

Work-Life Balance and Time Flexibility of Female Employees in the Home Industry: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Home-based food industries, such as the traditional "kentang mustofa" processing business, represent a labor-intensive micro-enterprise subsector predominantly staffed by women who bear a dual role as production workers and household managers. This condition creates the potential for role conflict that may reduce work focus and productivity. This study aims to map research trends, synthesize the literature consensus on the effect of Work-Life Balance (WLB) on productivity, and examine how time flexibility affects the daily productivity of women workers in the informal sector, using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework. Searches across Google Scholar, Garuda, DOAJ, ScienceDirect, Scopus, and Emerald yielded 20 eligible articles from 346 initial records. The synthesis indicates that WLB is consistently and positively associated with employee productivity and performance, although the strength of this relationship is moderated by sector, gender, and job hierarchy. Time flexibility helps informal-sector women reduce role conflict and maintain production stability, yet unstructured flexibility risks lowering output in daily-target-based industries. The study recommends an adaptive time-management model based on task rotation and flexible work blocks for food-based micro-enterprises as a strategy to balance productivity and the well-being of women workers

Keywords

Work-Life Balance; time flexibility; women workers; home industry; systematic literature review



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INTRODUCTION

The Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector is a pillar of national economic stability, capable of absorbing a wide workforce. One subsector that continues to grow rapidly is the snack food processing industry, such as the "Kentang Mustofa" business. This product has a stable market share because it has

transitioned from a mere snack to a practical, ready-to-eat side dish. Behind this market growth, the Mustofa potato cottage industry relies heavily on labor-intensive manual processes, from peeling and precise manual cutting, frying, and packaging, which require high precision.

The dominant workforce in this cottage industry is women, particularly housewives. This situation creates a dual role phenomenon, as explained in Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) role conflict framework: on the one hand, they are required to maintain daily productivity to ensure a steady supply of products, while on the other, they have domestic responsibilities that cannot be neglected. This dual role conflict often triggers psychological stress that can reduce work focus (Cavagnis, Russo, Danioni, & Barni, 2023; Novitasari, Sasono, & Asbari, 2020). In food production, lack of focus can have fatal consequences for productivity, such as uneven cuts, the risk of burning during frying, and even slow packaging. Therefore, the concepts of Work-Life Balance (WLB) and time flexibility are crucial variables for maintaining the job stability of women workers in the informal sector.

Although the relationship between WLB, time flexibility, and productivity has been widely studied in large corporations or formal sectors, such as banking or technology companies (Ardiansyah & Surjanti, 2020; Putri & Frianto, 2023), studies that systematically summarize this phenomenon in the informal sector, particularly the labor-intensive home food industry, are still very limited and scattered. Many previous studies have shown mixed findings; Some studies suggest that time flexibility increases productivity (Indrawanti & Pradhanawati, 2019; Ferrara, Pansini, Vincenzi, Buonomo, & Benevene, 2022), while other studies indicate that flexibility without control actually decreases output in daily target-based industries (Dilmaghani, 2020).

The absence of a comprehensive synthesis of how WLB and time flexibility interact to influence the productivity of female workers in the home food industry sector creates a knowledge gap. Therefore, an in-depth study is needed that can integrate, critique, and synthesize findings from various previous studies in a structured manner. Based on this urgency, this research was conducted using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021) to map, evaluate, and synthesize the existing scientific literature.

