

## **MATERNAL EMPLOYMENT AND CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENTS IN INDONESIA: THE NEEDS FOR CHILDCARE SUPPORT POLICIES**

### ***KERJA PEREMPUAN DAN PENGATURAN PENITIPAN ANAK DI INDONESIA: KEPERLUAN UNTUK KEBIJAKAN DUKUNGAN PENITIPAN ANAK***

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#### **ABSTRAK**

*Perempuan membutuhkan dukungan pengasuhan anak agar potensi mereka untuk berkontribusi terhadap ekonomi dapat optimal. Tulisan ini bertujuan mengetahui praktik pengaturan pengasuhan anak di kalangan keluarga dengan ibu yang bekerja dan mengidentifikasi kebutuhan untuk mendukung mereka dalam kehidupan kerjanya. Metode dalam studi ini menggunakan metode campuran eksplanatoris sekuensial dengan data kuantitatif diperoleh dari Modul Sosial Budaya dan Pendidikan Indonesia Survei Sosial-Ekonomi Nasional 2018. Data kualitatif yaitu wawancara dengan ibu yang bekerja melengkapi temuan kuantitatif untuk memberikan pemahaman konteks tentang dukungan yang dibutuhkan dari pemerintah. Temuan dalam studi ini menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar keluarga mengandalkan kakek-nenek untuk mengawasi anak balita, sementara beberapa keluarga lain bergantung pada kakak yang mungkin belum dewasa. Para ibu yang bekerja membutuhkan tempat penitipan anak yang terjangkau sebagai tempat yang aman bagi anak dan untuk meringankan beban keluarga. Dengan semakin banyaknya perempuan yang menjadi bagian dari angkatan kerja, pemerintah perlu menyediakan tempat penitipan anak yang terjangkau, terutama bagi keluarga dengan sumber daya terbatas. Pemerintah juga perlu mendorong penyediaan ruang laktasi dan ruang ramah anak, meluncurkan kampanye di media sosial, dan mengadakan acara komunitas untuk mendidik masyarakat tentang hak dan keamanan anak, tanggung jawab yang sama antara laki-laki dan perempuan, dan pengaturan kerja yang akomodatif.*

*Keywords: kerja perempuan, penitipan anak, pengawasan non-dewasa, kebijakan dukungan penitipan anak.*

#### **ABSTRACT**

Women need childcare supports to maximize their potential to contribute to their economy. This article aims to investigate childcare arrangement practices among families whose working mothers and identify the necessities to support them in their work lives. This study employs explanatory sequential mixed methods. Quantitative data were collected from Indonesia's Socio-Cultural and Education Module of the 2018 National Socio-Economic Survey. Qualitative data resulted from interviews with working mothers are applied as complementary for the quantitative findings to result contextual understandings concerning necessary supports from the government. Findings show that most families rely on grandparents to supervise the toddlers, while some others trust the older siblings, who possibly not be matured yet. Working mothers require affordable daycares as a safe place for their children as well as to ease their families' burdens. As more women become parts of the workforce, it is crucial for the government to provide inexpensive public daycares, especially for families with limited resources. In addition, the government should promote the provision of lactation rooms and child-friendly spaces, launch social media campaigns, and conduct community events to educate society concerning children's rights and safety, equal responsibilities between men and women, and accommodative working arrangements.

**Keywords: maternal employment; childcare arrangements; non-adult supervision; childcare supports policies**

## INTRODUCTION

The Government of Indonesia has the vision to become a high-income country by 2045. To achieve this goal, it is crucial to increase the Female Labor Force Participation Rate (LPFR), which was only 53.34% in 2021. If it can be raised to 65% by 2045, Indonesia's progress will be significantly boosted. However, there is concern about women's participation in the economy. According to Becker (1985), married women face domestic responsibility and earning discrimination, which may lead them to seek fewer demanding jobs, such as informal jobs, and to invest less in their human capital (Becker 1985).

Moreover, according to Cherry (2003), achieving labor market equality for women is challenging as long as they bear most childcare responsibilities. Patriarchal values often assume women to be accommodating spouses and responsible for domestic chores. Women are expected to modify their schedules to accommodate the demand for overtime from their partner's employer, unexpected changes to working hours, and other sudden changes. In addition, in some cultures, men are not expected to participate in domestic chores or care work, even if their wives also work. This arrangement is known as the "second shift" or "double burden" for women (Chen et al. 2018; Ford and Nurchayati 2017; Hochschild and Machung 2003). Some mothers have to leave the labor market after having their first child, as women are expected to work domestic chores even while working (Ford and Nurchayati 2017; Hochschild and Machung 2003; Usui, Rose, and Kageyama 2003; Utomo 2018).

Numerous researchers have attempted to estimate the impact of various childcare arrangements on married women's labor participation since the 1970s. In his empirical test, Heckman (1974) considered several factors influencing women's labor supply. The factors include the availability of informal childcare for older children in the households (number of children aged 14-18 years old), the husband's availability (measured using the husband's working hours as a proxy), and the availability

of low-cost care from friends and relatives living nearby (measured using the women's years of residence in the same area as a proxy). Heckman (1974) found that the wage rate and price of formal and informal childcare services significantly influence women's labor supply and choice of childcare support model (Heckman 1974). Subsequent research has confirmed Heckman (1974) findings that higher wages and lower childcare costs increase women's labor supply and demand for childcare (Blau and Robins 1991). Depending on their resources, some families can hire nannies, access daycare services, or have grandparents or other family members provide care.

However, not all families have the privilege of having suitable childcare arrangements. Families without support often have to leave their children with inappropriate caretakers or alone at home (Coohey 2007; Gonzalez and Ruiz-Casares 2022; Ruiz-Casares and Heymann 2009). Heymann (2000) found that poor parents in the United States face challenges in providing quality care for their children, including conflicting schedules between work and school activities, limited time to interact with their children, and difficulties accessing affordable childcare services (Heymann 2000). Later, Ruiz-Casares and Heymann (2009) developed an ethnographic decision-making model based on working parents in the developing countries of Botswana, Mexico, and Vietnam. They identified five decision-making points that led to the childcare decision (see Figure 1). The first point is whether the parent(s) can care for the child(ren) themselves. Some parents may have to work to make ends meet, while others may choose to be homemakers due to the cost of alternative care services. The second point is the availability of a person or daycare center that is accessible, affordable, and safe. The third is the availability of relatives or neighbors who can provide childcare. If none is available, parents may have to rely on an older sibling to care for the younger child, leading to inadequate supervision. Some parents might also consider the fifth point: bringing the child(ren) to work if the company or employer allows it (Ruiz-Casares and Heymann 2009).

