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The importance of supervisor support for the work outcomes and psychological well-being of Malaysian low-income working mothers

Syara Shazanna Zulkifli [1], **Hazalizah Hamzah** [1*]

[1]Department of Psychology, Faculty of Human Development, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Tanjong Malim – Malaysia

Abstract: Low-income working mothers are susceptible to well-being issues. However, research on the interplay between supervisor support and the work outcomes and psychological well-being of Malaysian low-income working mothers is scarce. Therefore, this study identifies the relationship between work outcomes (work stress, work-life balance, workplace bullying) and the moderating role of supervisor support in the psychological well-being of working mothers. Using purposive sampling, data were obtained from a survey of 269 respondents (M-age = 38.15, SD-age = 8.14) employing offline and online methods. The participants completed the demographic section, Psychological Well-being Scale, Work Stress Scale, Work-life Balance Checklist, Malaysian Workplace Bullying Index, and Supervisor Support Scale. Structural equation modelling analysis showed that work stress was the main contributor to psychological well-being (β = -0.41, t = -2.87, p = .004), followed by supervisor support (β = 0.29, t = 3.34, p <.001), and workplace bullying (β = -0.23, p = .048). In addition, supervisor support significantly weakened the impact of work stress on psychological well-being (β = -0.14, t = -2.00, p = .045). The study concludes that supervisor support enhances psychological well-being and reduces the negative burden of work stress on the psychological well-being of Malaysian low-income working mothers. Identifying the most significant contributors to psychological well-being can help working mothers to become more aware of the negative side effects of work, and encourage them to find effective solutions to maintain their psychological well-being. Finally, the study emphasizes for supervisors and human resource personnel the importance of supervisory roles in improving the work environment and providing strengthened support for psychological well-being.

Keywords: low-income; structural equation modelling; workplace bullying; work-life balance; work stress

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*__Corresponding Author:__ Hazalizah Hamzah (hazalizah@fpm.upsi.edu.my), Faculty of Human Development, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, 35900 Tanjong Malim, Perak – Malaysia.

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Introduction

"There is no experience in a woman's life that is more impactful, all-encompassing, and life-altering than becoming a mother" (Babetin, 2020). Mothers cater for the well-being and growth of the family. It has been commonly understood for decades that being a mother is a full-time stay-at-home job. They are responsible for managing the household, which includes house cleaning, cooking, washing the laundry, and ensuring that the house is in a respectable state. Moreover, mothers are also responsible for caring for and educating the children, promoting a healthy and nurturing environment which guarantees an optimum space for growth and development.

However, due to the rise in the cost of living, mothers nowadays are also commonly found in the working sector. This is evident from a Malaysian statistics report, which shows a rise in working women from 47.7% in 2002 to 56.2% in 2021 (Ministry of Economy Malaysia, 2023). For mothers from low-income communities, work helps them obtain financial security and improve the living standards of their family (Poduval & Poduval, 2009). In Malaysia, the lower-income community are known as the Bottom 40 or B40 category, as they encompass the lowest 40% of the total population in terms of socioeconomic status. Household monthly income rates differ across the 14 states in Malaysia; however, this study follows the definition of B40 according to the national standards, which defines those with incomes of less than RM4849 (equivalent to $1086.18) in 2018 and RM4850 (equivalent to $1,086.40) in 2019 as the the cut-offs for the category (Ng et al., 2018). To facilitate an easier calculation for the study participants, low-income working mothers, the minimum household monthly income is rounded up to less than RM5000 for the categorization of low-income.

Such mothers may experience challenges at work which impact their psychological well-being, a multifaceted construct that seeks to provide a holistic view of psychological functioning and human experience (Tang et al., 2019). A happy life, according to the six-factor model of psychological well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), can be derived from feelings of autonomy (being self-determined and independent); environmental mastery (being competent in managing tasks and activities); personal growth (continuously improving oneself and realizing one's potential); positive relations with others (engaging in meaningful and satisfying relationships with other people); purpose in life (perceiving life as meaningful and having clear life goals and directions); and self-acceptance (acknowledging one's strengths and weaknesses, and viewing oneself positively) (Ryff & Singer, 1996). These aspects of psychological well-being reflect virtue, excellence and the growth of an individual's full potential (Huta & Waterman, 2014).

Although having good psychological well-being leads to better outcomes in other aspects of life, attaining and maintaining a good level is not easy. Working mothers experience role conflicts between being workers and a primary caregivers, often receiving poor support, and having difficulties with childcare, factors which are considered as the main sources of stress (Zambrana et al., 1979). Moreover, financial burdens can worsen work-family conflict (Ibrahim & Ramli, 2021). If both mothers and fathers are working, the working mothers require support from others to help with household care and child-rearing (Sano et al., 2021), thus increasing the level of stress in the workplace and difficulties in balancing work and family domains (Woodward, 2022).