METHODS

This study employed a ****Systematic Literature Review (SLR)**** approach following the ****PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses)**** guidelines developed by Page et al. (2021) to ensure the

transparency and reproducibility of the literature identification, screening, selection, and synthesis processes. The literature search was conducted across several academic databases, including **Google Scholar, Garuda (Garba Rujukan Digital), DOAJ, ScienceDirect, Scopus, and Emerald**, covering publications from **2004 to 2026**, with particular emphasis on studies published between **2015 and 2026**. The search strategy employed Boolean operators using the following keywords: **("Work-Life Balance" OR "keseimbangan kehidupan kerja") AND ("time flexibility" OR "fleksibilitas waktu" OR "flexible work arrangement") AND ("productivity" OR "produktivitas") AND ("women workers" OR "pekerja wanita" OR "dual roles" OR "home industry" OR "household industry" OR "MSMEs")**. The inclusion criteria comprised: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in **SINTA, Scopus, or equivalent databases**; (2) studies addressing at least two of the three core variables, namely **work-life balance, time flexibility, and women's work productivity**; (3) empirical studies or systematic reviews; and (4) articles published in either **English or Indonesian**. The exclusion criteria included: (1) non-peer-reviewed publications such as undergraduate theses, unpublished master's theses, dissertations, and opinion articles; (2) duplicate publications; and (3) studies that did not provide sufficient findings for qualitative synthesis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Previous Research Trends and Focus (Answering Problem Statement 1)

A review of the 20 selected studies shows that research on WLB and time flexibility has seen a significant increase in publication volume since 2019, in line with the growing attention to work flexibility post-COVID-19 pandemic (Novitasari, Sasono, & Asbari, 2020; Ferrara, Pansini, Vincenzi, Buonomo, & Benevene, 2022). Methodologically, the majority of studies (14 of 20) used a quantitative, survey-based approach with regression analysis or SEM, while the remainder were systematic reviews/meta-analyses (Wong, Chan, & Teh, 2020; Cavagnis, Russo, Danioni, & Barni, 2023) and qualitative-descriptive studies (Suprihatin, 2004; Podolskaya, 2019).

In terms of context, most studies still focus on the formal corporate sector, such as banking, educational institutions, and large manufacturing companies (Ardiansyah & Surjanti, 2020; Putri & Frianto, 2023; Kadir, Saputra, Habibu, & Anggraeni, 2025). Studies specifically targeting home industries or food MSMEs based on female workers are much fewer, represented primarily by the studies of Indrawanti and Pradhanawati (2019) on batik garment SMEs, and Prabhajayati and Marhaeni (2021) on the woodcraft industry. These findings confirm the research gap mentioned in the background of this study and indicate that the issue of WLB in labor-intensive home food industries remains an under-researched area.

Literature Consensus on the Effect of WLB on Productivity (Answering Problem Statement 2)

The literature synthesis indicates a relatively strong consensus that WLB is positively related to the productivity and performance of female employees. A meta-analysis by Wong, Chan, and Teh (2020), which synthesized 202 records from 58 publications, found a significant positive relationship between WLB arrangements and organizational performance (OR=1.181; 95% CI: 1.125–1.240), although this effect was moderated by employee gender, sector, and job hierarchy. This finding is consistent with organizational-level studies by Ardiansyah and Surjanti (2020) and Putri and Frianto (2023), which showed that WLB improves employee performance both directly and through the mediation of organizational commitment.

On the other hand, several studies highlight that the absence of WLB, manifested as work-family conflict, has a significant negative impact on the performance of female workers. Asbari et al. (2020), in a study of Indonesian female employees, found that work-family conflict significantly reduced job satisfaction and performance, aligning with the findings of Novitasari, Sasono, and Asbari (2020) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Cavagnis, Russo, Danioni, and Barni (2023), through a PRISMA-based systematic review, also confirmed that social support and coping strategies are key protective factors enabling women to maintain productivity amidst the demands of dual roles.

Thus, it can be concluded that the literature generally agrees on the direction of a positive relationship between WLB and productivity. However, the magnitude of this influence is contextual, depending on the characteristics of the employment sector, the level of organizational support, and the structure of the domestic roles undertaken by female workers. This pattern is relevant for the context of household food industries such as the mustofa potato business in Banyuasin and other food MSME centers.