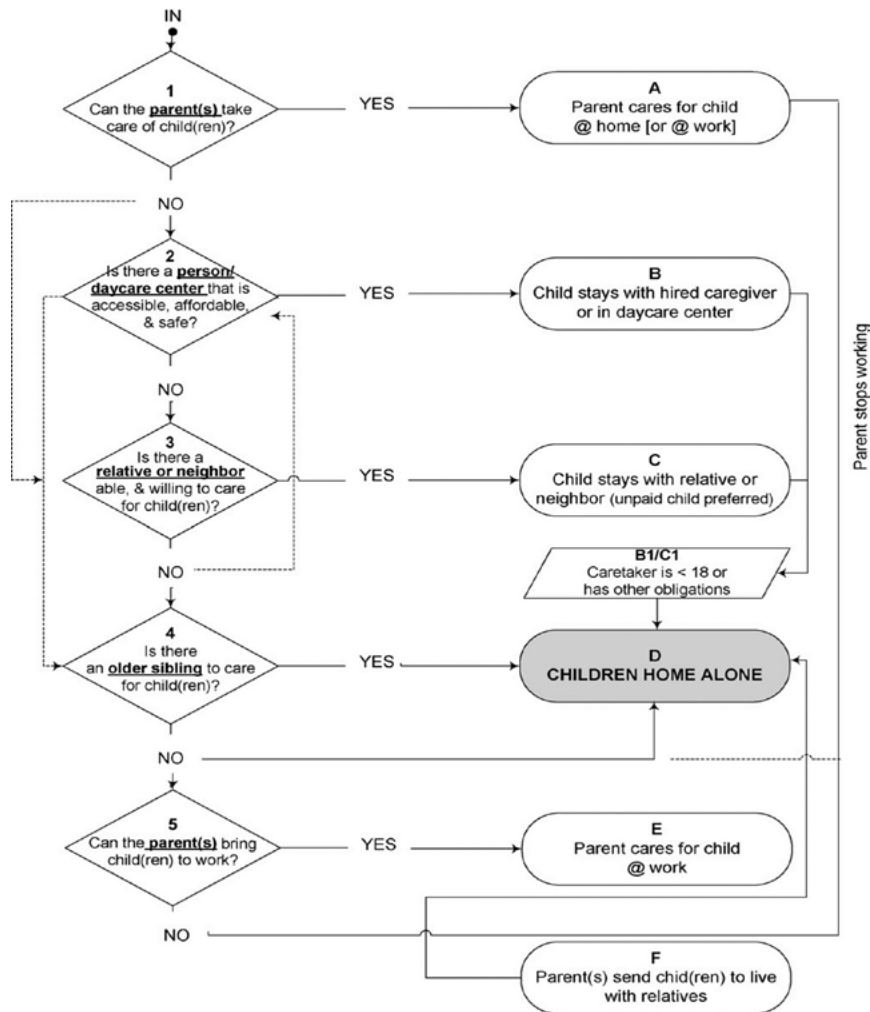


Figure 1. Theoretical framework of the temporary childcare decision-making process

Source: Ruiz-Casares & Heymann, 2009

Pandemi Covid-19 sampai pertengahan 2022 masih berlangsung meskipun beberapa kegiatan sudah diperlonggar aturannya. Namun, langkah-

Given the complexity of the child supervision issue, Coheey (2003) developed and tested a classification system for different supervision problems. He identified five types of supervision problems. The first is when parents do not watch their children closely enough. The parents might be nearby, but they do not know where the children are, who they are with, or what they are doing, or they do not check in on them frequently enough. The second type is when alternative childcare is inadequate. The parent might have temporarily left the child without a caregiver or might have left the child with someone who is unable to care for them. Unsuitable caregivers include those who are too young, drink alcohol or use drugs, have a mental health problem, are

inattentive, or are inappropriate. The third type of supervision problem is failing to protect the child from a third party. This could include situations where the third party is an alleged or known child sexual or physical abuser or a person engaged in illegal or inappropriate activities. It may also include instances where the parent exposes the child to domestic violence. The fourth type of supervision problem is when the parents allow, encourage, or force the child to engage in a harmful activity or are aware that the child is engaging in illegal or inappropriate behavior yet do nothing to intervene. The last type is when the parent drives carelessly or is drunk with the child inside the vehicle (Coohy 2003).

In many countries, such as the USA and Canada, lack of supervision is considered a form of child neglect (Coohy 2007; Trocmé et al. 2005). At the same time, leaving children

at home with an unsuitable caregiver, such as another child or even alone, is not ideal for both children and parents. Being left alone without adult supervision may result in adverse physical, mental, or social outcomes for the child, such as injuries, malnourishment, nightmares, social withdrawal, and death (Ruiz-Casares, Trocme, and Fallon 2012; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2022).

However, previous studies on childcare arrangements found variations in supervision practices among different cultures and conditions. Most of these studies mainly come from developed countries (Gonzalez and Ruiz-Casares 2022; Grégoire-Labrecque et al. 2020; Klassen et al. 2022; Miconi et al. 2018; Ruiz-Casares and Heymann 2009). By using the data from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and the DHS dataset, Ruiz-Casares et al. (2018) conducted a study on the prevalence of non-adult supervision for children under the age of five in 61 Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC). These countries include Southeast Asian countries such as Cambodia (DHS 2014), Lao People's Democratic Republic (MICS 2012), Myanmar (DHS 2016), Thailand (MICS 2013), and Vietnam (MICS 2014). The researchers confirmed that it is common for children in these countries to be left home alone without adult supervision and for older children to look after their younger siblings. Their calculation showed that the prevalence of children left home alone for at least one hour in the past week before the survey ranged from 1.5% in Thailand to 6.7% in Myanmar. The numbers were higher for the prevalence of children being supervised by older children, which ranged from 3.8% in Thailand to 11.4% in Myanmar. The main variables of interest in the study were the mother's education, residence location, socio-economic status, and the number of household members. For countries in Southeast Asia, children whose mothers have high education are less likely to experience non-adult supervision, while children who reside in rural areas and in lower-wealth households are more likely to experience it. In addition, the child's age and sex are also included in the model. Children aged three years or older were more likely to be under non-adult supervision or home alone, but

there is no clear pattern of association regarding the child's sex. Overall, the study highlights the importance of studying childcare and child supervision practices in different settings (Ruiz-Casares et al. 2018).