Hamplová (2019) conducted a study to assess the subjective well-being of working and non-working mothers in 30 European countries. The findings suggest that non-working mothers are generally happier than working ones. In addition,

in a comparison between full-time and part-time employment, the results showed that full-time work was the most detrimental to mothers' well-being, which suggests that working mothers in full-time employment have the lowest subjective well-being amongst other working mothers and non-working ones.

In addition, Sato (2022) made a comparison between the well-being of housewives and working wives in Japan, specifically between housewives with children, housewives without children, working wives with children, and working wives without children. The study reported higher levels of happiness amongst housewives than working wives. Notably, this study also found that happiness increases with increasing monthly income. Working wives with children from low-income communities were the unhappiest out of the four groups. Sato's findings demonstrate that the poor income of mothers resulted in financial constraints in addition to caring for the children, hence lowering their happiness level. The study emphasizes the burden that comes with parenthood, and that the most detrimental for women in Japan were those of parenthood and employment combined, which is a similar case in Malaysia.

Research has also shown that women have a higher predisposition to becoming victims of workplace bullying, with one study finding that 81% of women tended to be victimized, compared to 35% of men (Samora et al., 2020). In addition, a meta-study demonstrated that workplace bullying severely affected employee health and well-being (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012). Women are frequently bullied through social manipulation, false accusations, verbal abuse, social isolation, and devaluation at work, such as being allocated duties that are below their level of expertise or outside their job scope (Munro & Phillips, 2020).

The impact of workplace bullying can be especially significant for working mothers with low incomes, as they may suffer from restricted access to resources and support to manage the consequences of bullying. The enduring effects of workplace bullying can significantly affect their welfare, their capacity to support their households, and their general health and well-being. For this reason, the presence of a supervisor at work may help to alleviate the negative work outcomes on psychological well-being.

A supervisor is an individual who shoulder the responsibility for employees' behaviors and work outputs, as well as for resolving their issues while providing appropriate and adequate support (Herrity, 2023; Lessing, 2011). Generally, previous research has reported that support obtained from supervisors improved employee well-being (Larson et al., 2005; Liang et al., 2022; Moen et al., 2016; O'Driscoll et al., 2004). Furthermore, when comparing supervisor and co-worker support, Uddin et al. (2021) found that supervisor support had significant effects on emotional and instrumental support, while co-worker support was only significant for emotional support, thus highlighting the profound effects of supervisor support on female employees.

Finally, supervisors are leaders who have the capabilities to control the working environment by managing the negative impacts of work outcomes on psychological well-being, as evident from the significant impact of supervisor support as a moderator between work outcomes and well-being demonstrated in several studies outside of Malaysia, which include Canada (Geldart et al., 2018), Spain (Lucia-Casademunt et al., 2018) Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore India, Israel, Italy, Japan and Saudi Arabia (Schneider et al., 2022). As such, supervisor support is essential for working mothers to ensure a harmonious and conducive workplace.

Working mothers have reported poor psychological well-being due to their dual responsibilities, in the form of stress at work; a

poor work-life balance; and workplace bullying (Mazumdar et al., 2022; Reid et al., 2020; Rosander et al., 2020). This is evident in the rise of mental health and well-being issues among Malaysian low-income working adults, affecting more females than males (Ying et al., 2019). Malaysian women, in particular, have been pressurized into quitting due to work-family conflicts, child-care issues, discrimination, and sexual harassment, while facing poor empathy from management (Kee et al., 2020; Women's Aid Organisation, 2020).

Faced with ineffective support in the workplace can result in poor well-being amongst employees (Hämmig, 2017; McIlroy et al., 2021). If not tackled urgently, such continual issues may further damage the psychological well-being of working mothers and negatively impact their families and the work organization as a whole. Therefore, the presence of supportive supervisors with authority in the workplace is essential to help these unresolved conflicts and maintain healthy states of psychological well-being.

In particular, supervisor support may mitigate the negative impact of work-related factors on psychological well-being, concurrently strengthening it (Evanoff et al., 2020; Zakaria et al., 2020). While previous research has explored the impact of supervisor support on psychological well-being, there is a dearth of studies which examine the moderating relationship between supervisor support and work outcomes with regard to psychological well-being in Malaysia. Moreover, there is currently little research on psychological well-being among low-income working mothers in Malaysia (Malek & Yusof, 2022).

