working mothers negatively affects their time availability for family health activities, is

accepted. The results show that the higher the perceived workload, the less time mothers have to engage in activities such as preparing nutritious meals, managing their children's eating routines, and conducting regular family health practices. This supports the role conflict theory, which asserts that time limitations resulting from professional obligations reduce the mother's capacity to perform her domestic responsibilities optimally.

The second hypothesis, which stated that time availability positively affects food quality in the family, is also accepted. This finding reinforces the notion that adequate time enables mothers to plan meals, choose healthy ingredients, and cook food in ways that are both nutritious and appropriate to the family's needs. Time, therefore, is not merely a technical factor, but a crucial prerequisite in shaping a healthy lifestyle within the family.

However, the third hypothesis, which proposed a direct relationship between workload and food quality, is rejected. The analysis demonstrates that workload does not significantly influence food quality directly, but rather exerts its effect through the mediating variable of time availability. In other words, even when a mother experiences a high workload, if she has access to strategies or support systems that ensure sufficient time, the quality of food can still be maintained.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that time availability plays a central role in sustaining a healthy family lifestyle amid the demands of working motherhood. Its mediating function suggests that policy interventions and empowerment programs for working mothers should prioritize time management skills, workplace flexibility, and social or domestic support systems.

Practical suggestions include the provision of time management training for working mothers, the development of quick and nutritious meal options, and the promotion of regular family mealtime as a public health priority. Organizations should also consider implementing flexible work policies or providing support services such as healthy workplace canteens and family-oriented catering.

For future research, it is recommended to further explore other influential factors in supporting healthy lifestyles among working mothers, such as spousal support, maternal mental health, the role of digital tools in meal planning, and qualitative approaches that capture the lived experiences of women managing dual roles. Longitudinal studies are also advised to assess the long-term impact of work patterns and time management on overall family health outcomes.

By understanding the relationship between workload, time availability, and food quality, the design of targeted interventions and family policies can be more effective and contextually relevant in addressing the challenges of working mothers in today's modern society.

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