Studies examining the connection between maternal employment, childcare arrangements, and childcare support policy in Indonesia are still limited. Therefore, this study aims to examine childcare arrangements for women workers in Indonesia and to understand the needs of families in Indonesia regarding maternal employment and child protection.

## METHODS

This study uses an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative analysis was based on data from SUSENAS-MSBP 2018, focusing on children under five who reside with biological parents. The survey asked households about the supervision arrangement when the mothers (or other primary caregivers) had to leave home and any instances of nonadult supervision in the past week. Only complete family settings, in which the child resides with both biological parents, were included in the analysis to assess the childcare arrangements and supervision practices under different parental working arrangements. The results from the quantitative part will be complemented by qualitative data collected through ten in-depth interviews with working mothers, providing additional contextual information from the working mothers' perspectives.

### Quantitative sample

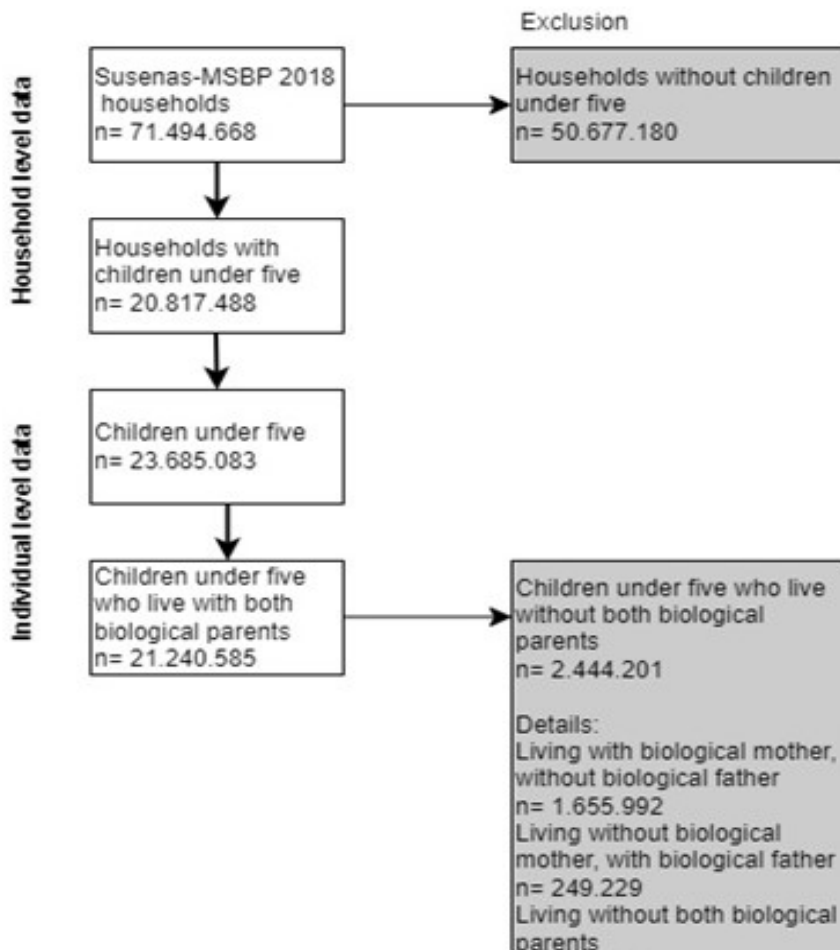
From the 71.5 million households represented in the SUSENAS-MSBP 2018, there are around 20.8 million households (29.12%) with children under five. Regarding individual-level data, 23.7 million children under five and 89.68% live with both biological parents. Therefore, the quantitative analysis in this study focuses on childcare arrangements for 21.2 million Indonesian children under five who live with both biological parents. Most households (87.31%)

only have one child under five. Urban areas are home to more than half of households (54.53%). In addition, 58% of children under five years old have one working parent, and 41.43% of children have both of their parents working.

**Qualitative informants**

This study employed purposive sampling and snowballing techniques to select qualitative informants. The authors aimed to include working women with varying education levels, occupations, and childcare arrangements. Qualitative informants were recruited by posting messages on social media and WhatsApp groups to find working mothers with children under five

years old. These informants were then asked to refer other working mothers interested in participating. The study included ten working mothers as informants with different educational backgrounds, occupations, numbers of children, and childcare arrangements. On average, the informants were 32, with the youngest being 27 and the oldest being 39. One informant did not have a child under five but was still interviewed because she had experienced leaving her children without adult supervision when they were younger. Four informants had no external support, while the rest relied on a single source of external support or a combination of daycare, housemaids, and grandparents.



**Figure 2. Quantitative sample selection framework**

**Table 1. Characteristics of qualitative informants**

No	Mothers' characteristics				Children's sex and age	Support system
	Alias	Age	Education	Occupation		
1	INE	36	Elementary	Odds jobs	Male 15; Female 8; Female 2	none
2	NANDO	28	Bachelor	Researcher	Female 2	daycare
3	AMMA	32	Bachelor	Online snack seller	Female 1	none
4	MANDEH	32	Master	Corporate Worker	Female 3; Male 1	daycare, housemaid, grandparent
5	MACE	33	Master	News Editor	Male 7; Male 2	none
6	AMBU	33	Master	Consultant	Male 0 (9 months old)	babysitter, grandparent
7	EBHU	32	Master	Researcher	Female 4	daycare, housemaid
8	BIYANG	27	Diploma	Online Shop Seller	Female 0 (6 months old)	grandparent
9	UMAI	39	Bachelor	Program facilitator	Female 10; Female 8; Male 6	none
10	ENDE	31	Senior Highschool	Factory worker	Female 13, Male 1	grandparent

Source: obtained from primary data

### Research location

There are two location sets in this study. The SUSENAS-MSBP data used for quantitative analysis covers all provinces in Indonesia, making it representative at the national level. For qualitative analysis, we did not predetermine a specific location. However, due to the authors' limited network, the snowballing technique only yielded informants from the Greater Jakarta Region and East Java Province.