This lack of research was supported by a systematic review (Zulkifli & Hamzah, 2024) which reported a limited number of studies in Malaysia which incorporated all the variables discussed above. Not only did this review find no studies which focused on supervisor support as a moderator between work outcomes and psychological well-being among working mothers in Malaysia, but only five out of the 23 studies included recruited working mothers as their research sample, of which all were studies outside of Malaysia.

Furthermore, the review reported few qualitative studies on the experience of support among working women in Malaysia, suggesting that studies on supervisor support, work outcomes and psychological well-being among Malaysian working mothers are very limited, suggesting a knowledge gap in this area that urgently needs to be filled.

With this in mind, this study addresses these gaps in the literature by identifying the impact of work stress, work-life balance, workplace bullying, and supervisor support on the psychological well-being of Malaysian low-income working mothers. The following hypotheses were formulated:

H_1a: Work stress has a significant negative impact on psychological well-being.

H_1b: Work-life balance has a significant positive impact on psychological well-being.

H_1c: Workplace bullying has a significant negative impact on psychological well-being.

H_1d: Supervisor support has a significant positive impact on psychological well-being.

Furthermore, there is a dearth of studies which examines the moderating relationship between supervisor support and work outcomes in relation to psychological well-being in Malaysia, particularly among low-income working mothers. Therefore, this study also aims to identify the role of supervisor support as a moderator in the relationships between work stress, work-life balance, and workplace bullying and psychological well-being. Consequently, the following hypotheses were formulated and tested:

H_1e: Supervisor support weakens the impact of work stress on psychological well-being.

H_1f: Supervisor support strengthens the impact of work-life balance on psychological well-being.

H_1g: Supervisor support weakens the impact of workplace bullying on psychological well-being.

Methods

Participants

Using purposive sampling, the sample size was calculated using G*Power version 3.1.9.7. (Faul et al., 2007). By utilizing the multiple multivariate regression F test, all the required information was computed (a total of five predictors, a medium effect size, $f^2 = 0.15$, power, $1-\beta = .95$ and significance level, $\alpha = .05$), for which a minimum of 138 respondents was needed. Initially, 286 working mothers were involved, with final data from 269 analyzed, after those from 17 removed due to outliers identified during the normality assessment. The inclusion criteria for the potential respondents were as follows: a) working mothers from the low-income community; b) Malaysian nationality; c) able to read and understand Bahasa Malaysia; and d) in agreement to participate in the survey.

Measures

In addition to a demographic section in the final section of the survey, five validated instruments were used: Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995); the Workplace Stress Scale (the Marlin Company and the American Institute of Stress, 2011); the Work-Life Balance Checklist (Daniels & McCarraher, 2003); the Malaysian Workplace Bullying Index (Kwan et al., 2020); and the Supervisor Support Scale (Baloyi et al., 2014). All the instruments were translated by the research team using back-to-back translation, following the recommendations of Sperber (2004).

Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995) is an 18-item scale adopted to measure psychological well-being in six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationship with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. The participants responded on, a 7-point Likert Scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly Agree to 7 = Strongly Disagree. Examples of items are "I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions" and "I like most parts of my personality". Higher scores indicate higher levels of well-being. The original version of the instrument obtained low to modest internal consistency coefficients, ranging from .33 to .56 (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), while this study obtained a reliability value of $\alpha = .78$.

The Workplace Stress Scale (the Marlin Company and the American Institute of Stress, 1978) is an 8-item unidimensional instrument measuring employees' level of job stress. The measure serves as an early screening tool for stress in order to determine the need for further stress assessments, and includes statements regarding work conditions, workload and emotions toward work. Examples of items are "I have too many unreasonable deadlines" and "I feel that my job is negatively affecting my emotional well-being". The response option for the stress scale ranges from 1 to 5, with 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, and 5 = Very Often. Higher scores indicate higher levels of stress in the workplace. The stress scale contains double-barrelled items; this research separated these into two different items during the translation period, producing a total of 16 items for the Malay version. This study obtained a reliability value of $\alpha = .75$.

The Work-life Balance Checklist (Daniels & McCarraher, 2003) was used to measure work-life balance. It comprises a total of 10 items on a unidimensional scale and measures work-life balance in terms of excessive workload, lack of time spent with families, and lack of contribution

towards the family due to work responsibilities. Examples of items are "There isn't much time to socialize/relax with my partner/see family during the week" and "My relationship with my partner is suffering because of the pressure or long hours of my work". The original response options were A = Disagree, B = Sometimes and C = Agree. For the scoring purposes of this study, the response options were converted to a three-point Likert scale, namely 1 = Disagree, 2 = Sometimes and 3 = Agree. Scores are calculated by adding up all the items in the scale. Higher scores indicate lower levels of work-life balance. The study obtained a reliability value of α = .82.