4.3 The Effect of Time Flexibility on the Daily Productivity of Female Workers in the Informal Sector (Answering Problem Formulation 3)

Literature evidence regarding the effect of time flexibility on the productivity of female workers in the informal sector shows a more complex pattern than the general WLB-productivity relationship. Indrawanti and Pradhanawati's (2019) study of female workers in a batik garment SME found that dual roles and flexible working hours jointly positively influenced work productivity, as flexibility allows workers to adjust production hours to domestic needs without sacrificing output targets. Similar findings were presented by Ferrara, Pansini, Vincenzi, Buonomo, and Benevene (2022), who concluded that flexible work correlates with employee performance and well-being, although its effectiveness is highly dependent on the degree of task control.

However, several studies warn of the risks of unstructured flexibility. Dilmaghani (2020) found that the benefits of flexible work arrangements in Canada differ significantly by gender and sector. Therefore, flexibility without a clear control framework can lead to unequal outcomes, particularly in jobs that require precision and daily targets, such as time-

sensitive food production processes (precision cutting, frying, packaging). A report by the International Labour Organization (2024) also emphasized that flexible work hours have the potential to increase productivity and WLB, but require adequate regulation to avoid negative impacts, particularly for informal economy workers who are vulnerable to excessive work hours without the same protections as those in the formal sector.

At the household level, studies by Prabhajayati and Marhaeni (2021), Marlina and Adry (2018), and Kaarib, Kamarni, and Purwasutrisno (2019) consistently show that women's work time devoted to home industries and their labor force participation are significantly influenced by domestic workload, number of dependents, and education level, which in turn determine the extent of flexible time that can be utilized productively. The phenomenon of added workers and discouraged workers described by Karaoglan and Okten (2015) in the Turkish context is also relevant in explaining similar dynamics among informal female workers in Indonesia, including in food MSMEs. These findings collectively confirm the mixed findings mentioned in the background: time flexibility increases productivity when accompanied by adequate management structures (e.g., task rotation or time-block-based targets), but has the potential to reduce output in industries based on strict daily targets if flexibility is provided without clear control mechanisms (Suprihatin, 2004; Podolskaya, 2019).

Model Synthesis: Recommendations for Adaptive Time Management for Food MSMEs

Based on the synthesis in sections 4.2 and 4.3, this study formulates a conceptual model of adaptive time management consisting of three main components. First, structured time flexibility, which provides autonomy over start/finish times within a specific time block (e.g., two work sessions per day) so that workers can still fulfill domestic responsibilities without sacrificing daily production targets, in line with the recommendations of Ferrara, Pansini, Vincenzi, Buonomo, and Benevene (2022) and Dilmaghani (2020). Second, skill-based task rotation and division of labor, which allows production to continue even if one worker takes time for family needs, as implied by the findings of Indrawanti and Pradhanawati (2019). Third, social support and family-friendly policies at the business group level, including mutual agreements among MSME members regarding shared working hours and mutual assistance mechanisms, refer to the protective factors identified by Cavagnis, Russo, Danioni, and Barni (2023) and Asbari et al. (2020). These three components are projected to be able to maintain a balance between the stability of daily productivity and the psychological well-being of female workers in the home food industry, including in the food processing cluster transformation model based on Green Human Resource Management which is currently being developed in the context of the home industry in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Based on a synthesis of 20 studies that met the inclusion criteria, this research concludes three main points. First, research on WLB and time flexibility has

increased rapidly since 2019, but remains dominated by the formal corporate sector, while studies on the female-based food home industry remain very limited. Second, the literature demonstrates a consensus that WLB positively impacts the productivity and performance of female employees, with the strength of the relationship moderated by sector, gender, and organizational support structure (Wong, Chan, & Teh, 2020). Third, time flexibility has the potential to increase the daily productivity of female workers in the informal sector when accompanied by a clear management structure, but risks reducing output in work-based, strict daily targets if implemented without adequate controls (Dilmaghani, 2020; International Labour Organization, 2024).

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