### Data analysis

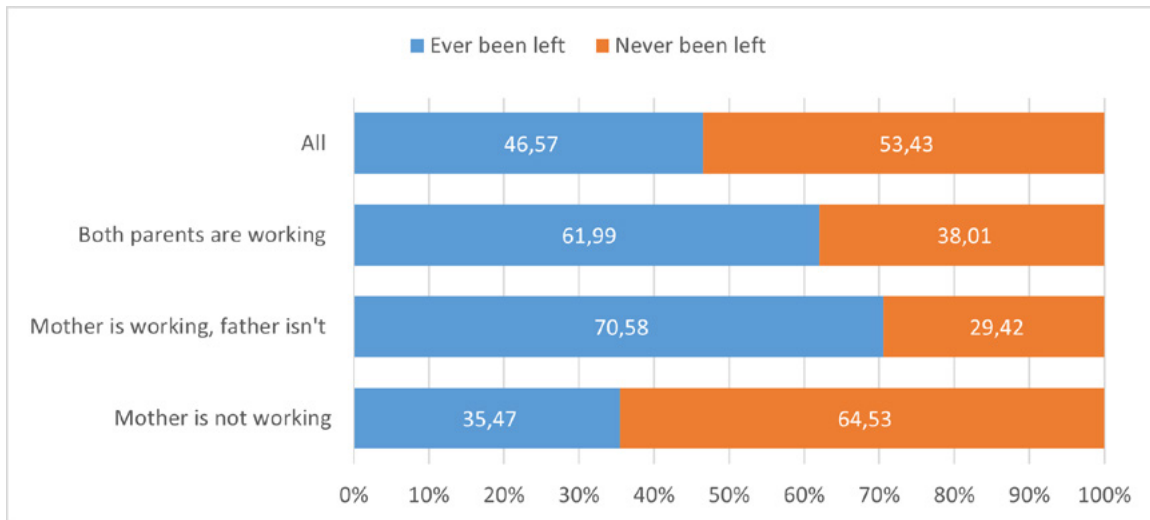
The analysis in this study is based on Ruiz-Casares and Heymann's (2009) theory of childcare decision-making and Ruiz-Casares et al. (2018)'s empirical model of nonadult supervision. Both studies posit that childcare decisions are influenced by parents, older children, neighbors, or relatives who can provide childcare support, as well as the availability of an external support system or childcare facilities.

Descriptive statistics (frequencies) were produced using STATA 16 to understand childcare arrangements and child supervision practices. These statistics are complemented by qualitative results that showcase the different perspectives and experiences of the informants.

## RESULTS

### Childcare arrangements

Mothers typically bear the primary responsibility for supervising their children. However, they may need to leave the children in the care of others when they have errands to run, work commitments, or social events to attend. The SUSENAS-MSBP 2018 data reveals that 46.57% of mothers have left their children to engage in activities outside the home. The proportion of children under the care of someone else is highest when the mother is employed but the father is not, standing at 70.58% (see Figure 3).



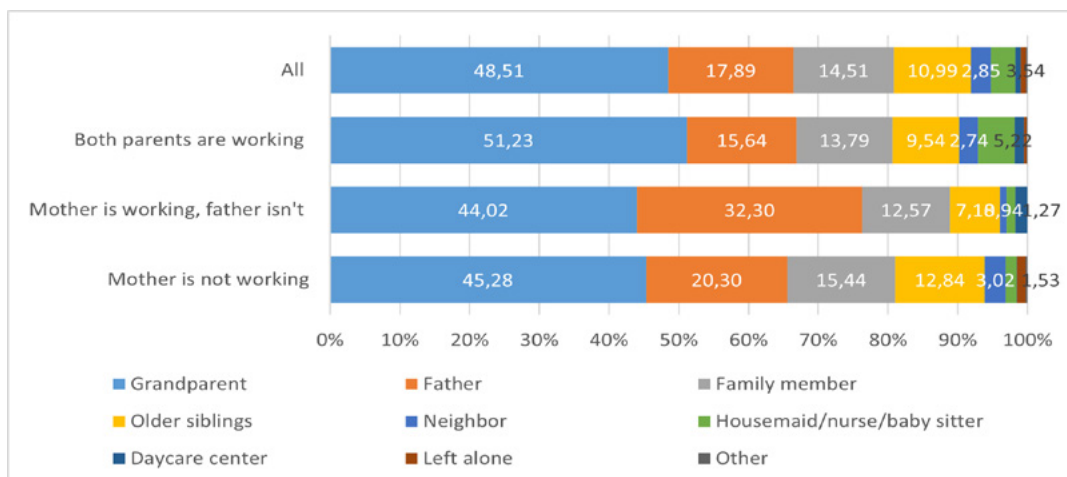
**Figure 3. The proportion of children under five years old left by mothers in the past week by parents' working status**

Source: SUSENAS-MSBP 2018 (author's calculation)

Figure 4 shows that 48.51% of families rely on grandparents for child supervision when their mothers are away, and the percentage rises to 51.2% when both parents are working. Qualitative interviews with mothers indicate that nearly half rely on their parents, particularly grandmothers, to supervise their children. This strategy could be used under specific circumstances where the grandparents live nearby or in the same house. From the interviews, this study finds that relying on the childcare arrangement in the hands of others is believed to be effective, as at least there is someone who can watch over their children. Although the extent of support varies, this study noted that parents could have peace of mind

knowing their children are with someone they trust. One mother mentioned hiring a housemaid to assist the grandmother with the caregiving activities.