The 18-item Malaysian Workplace Bullying Index (Kwan et al., 2020) was used to measure workplace bullying in the Malaysian context. It is divided into two subscales, work-related bullying, and person-related bullying. Examples of items are "Being requested to do work which is out of the job scope" and "Having credit for the work taken by someone else". Since the instrument was developed in 2018 and is specific to the Malaysian population, the researchers found no study that utilizes it, however, the developer reported an excellent reliability value for the original instrument, with a total of α = .95 for the scale (Kwan et al., 2020). The response options are rated on a five-point Likert scale, with 0 = Never, 1 = Now and Then, 2 = Monthly, 3 = Weekly and 4 = Every day. Total scores are calculated by the summation of all 18 items, with higher scores indicating a higher level of workplace bullying. This study obtained a reliability value of α = .79.

The 12-item Supervisor Support Scale is a unidimensional scale adapted from a study by Baloyi et al. (Baloyi et al., 2014). Examples of items are "My immediate supervisor trusts me" and "My immediate supervisor takes prompt and fair corrective action on employees who fail to perform their work satisfactorily". The response options are in terms of a five-point Likert scale, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The scoring procedure involves summing up all the instrument items; higher scores indicate a higher level of supervisor support in the workplace. The original instrument had a reliability value of α = .96, while this study obtained a comparable reliability value of α = .90.

Procedure

The research was conducted with institutional approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Sultan Idris Education University [Code: UPSI/PPPI/PYK/ETIKA(M)/014(643)]. The data were collected through online and offline media, and distributed through social networking platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, and social messaging platforms including Telegram and WhatsApp. A link to a Google Form and a simple introduction to the study were posted on the general page of the social media and to several groups associated with mothers, such as the parenting tip groups, breastfeeding groups, and mother and child groups, together with other relevant social media groups. In this way, the online survey reached low-income working mothers through their social connections and social media groups they members of. Offline, printed copies of the survey were distributed manually to colleagues, acquaintances and workers in nearby shops if they fulfilled the inclusion requirements. In addition, random strangers who were mothers were approached and asked about their interest in participating in the survey; if interested, they were screened with reference to the inclusion criteria before completing the printed surveys.

The first page of the survey contained a brief introduction to the research study, the researcher's background, ethical statements including risks and benefits, confidentiality, anonymity, the estimated time taken, and finally an agreement statement giving consent for the study participation was given once the respondent had submitted the online

questionnaire. The total duration of the data collection was approximately two months, from August to October 2023. Finally, the data collected through the quantitative measures were analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to satisfy the research objective.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive analysis and SEM, which consisted of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and path analysis. In CFA, several criteria must be established to consider a measurement model as fitting and good. Model fit is achieved when the Chi-square/degree of freedom (χ^2/df), at least one absolute index, and one incremental index value are satisfied (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The fit indices involved in model fit comprise the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), Root Mean Square Error of approximation (RMSEA), with a 95% Confidence Interval (CI) including the Lower Limit (LL) and Upper Limit (UL) of RMSEA. The cut-off criteria for a good measurement model involve a combination of measures, including chi-square/df (χ^2/df) of less than 5.0, a CFI value of more than .90; RMSEA less than .80; SRMR less than 1.0; Average Variance Extracted (AVE) more than .50; and Composite Reliability (CR) more than .70 (Awang, 2014; Hair et al., 2014). The squared multiple correlation or coefficient of determination, denoted by the symbol R^2 , is used to determine the amount of variation of the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables, ranging from .00 to 1.00 (Hair et al., 2020).

Moderation Analysis

After CFA, we conducted a moderation analysis using the two-stage approach (Chin et al., 2003). In the first stage, the structural model was first estimated without the interaction term to determine the latent variable scores. The scores were then multiplied to obtain a variable that measures the interaction term. The model was then reanalyzed with the inclusion of this interaction term. To avoid multicollinearity issues, each model has only one interaction term per analysis (Memon et al., 2019). Furthermore, as recommended by Hair et al. (2021), the independent, moderator and dependent variables were standardized prior to moderation analysis.

Results

Normality Assessment

Assessment of normality was tested in both the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) software. In SPSS, values of skewness and kurtosis were calculated to identify the deviation from normality. These values from the initial 286 sets of data exceeded the values of -1 and +1, with skewness ranging from -1.559 to 1.500, and kurtosis ranging from 0.291 to 3.834, indicating that the data were slightly non-normally distributed (Hair et al., 2020).