*Since [my daughter] S was born [three years ago], I've hired a housemaid to help me out. When I go to the office, S and the maid go to my parent's house. My mom takes care of S there, bathing and feeding her. The maid helps by preparing the hot water for the bath and the food. When S was around two, the maid started helping with feeding too, but my mom did it all before that. (MANDEH 31, Corporate Worker, Bogor)*



**Figure 4. Types of supervision support for families when mothers have to leave their children in the past week by parents' working status**

Source: SUSENAS-MSBP 2018 (authors' calculation)

In addition to grandparent support, families often rely on various family members to provide childcare assistance. As shown in Figure 4, husbands or fathers (17.89%), other family members (14.51%), and older siblings (10.99%) are common sources of supervision when mothers are absent. Notably, fathers tend to be more involved in childcare when mothers work and fathers are not (32.30%). Older siblings are also commonly relied upon, with some parents considering their maturity and risk-response abilities as beneficial for caring for younger siblings. In one interview, a mother expressed her gratitude for being able to trust her older daughter to care for her younger sibling in her absence, indicating the positive aspects of sibling care.

*Thank goodness, [my daughter] S is now eight and able to do things on her own. She can help with cleaning the house, taking care of her little sister, giving a bath, and playing together. (INE, 36, Odd Job, Bogor).*

When families do not live near their parents or relatives, they must rely on themselves or seek alternative childcare support. While the proximity of the family's relatives could not be determined from the SUSENAS-MSBP 2018 data, a small percentage of children were under the supervision of non-family members such as neighbors (2.85%), housemaids/nurses/babysitters (3.54%), and daycare centers (0.75%) (see Figure 4). According to one mother, her family prefers daycare because both she and her husband are employed and are unable to provide full attention to their child's growth. They do not have close relatives or relationships with neighbors and are unsure about hiring housemaids. They chose daycare because it provides clear developmental targets and assists their child in enhancing her skills, despite being quite far from their home.

*[...] My husband and I work from home, so having someone come to our house to care for [my 2.5-year-old daughter] A is impractical. A will inevitably want to come back to us, and we won't be able to focus on our work... So we decided to look for another daycare since the one near our house is closed due to the pandemic. This new daycare has a set schedule for activities, free play, and meals ... And overall,*

*it's structured and disciplined. Since starting at this new daycare, I've noticed a significant difference in A's personality. She's more cheerful and more confident in speaking up. (NANDO, 28, Researcher, Bogor).*

On the other hand, leaving children in the care of someone else has consequences. Due to parents' limited ability to supervise, children are at risk of contracting viruses from their environment. This issue was noted by one informant, who expressed her concern about not taking care of her child herself, which resulted in her child's health issues.

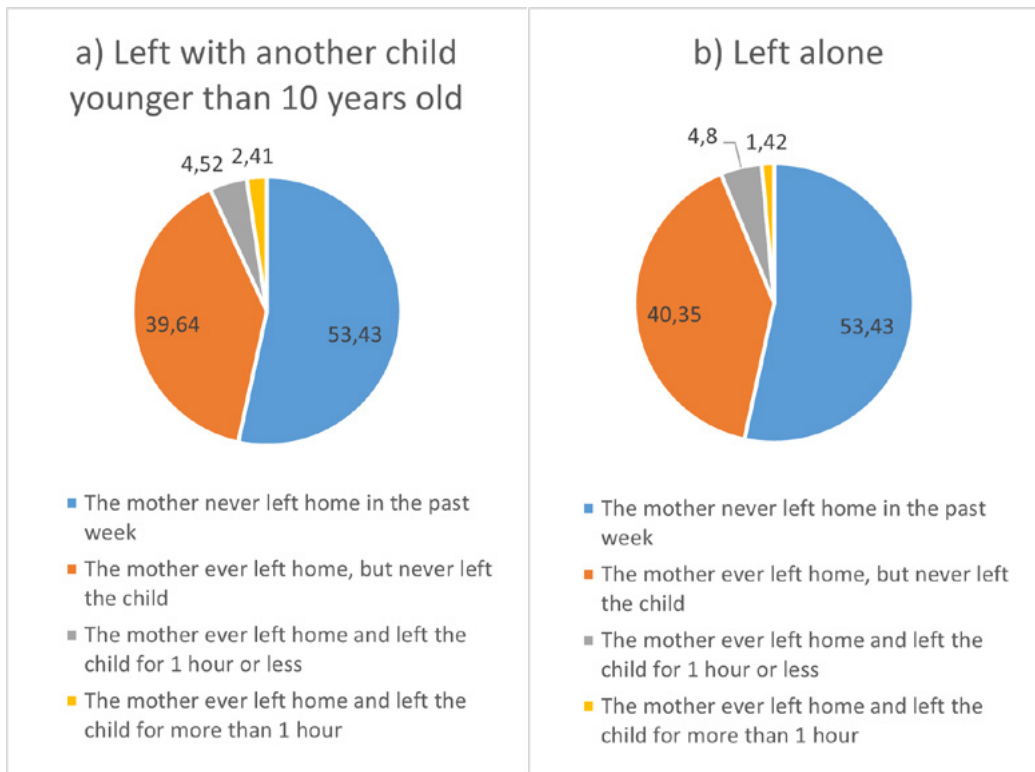
*When my child is in daycare, she often coughs and is very thin. After discussing this with my husband, we decided not to leave our child in daycare. (EBHU, 32, Researcher, Bekasi).*

### **Nonadult supervision practices**

This study noted that certain families might have a limited choice of external sources of assistance and may, therefore, resort to leaving the children unattended at home. According to the SUSENAS-MSBP 2018 data, a considerable proportion of children under five were left unsupervised by adults. Specifically, 6.93% of children under five were left with another child under ten, with 4.52% being left alone for one hour or less and 2.41% for more than one hour. Additionally, up to 6.22% of children have ever been left alone, with 4.80% left alone for less than an hour and 1.42% for more than an hour (see Figure 5). Regardless of the duration, leaving children under five unsupervised poses a potential risk to their safety.

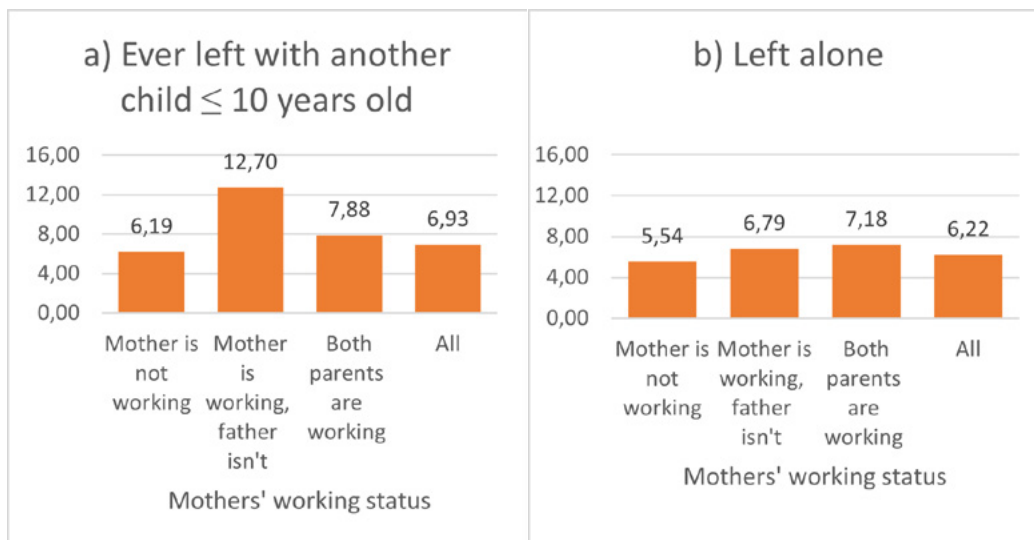
The prevalence of nonadult supervision of children under five years old is correlated with parents' employment status, as shown in Figure 6. When the mother is not working, the prevalence of nonadult supervision is at its lowest. However, this is not the case for fathers. In cases where the mother is employed but the father is not, the prevalence of children ever being left with another child younger than ten years old is significantly higher at 12.70%, compared to when both parents are employed, which is 7.88%. In situations where the mother is working, and the





**Figure 5. Share of children based on their experience**

Source: SUSENAS-MSBP 2018 (authors' calculation)



**Figure 6. Prevalence of nonadult supervision for children under five years old by parents' working status**

Source: SUSENAS-MSBP 2018 (authors' calculation)

father is not, 6.79% of children under five are left alone. The prevalence of being left alone is lowest when the mother is not working (5.54%) and highest when both parents work (7.18%).

Two qualitative informants give examples of a father's unemployment and inability to supervise. One mother had to bring her children when selling snacks door-to-door because her

late husband was bedridden at home. Another mother reported that her unemployed husband was occupied with job hunting after being laid off, leaving him unable to provide adequate attention to their child. At the same time, the mother was also occupied with her work and stressed by the situation, negatively affecting their child's growth. This case highlights that

having both parents work from home may not guarantee adequate attention for children. The situation could be worse for children who are left without adult supervision.

*The pandemic made it hard for me [while working from home] to give enough attention to [my 4-year-old daughter] H. I let her use a gadget, but she became addicted to it. ... Then my husband lost his job. He was home but under a lot of stress and couldn't take care of H as much. As a result, H was overlooked and might have a speech delay. She didn't want to look at us or respond when we called her. (EBHU, 32, Researcher, Bekasi)*

The pandemic-induced work-from-home setup has resulted in unsupervised children and highlighted concerns about gender-based childcare arrangements. Our study finds that mothers still bear childcare responsibilities, while fathers are expected to primarily focus on earning money, perpetuating the traditional gender division of labor. As noted by one informant, this division of roles often leads to tension between spouses.

### **The needed support and policies**

Due to the prevailing gender norms that expect women to be the primary caregivers of children, many mothers are forced to make a difficult choice. They have to decide whether to work full-time, part-time with a reduced benefit, or even resign from their jobs altogether to focus on raising their children. This study sheds light on the challenges working mothers and their families face as they try to balance labor market participation with their children's safety and well-being. This section presents the findings of the support and policies that families need based on their experiences and perspectives on the policies required to meet their challenges.

### **Public daycare services**

The interviews with mothers currently using or considering daycare services revealed that they mainly reside in urban or peri-urban areas, have higher education levels, and are in better economic condition. According to them,

providing affordable public daycare services in residential and office areas is essential. Three mothers in the study preferred daycare near their homes, as it is convenient for those working from home. Moreover, one mother suggested that the government convert daycare centers into public facilities or mandate their provision in all office complexes. She believes that having her child close by would enable her to meet the child during office break hours if she had to work in the office.

*There's only one daycare center in our neighborhood, and many people we know put their kids there. It's really close to home, so it's convenient for us. I wouldn't consider using my office's daycare because my house is too far [from the office], and it would be difficult to use public transportation with my kid. (MANDEH 32, Corporate worker, Bogor)*

*There's an excellent daycare across my residential cluster [...], and I wish the government would make it mandatory for all office buildings to have a daycare facility. It's hard to leave our kids with a nanny at home all day, so I think it would be better if they were in daycare. (EBHU, 32, Researcher, Bekasi)*

While some offices have already established daycare centers, the supply is often limited. One mother in the study reported that her state-owned company offers a subsidized daycare service, but unfortunately, the center has a long waiting list due to its limited capacity. This case highlights the importance of not only the availability of daycare but also its ability to cope with the needs of parents, particularly regarding capacity and quality.

*Definitely, having a daycare service in the office is really important. A lot of employees want it, and it's not that expensive. When I started working in this company back in 2015 or 2016, the daycare fee was only about 500.000 rupiah a month, which was super cheap. I believe the company gave a subsidy, considering other daycares could charge up to 1.8 million or even 3 million rupiah, like what one of my friends had to*

*pay. [...] The only downside is the waiting list is crazy long, and they only accept kids of certain ages, maybe from three-month-old babies up to two-year-old- toddlers. I'm not sure how many kids they accept, but probably only around ten because they need to give each baby full attention. (MANDEH 32, Corporate worker, Bogor)*

### **Childcare support facilities**

Childcare support facilities that families need may extend beyond child supervision to include lactation rooms, child-friendly spaces, or temporary daycare services. One mother, who works as a program facilitator, observed that although mothers are allowed to bring children to the office or the venue, it is difficult for them to breastfeed their children. Lactation rooms are unavailable in many offices or venues, leaving mothers searching for secluded places. She hoped that at least all government offices would provide functional lactation rooms. Another mother who works as a news editor expressed her desire for the government or other event organizers for women to implement policies that support the needs of mothers. Without adequate support for their children, women must choose between leaving their children or sacrificing their career development.