Further inspection of outliers was conducted using multivariate normality. Following the steps recommended by Arifin (2015), a simple scatter plot for multivariate normality was plotted. From this, a total of 17 respondents showed indications of multivariate non-normality as they did not form a straight line, so were removed. The data were then reassessed for normality and outliers. The results showed normal distribution for all the measures of skewness, kurtosis, scatter plots and box plots, with skewness between -0.349 and 0.422, and kurtosis between -0.787 to -0.082, figures which are between -1 to +1. Subsequently, a total of 269 participants were further analyzed for multicollinearity.

Multicollinearity

Tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values indicated multicollinearity when VIF is more than 5, and tolerance is less than 0.20

(Garson, 2012). The tolerance for the constructs was reported to be between 0.651 and 0.853 (higher than 0.20), with their VIF between 1.172 and 0.537 (less than 5), indicating no multi-collinearity.

Participant Characteristics

A total of 269 sets of data proceeded to further analysis. This showed that the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 67 (M = 38.15, SD = 8.14); the majority were Malay; had graduated from secondary school; had a monthly income of less than RM2500; were married; and had around 11 to 12 years' working experience. The participants obtained an average score of M = 84.52 (SD = 12.29) for psychological well-being; M = 34.84 (SD = 7.32) for work stress; M = 23.72 (SD = 4.32) for work-life balance; M = 9.46 (SD = 5.94) for workplace bullying; and M = 43.23 (SD = 7.55) for supervisor support. They reported a low mean value for workplace bullying, indicating negatively skewed data, and suggesting that the participants experienced little to no workplace bullying. Table 1 shows the demographic information of the respondents.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CFA was conducted following the step-by-step analysis recommended by Kline (2023), who asserted that global fit indices such as CFI and RMSEA do not determine the fit and acceptability of a model. However, as fit indices have become a norm in the field of SEM (Hair et al., 2014), the researchers adopted both perspectives to determine the acceptability of the model. CFA was conducted using the Maximum Likelihood estimator, as it is robust and suitable for data with a normal distribution (Hair et al., 2014). The results of the initial analysis (Model 1) showed a slightly poor model fit, with a chi-square of $\chi^2(2617) = 5835.65, p = <.001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.230$, RMSEA = .068, 90% CI [.065, .070], SRMR = .085, and CFI = .528. Specifically, CFI failed to meet the minimum threshold of .90 (Hair et al., 2014) and the chi-square test was significant. Therefore, the initial model was tentatively rejected.

The local fit testing results showed poor factor loadings, together with high modification indices and standardized correlated residuals, suggesting a poor data fit. The tentatively rejected model was then re-specified to improve its fit (Kline, 2023). The deletion of indicators must not exceed 20% of the total number in the model in order to avoid endangering the content validity and theoretical foundations that helped build the model (Hair. et al., 2017). Therefore, 14 items out of a total of 74 were deleted, equating to a level of 20% deletion.

Modification indices were utilized to address the specification error. The re-specified Model 2 then obtained a slightly acceptable model fit, with $\chi^2(1665) = 2732.47, p = <.001, \chi^2/df = 1.641$, CFI = .804, RMSEA = .049, 90% CI [.046, .052], and SRMR = .074. Notably, although the chi-square test was significant, the model can be considered acceptable with minimal model-data discrepancy (Kline, 2023). Such discrepancy showed no significant standardized correlated residuals greater than 1.96, with values of between -0.44 and 0.49, together with acceptable values of the global fit indices.

Although CFI did not satisfy the cut-off value, numerous researchers have argued that fit indices should only be used descriptively due to their inconsistent findings and biases towards sample size and factor loadings (Kline, 2023; Rosman et al., 2021). Since there is no magic best-fit value that divides good from bad models, dependent on model simplicity and sample size, cut-off values cannot be standardized across all models (Hair et al., 2014). According to Hair et al. (2014), complex models with smaller sample sizes, such as those in this study, require a more flexible model fit evaluation criterion. Accordingly, the researcher concluded that the measurement model was

acceptable for path analysis. Table 2 shows the measurement model fit summary.

Reliability and Validity

Once the model fit has been achieved, the final measurement model is then analyzed to determine its reliability and validity before proceeding to SEM (Hair et al., 2017). For each of the constructs, Cronbach's Alpha (α), MacDonald's Omega (ω), and Composite Reliability (CR) exceeded the minimum requirement of .70 (Hair et al., 2021), indicating that internal consistency reliability was established. Validity was measured using both CR and AVE, with AVE measured using the mean of standardized factor loadings, denoted by a cut-off value of more than .50. However, Fornell and Larcker (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) suggest that convergent validity is established even if AVE falls below .50, provided that CR meets the requirement of more than .60.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Respondents