*It would be great if the officials could provide a playroom for kids during events. If moms have to bring their kids and the kids behave, there's no problem, right? But if a mom brings a little kid, she needs to breastfeed them, and if there's no lactation room, we have to hide somewhere. It's not easy, though, because people keep walking by! (UMAI, 39, Program Facilitator, Probolinggo)*

### **Accommodative working arrangements**

Providing daycare and childcare support facilities may not be enough for working mothers, as they also wish for pro-family workplace policies that offer accommodative or flexible working arrangements. This study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic; hence, some mothers

shared their experiences transitioning from working at the office to working from home and vice versa. Although returning to the office is inevitable for some mothers, those with positive experiences with accommodative or flexible working arrangements hoped that more employers could adopt such policies. These mothers shared that while the sudden transition to working from home required new adaptation and was stressful, it opened up the possibility of balancing their roles as mothers and employees. They were excited about the working-from-home policy because it increased their productivity and allowed them to do household chores. Meanwhile, working from the office was considered time-consuming and tiring as they needed to commute, making it hard for them to take care of the family. A mother also expressed her psychological well-being when working at home, as she can start the day with full energy, enabling her to do multiple tasks while doing the household chores.

*At first, I thought working from home was like being a stay-at-home mom. It was a big adjustment since I juggled work, household chores, and caring for my kids. I got stressed because I was so used to working in the office. [...] But overall, it's a great policy. My workplace is very flexible, and we can work from home or in the office. It's also cost-efficient, and I can work while caring for my family and home. (MANDEH 31, Corporate Worker, Bogor).*

It is a great support when a mother works in an office that acknowledges and accommodates working mothers' challenges. For instance, one mother shared her experience with her previous office, which would provide a hotel room for mothers with babies who had to attend an event and stay overnight. The hotel room was equipped to accommodate the mother, her baby, and one more person to assist with the baby. Her superiors and colleagues were accommodating and understood if she needed more time to complete her work. The mother was grateful and motivated to continue working, knowing that she had the support of her workplace.

*At my workplace, they had a policy that allowed me to bring my baby and one*

*caregiver with me if I had to work at the hotel. They even provided us with a room so my work wouldn't be interrupted. It was great because I could still work despite having a child. ... They were also very understanding and respected my time. I could set my working hours and attend a meeting when it was convenient for me. [...] My team leader even encouraged me to breastfeed my baby instead of giving her formula. He also gave me extra time to finish my reports. (UMAI, 39, Program Facilitator, Probolinggo)*

On the other hand, a mother with a six-month-old baby is transitioning back to working in the office. She has expressed feeling drained, inefficient, and discouraged about pumping breastmilk. She would prefer a reduced work schedule with fewer benefits and lower pay to accommodate her needs.

*I used to work from home, but then I had a baby and had to go back to the office. Every time I had to work at the office, I felt unproductive. I had to stop pumping my breastmilk, and it was hard to get back to work right away after that. At home, someone could help me clean the pump, but at the office, I had to do it myself. If I had to pump three times a day, I would waste about 2.5 hours [...] Even though there's a policy for mothers to pump their breastmilk, I still felt guilty for taking time away from work. If I were at home, I could participate in meetings while pumping. [...] I wish there was an option to work more flexible hours and not have to work a full 40 hours a week. I'd be willing to lose some benefits and take a lower wage if it meant I could have that flexibility. (AMBU, 33, Consultant, Depok City)*

Additional support can ease the burden on families, such as extended leave benefits for family matters and fair working arrangements. One mother suggested that the government should introduce an additional leave benefit for family matters, especially for parents with toddlers. This issue arises because every worker is only entitled to a minimum of 12 leave days a year according to Law No. 13 of 2013 on Employment, particularly Article 79. However,

the government often declares a *cuti bersama*, a mass leave that uses the annual leave quota. With limited leave benefits, parents may face difficulties if their family members get sick or require hospitalization.

*I really hope the government can give moms and parents with young kids more time off. Kids under three are always getting into something, so it'd be great if parents could have more time off to take care of them. Maybe even until they turn five that would be ideal. [...] When your kid is sick, you have to take them to the doctor. And if you live far from work, like we do in Jakarta, you end up having to take a whole day off just for that. (EBHU, 32, Researcher, Bekasi)*

Ensuring fair working arrangements is also important to reduce the burden on women. One mother, who works in a factory, explained that female workers had to resign when they are about to give birth and that there is no paid maternity leave. Moreover, the workers are often required to work overtime to meet production targets. This mother typically works 12 hours a day until 9 p.m. Although her supervisor is understanding of their circumstances and permits them to come in late if they have family matters, she longs to get home early, at 5 p.m., so she can still spend time and play with her children.

*I have to leave home pretty early, around 6:30 in the morning, because the factory's working hours start at 7:30 a.m. and go all the way to 9 p.m. It's a really long day, and we have to work overtime for 12 hours straight sometimes. It's tough, but we don't have a choice, and we can't just leave the work to someone else. We only have one day off every two weeks if the production demand is high, and if it's low, we can get one rest day a week and go home in the afternoon. [...] It's really hard to be away from my kids for so long. I can't see them grow, especially the youngest [...]. [Leave rights for family matters?] No, there is no policy like that, so when I was pregnant, I had to resign. [My wishes for workplace policy?] I really wish I could go home in the afternoon and*

*spend more time with my family. (ENDE, 31, Factory worker, Jombang)*

## DISCUSSION

In Indonesia's patriarchal culture, women are expected to fulfill multiple household roles, particularly in childcare, regardless of their employment status. This puts many mothers in a difficult position where they have to decide whether to work full-time outside the home, work part-time with a reduced benefit, or even resign to focus on raising their children. Typically, mothers of young children are in their early thirties, a crucial period for career advancement and reproductive choices. The role of women is defined by the social norms of nurture, which attach normative expectations to a specific position in a social structure (White, Klein, and Martin 2015). When the role is clearly defined for any person occupying the position of biological motherhood, it is easier for the person to take up the role in a socially acceptable way. Unfortunately, in the case of working mothers, the norms of nurturing remain the same, resulting in a double burden for mothers who play multiple roles between market work and domestic work. This is also evident in the prevalence of nonadult supervision for children under five years old among working mothers and unemployed fathers. While unemployed fathers may face difficulties in the labor market, such as illness or disability, limiting their ability to engage in childcare (Raley, Bianchi, and Wang 2012), more roles or role diversification is positively related to role strain (White et al. 2015). The theory assumes that the more roles one has, the greater the strain. The expectations of a mother's role in childcare often contradict those of another role as a worker, resulting in expectation overload and conflict.