Demographic	*M*	*SD*	*f*	%
Age	38.15	8.14		
Race				
Malay			220	81.8
Indian			10	3.7
Chinese			14	5.2
Bumiputera Sabah and Sarawak			25	9.3
Highest Education				
Did not go to school			3	1.1
Primary School			24	8.9
Secondary School			117	43.5
Pre-university/university			125	46.5
Marital Status				
Married			224	83.3
Separated			5	1.9
Divorced			31	11.5
Widower			9	3.3
Household Monthly Income				
Below RM2500			94	34.9
RM2501-RM3000			76	28.3
RM3001-RM4000			50	18.6
RM4001-RM5000			49	18.2
Years of Work Experience	11.56	8.25		
Total Score				
Psychological Well-being	84.52	12.29		
Work Stress	34.84	7.32		
Work-life Balance	23.72	4.32		
Workplace Bullying	9.46	5.94		
Supervisor Support	43.23	7.55		
Total			269	100.00

Table 2

Model Fit Summary for the Measurement Model

Model	Item	$\chi^2(df)$	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA	90% CI		χ^2/df
						LL	UL	
1	74	5835.65 (2617)	.528	.085	.068	.065	.070	2.230
2	60	2732.47 (1665)	.804	.074	.049	.046	.052	1.641

Table 3

Reliability and Validity for CFA

Construct	Number of items	α	ω	CR	AVE
Psychological Well-being	12	.78	.78	.79	.24
Work Stress	11	.75	.75	.76	.25
Work-life Balance	10	.82	.82	.82	.31
Workplace Bullying	15	.79	.79	.79	.28
Supervisor Support	12	.90	.90	.91	.44

In the same vein, Malhotra and Dash (1994) argue that AVE is a strict measure of convergent validity, which can be established through the use of CR by itself. Following the justifications made by Fornell and Larcker (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and Malhotra and Dash (Kahle & Malhotra, 1994), the researcher did not consider AVE as a measure of convergent validity, but stated it for descriptive purposes only. From the results obtained, it was concluded that both reliability and validity were satisfied. Table 3 shows the reliability and validity of each construct.

Next, discriminant validity was assessed using two methods, the Fornell and Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) o (Henseler et al., 2015). The Fornell and Larcker criterion states that the square root of AVE should be greater than the correlation between the construct and other constructs in the model, while the HTMT ratio of correlations is derived from the classical multitrait-multimethod matrix, and is a more recent method for detecting discriminant validity. The analysis showed that the square root of AVE for each construct was larger than the correlation between the construct and other constructs, while the HTMT correlation matrix showed that all correlations were below .90, indicating that discriminant validity was established.

Common Method Bias

Common method bias occurs when measurement error instead of theory influences the effect of an independent variable on the dependent variable, resulting in a variance shared by the variables due to a single data collecting method (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012); this is common in self-report studies. To test for common method bias, this study adopted the Latent Common Method Factor approach (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012) using SPSS AMOS software by comparing the regression weights of indicators with and without a shared latent component. A difference of over 0.20 implies common technique bias (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012; Podsakoff et al., 2012). Variations in regression coefficients between the different measurement models were between λ = -0.068 to 0.096, and all the weight comparisons were below 0.20, showing that the model was free from common method bias.

Path Analysis

Path analysis was conducted to investigate each of the proposed hypotheses. The structural model showed a similar marginal model fit with the finalized measurement model, with only slight changes in values for chi-square, with $\chi^2(1665) = 2736.68$, $p = <.001$, $\chi^2/df = 1.644$, CFI = .803, RMSEA = .049, 90% CI [.046, .052], and SRMR = .074. $R^2 = .227$ was reported, which indicates that 23% of the variance in psychological well-being is accounted for by work stress, work-life balance, workplace bullying, and supervisor support.

The results of the path analysis showed a significant negative association between work stress and psychological well-being, with $\beta = -0.41$, $t = -2.87$, $p = .004$; a significant positive association between supervisor support and psychological well-being, with $\beta = 0.29$, $t = 3.34$, $p = <.00$; and a significant negative association between workplace bullying and psychological well-being, with $\beta = -0.23$, $t = -1.98$, $p = .048$. In addition, work-life balance and psychological well-being showed a nonsignificant association, with $\beta = 0.02$, $t = 0.18$, $p = .854$.

From the analysis, work stress was shown to have the main effect on psychological well-being, followed by supervisor support, and workplace bullying. However, there was no significant relationship between work-life balance and psychological well-being. Based on the analysis, the alternative hypotheses H1a, H1c and H1d are supported, while H1b is not supported.

Moderation analyses were then conducted using a two-stage approach (Chin et al., 2003). From the analysis, supervisor support was demonstrated to significantly and negatively moderate the relationship between work stress and psychological well-being, with $\beta = -0.14$, $t = -2.01$, $p = .044$. Psychological well-being was explained by 25% of variance from this model, with $R^2 = .250$. Specifically, the results show that supervisor support weakened the relationship between work stress and psychological well-being, a finding which supports the alternative hypothesis H_1e. On the contrary, supervisor support did not moderate the relationship between work-life balance and psychological well-being, nor between workplace bullying and psychological well-being. Hence, H1f and H1g are not supported. Table 4 shows a summary of all the hypothesis testing conducted.

Discussion

The study has identified the contributors to the psychological well-being of Malaysian working mothers to be work stress, work-life balance, workplace bullying, and supervisor support. The results show a relationship between work stress, supervisor support and workplace bullying, and psychological well-being. Work stress was identified as having the main effect on psychological well-being, followed by supervisor support and workplace bullying. The relationship found between work stress and psychological well-being is in line with previous studies of other populations (Kim et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2021). Similarly, the findings related to the link between supervisor support and psychological well-being, and between workplace bullying and psychological well-being, are also supported by previous studies (Cuéllar-Molina et al., 2018; Lucia-Casademunt et al., 2018).

Finally, this study identified supervisor support as a moderator in the relationship between work stress and psychological well-being, supporting other studies with similar outcomes (Evanoff et al., 2020; Schneider et al., 2022). The relationship between work stress and psycho-logical well-being with supervisor support as a moderator may further be explained by the framework of occupational stress (Israel et al., 1989).

This framework proposes that stressors produce short- and long-term consequences for individuals. In the case of the low-income working

Table 4

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis Testing				β	S.E.	C.R.	p-value
H_1a	Work Stress	→	Psychological Well-being	-0.41	0.32	-2.87	.004
H_1b	Work-life Balance	→	Psychological Well-being	0.02	0.19	0.18	.854
H_1c	Workplace Bullying	→	Psychological Well-being	-0.23	0.33	-1.98	.048
H_1d	Supervisor Support	→	Psychological Well-being	0.29	0.11	3.34	<.001
H_1e	WS x SS	→	Psychological Well-being	-0.14	0.05	-2.01	.044
H_1f	WLB x SS	→	Psychological Well-being	0.05	0.05	0.75	.453
H_1g	WB x SS	→	Psychological Well-being	-0.10	0.05	-1.54	.124

Note: WS x SS = interaction term between work stress and supervisor support; WLB x SS = interaction term between work-life balance and supervisor support; WB x SS = interaction term between workplace bullying and supervisor support

mothers, work stress leads to poorer psychological well-being, although having supervisor support as a modifying variable reduces the impact of such stress. Accordingly, the findings from this study are in line with the framework of occupational stress.

The relationship between supervisor support and psychological well-being could be explained by the Organisational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Working mothers may feel that their supervisors acknowledge and appreciate them for their hard work; in turn, these positive feelings enhance their psychological well-being. Having supportive supervisors lightens the overall mood of the workplace, allowing for a safe and positive working environment, which lessens potential conflicts within the workplace and is conducive to encouraging motivation and productivity. In addition, a supportive supervisor might instil a sense of belongingness, a feeling that is placed in the third hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1970), which is fundamental to achieving a state of self-actualization, a component of psychological well-being.

Subsequently, workplace bullying was reported to be a negative and the weakest predictor of psychological well-being. This finding is similar to previous ones, which have reported that 81% of women have experienced workplace bullying, particularly between the ages of 35 and 44 (Samora et al., 2020), which is comparable to the average age of the participants in this study. It is important to note that participants' understanding of the meaning of bullying may have an impact on what they constitute by it (Lewis et al., 2008). Although not measured in this study, future studies could delve deeper into the relationship between workplace bullying and psychological well-being among working mothers by incorporating several moderators or mediators, together with a deeper exploration of their experiences and perceptions of workplace bullying through a qualitative approach.

Furthermore, this study found no significant relationship between work-life balance and psychological well-being, which is contrary to previous findings (Lucia-Casademunt et al., 2018; Rahim, 2019). The majority of the participants in this study were Malay, in whose culture,caring for the children is primarily the mother's role (Hossain, 2014). Therefore, their perception of work-life balance may not be related to psychological well-being. Future studies could help clarify the conflicting findings between the work-life balance and psychological well-being of working mothers by employing a qualitative approach, a different but related instrument measuring work-

family balance and focusing on other aspects of it, such as work-family conflict and work-family enrichment.

Finally, this study fails to replicate and support the underlying theory behind the psychological well-being scale (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), as only 12 out of the theorized 18 items were retained during the analysis. All the indicators of the autonomy subscale were removed, supporting the structure for indicators of self-acceptance (items 1, 2, 5), environmental mastery (items 4, 8, 9), and personal growth (items 11, 12, 14). Notably, only one item from the positive relations subscale and two from purpose in life one was retained.