Balancing labor market participation with their children's safety and well-being is a constant challenge for working mothers, as revealed in the interviews conducted with them. Despite their best efforts, they need support. For families living together or near their parents' home, relying on grandparents for childcare is common. Grandparents are often eager to help their children, and it also helps save money. However,

parents should be mindful of the burden on grandparents, who may experience fatigue from caring for their grandchildren (Fauziningtyas et al. 2019). Parents also often turn to older siblings to help care for younger ones, as it is seen as an opportunity for them to gradually gain agency (Gonzalez and Ruiz-Casares, 2022). However, leaving a child under five with another child raises a safety concern. In North America, leaving children under the supervision of another child is considered child neglect. Still, Indonesian Law No. 23/2002 on Child Protection does not provide clear guidance on the types of neglect or actions that may arise from leaving a small child with another child.

The need for childcare has increased as more women have entered the workforce, and daycare has become a popular option for families with working mothers. Mothers who utilize daycare services confirmed their good care, supervision, and structured activities for children. Some daycares even offer kindergarten programs for children aged three and older. However, the cultural norm of entrusting children to family members in Indonesia has made daycare unpopular. In fact, only 0.79% of children under five were enrolled in daycare centers while their mothers were away, representing over 78,000 children based on SUSENAS-MSBP 2018. According to CIPS and PROSPERA (2022), there are only 6.8 childcare facilities for every 1,000 children aged 0-6 in Indonesia. These facilities mainly consist of kindergartens or playgroups that only operate for 3-5 hours per day. Furthermore, only 1.0% of the total number of ECEs in Indonesia offer full-day daycare or an integrated service, which is essential for families with working parents or single mothers (CIPS and Prospera 2022). Moreover, families with higher economic means are the ones who are more likely to have the option of sending their children to daycare centers. Providing affordable public daycare services is crucial to supporting working mothers while ensuring their children's safety by preventing them from being left without adult supervision. However, the scarcity of affordable and high-quality daycare centers emphasizes the need for the government to address the issue of daycare provision.

Working mothers require more than just public daycares to support their needs. They require access to additional childcare support facilities, as well as accommodative and fair working arrangements. The Indonesian government recognizes the importance of supporting mothers with young children by promoting and facilitating breastfeeding through Law No. 36/2009 on Health (especially Article 128). The government also emphasizes the need for facilities to accommodate working mothers with babies and toddlers through Regulation No. 5/2015 of the Minister of Women Empowerment and Child Protection. Article 83 of Law No. 13/2013 on Employment provides additional support for mothers in the workforce, including time and facilities for breastfeeding. Moreover, the Regulation of the Minister of Women Empowerment and Child Protection No. 5/2015 mandates the provision of gender-responsive childcare facilities in the workplace. However, these policies' implementation often falls short of expectations, creating a gap between policy and reality. The factory worker case illustrates how companies avoid their obligation to provide maternity benefits as mandated by Law No. 13 of 2013 on Employment by having workers sign a voluntary resignation agreement before giving birth. This issue is frequently overlooked in policy discussions, as workers remain silent because they have no choice but to follow the rules.

Balancing work and home responsibilities can be a significant challenge for many working mothers. As Ford & Nurchayati (2017) and Hochschild (2003) noted, women often have to juggle care work and domestic chores alongside their primary responsibilities. For example, one mother shared her experience of feeling guilty and unproductive at work while trying to balance her breastfeeding needs. Although there are legal provisions such as Law No. 13/2013 on Employment and Law No. 36/2009 on Health (Article 128 Paragraph 3), as well as Government Regulation No. 33/2012 on Exclusive Breastfeeding (Article 30), that allow breastfeeding mothers to pump and require workplaces to provide lactation rooms, they do not always address the underlying issues. Providing

flexible work options is vital to enabling mothers to feel supported and perform at their best in the workplace.

In the end, leaving children for work is has psychological consequences, especially for mothers. They may experience guilt and anxiety and even consider taking lower-paying jobs to manage their working schedules and childcare arrangements better. However, studies by Aarntzen et al. (2021) have shown that when it comes to working parents with excessive work schedules, fathers who hold traditional gender role beliefs tend to feel less guilty than mothers about leaving children in the care of others (Aarntzen et al. 2021).

## CONCLUSION

Indonesia aims to become a developed country by 2045, requiring women's active labor participation. However, traditional gender roles often assign caregiving duties to mothers and breadwinning roles to fathers, discouraging women from pursuing higher education or entering the workforce. Yet, not all families can or want to conform to this norm, as women may need to work as breadwinners, earn additional income, or engage in social activities. Childcare support is necessary for working mothers to ensure their children's safety.

The study's quantitative and qualitative analyses confirm the need for support to ensure working mothers can fulfill their multiple roles while keeping their children safe. Families often rely on grandparents or trusted relatives for support. Still, those who live far away from their relatives may have to seek external support, such as daycare or housemaids or babysitters. Children whose mothers are employed are more likely to be left without adult supervision, even when the fathers are not working. Limited resources may leave families with no choice but to rely on risky arrangements (leaving children with neighbors, older siblings, or at home alone).

The interviews with working mothers from different backgrounds revealed they need access to affordable public daycare, childcare support facilities, and accommodating working

arrangements to balance their work and home responsibilities. These policies are essential to providing a safe and nurturing environment for children's growth and development, making them critical for families with working mothers.

Based on the findings, this study recommends that the government provide more affordable daycares, especially for low-income families. The government should also increase the availability of child-friendly spaces, start social media campaigns, and host community events to inform the public about children's rights and safety, gender equality in childcare responsibilities, and accommodative working arrangements.

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