The findings indicate that the actual measurement of the psychological well-being of low-income working mothers may be different to that theorized, particularly in terms of autonomy; in this case, no indicators were retained, so one might assume that the definition of autonomy in the working mother context may be different. The same can be said for social relationships and purpose in life. Therefore, future studies could delve further into the meaning of autonomy, positive relations, and purpose in life for working mothers in order to understand and develop a comprehensive view of psychological well-being within the specified context.

This study has successfully demonstrated the significant impact of work stress and workplace bullying on psychological well-being, as well as the moderating role of supervisor support in the relationship between work stress and psychological well-being. To the best of our knowledge, this study is among the first to determine the impact of work stress, work-life balance, and workplace bullying on psychological well-being among Malaysian low-income working mothers, using supervisor support as a moderating factor.

Moreover, this study has successfully analyzed the complex relationships between the constructs using SEM, allowing for causal interpretations and contributing to methodological advancements. According to Tarka (2018), 1) SEM facilitates a comprehensive analysis of empirical data by accounting for diverse dimensions of the investigated phenomena, encompassing both tangible particulars and abstract theoretical constructs; 2) it enhances analytical precision in comparing and validating theories against empirical data, thus improving traditional statistical methods; and 3), by integrating theory with empirical evidence, SEM offers researchers in the social sciences a powerful tool for refining theoretical models and improving diagnostic tools.

Nevertheless, the key limitation of this study was the distribution of ethnicities studied, as the analysis was primarily based on the self-reporting from Malay working mothers. Hence, the findings could not be generalized to working mothers from other ethnicities in Malaysia. Future studies could contribute by ensuring a wider and more diverse sample from different ethnicities in the country. Furthermore, SEM generally requires a large sample size. Although the size calculated by the G*Power software for this study was deemed to be adequate, future studies might obtain better and more reliable results by increasing their sample size.

A second limitation was that the study encountered issues with satisfying the CFI value to a minimum of .90. The deletion of numerous items due to low factor loadings for various constructs did not aid in reaching the intended CFI value. We acknowledge that the complex model with several constructs and a large number of indicators could be the underlying cause of such an issue. Future research could benefit by identifying a more reliable and valid measurement of constructs with fewer items to simplify the model before testing the hypotheses.

Finally, this study only employed a quantitative approach to identifying the hypothesised relationships; consequently, the underlying causes for the

outcomes analyzed were not obtainable nor explorable. Future studies could employ mixed-method research to obtain comprehensive findings able to explain the results from the quantitative approach. Ultimately, it is hoped that this research will progress the field of organizational psychology in the areas of supervisor support, work outcomes and psychological well-being.

The study provides two implications for the psychological research field. In theoretical terms, it adds to the body of literature on work outcomes and psychological well-being among the working mother population, contributing deeper understanding of the mechanism of supervisory support that can enhance subordinates' psychological well-being. In due course, it is hoped it will advance knowledge in the areas of organisational psychology and eudaimonic well-being in Malaysia.

In practical terms, the study findings will also aid in the areas of employee retention and engagement by widening the existing knowledge of the impact of work stress, workplace bullying, and supervisor support on psychological well-being, specifically in the context of low-income working mothers. The research findings should raise awareness and educate working mothers on the importance of maintaining and improving psychological well-being by focusing on work outcomes. Identifying the most significant contributor to psychological well-being can help working mothers to become more aware of the negative consequences of work, and encourage them to find effective solutions to maintain their psychological well-being. Finally, the study should enlighten supervisors and human resource personnel on the importance of supervisory roles in the improvement of the work environment, encouraging them to pay greater attention to psychological well-being through this medium.

Conclusion

The study has highlighted the work outcome contributors to psychological well-being among Malaysian low-income working mothers in the workplace. It found that work stress, supervisor support and workplace bullying influence mothers' psychological well-being, and that supervisory support moderated the relationship between work stress and psychological well-being. Addressing work stress, workplace bullying, and supervisor support issues will aid in the enhancement of the eudaimonic aspect of well-being, including feelings of autonomy, environmental mastery, having a purpose in life, good relationships with others, personal growth, and self-acceptance among Malaysian low-income working mothers. This will ultimately benefit employees, supervisors and the company by preventing poor levels of well-being and mental health problems.[]

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Author Contribution Statement

Syara Shazanna Zulkifli: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Project Administration; Resources; Visualization; Writing Original Draft; Writing, Review & Editing. **Hazalizah Hamzah:** Conceptualization; Validation; Writing, Review & Editing.

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