

Life Balance Among Working Mothers: The Role of Social Support, Parenting Stress, and Family Relationships

Çalışan Annelerde Yaşam Dengesi: Sosyal Destek, Ebeveynlik Stresi ve Aile İlişkilerinin Rolü

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Süreç/History

Geliş/Submitted: 15/12/2025
Kabul/Accepted: 15/06/2026
Yayın/Published: 25/06/2026

İntihal/Plagiarism

Bu makale, en az iki hakem tarafından incelendi ve intihal içermediği teyit edildi. / This article has been reviewed by at least two referees and scanned via a plagiarism software.

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Öz

Yaşam dengesi, bireyin kişisel ve profesyonel alanları arasındaki kritik dengeyi temsil etmektedir. Çalışan anneler için bu dengeye ulaşmak, iş yerinin ve ailenin çift yönlü taleplerinin muazzam bir baskı yarattığı ve onları adeta iki tam zamanlı işi aynı anda yürütmeye zorladığı modern çağda hayati bir önem taşımaktadır. Bu çalışma, çalışan annelerin yaşam dengesini etkileyen psikososyal dinamikleri; özellikle sosyal destek, ebeveynlik stresi ve ebeveyn-çocuk ilişkisi kalitesinin rollerine odaklanarak incelemiştir. Yordayıcı ilişkisel tarama modelinin kullanıldığı araştırmanın verileri, çoğunluğu 31-40 yaşlarında (%55,4), evli (%90), üniversite mezunu (%61,1) ve tam zamanlı çalışan (%82) 350 çalışan anneden toplanmıştır. Veri toplama araçları olarak Yaşam Dengesi Ölçeği, Çok Boyutlu Algılanan Sosyal Destek Ölçeği (ÇBASDÜ), Ebeveynlik Stresi Ölçeği ve Ebeveyn-Çocuk İlişkisi Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen veriler SPSS yazılımı kullanılarak istatistiksel olarak analiz edilmiştir. Hiyerarşik regresyon analizleri, her üç yordayıcı değişkenin de yaşam dengesindeki varyansı anlamlı şekilde açıkladığını göstermiştir. Özellikle ebeveynlik stresi, en güçlü ve en istikrarlı yordayıcı olarak öne çıkmış ve yüksek stres düzeylerinin düşen yaşam dengesiyle güçlü bir şekilde bağlantılı olduğu görülmüştür. Aksine, algılanan sosyal destek güçlü bir pozitif ilişki sergilerken, ebeveyn-çocuk ilişkisi kalitesinin katkısı nispeten sınırlı kalmıştır. Son olarak bu araştırma, çalışan annelerin yaşam dengesinin psikososyal riskler ve kaynakların etkileşimi tarafından güçlü bir şekilde belirlenen çok boyutlu bir yapı olduğunu belirterek literatüre katkıda bulunmakta; hedef odaklı kurumsal, ailesel ve klinik müdahaleler için kritik bir zemin hazırlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ebeveyn-çocuk ilişkisi, Çalışan anneler, Yaşam dengesi, Sosyal destek, Ebeveynlik stresi.

Abstract

Life balance represents the crucial equilibrium between an individual's personal and professional domains. For working mothers, achieving this balance assumes paramount significance in the modern era, where the dual demands of the workplace and family create immense pressure, forcing them to navigate what virtually amounts to two full-time jobs. This study investigated the psychosocial dynamics affecting life balance among working mothers, specifically focusing on the roles of social support, parenting stress, and parent-child relationship quality. Using a predictive correlational research design, data were collected from 350 working mothers, the majority of whom were aged 31-40 (55,4%), married (90%), university graduates (61,1%), and employed full-time (82%). Data were gathered using the Life Balance Scale, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), the Parental Stress Scale, and the Parent-Child Relationship Scale. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software. Hierarchical regression analyses revealed that all three variables significantly predicted life balance. Parenting stress emerged as the strongest and most consistent predictor, with higher levels of stress being strongly associated with lower levels of life balance. In contrast, perceived social support demonstrated a substantial positive association with life balance, whereas the contribution of parent-child relationship quality was comparatively limited. Overall, the findings contribute to the literature by demonstrating that life balance among working mothers is a multidimensional construct shaped by the interaction of psychosocial risks and resources. These findings provide an important foundation for the development of targeted organizational, familial, and clinical interventions aimed at enhancing working mothers' well-being.

Keywords: Parent-child relationship, Working mothers, Life balance, Social support, Parenting stress.

Atıf için (to cite): Girgin, Ç. & Özkan Bardakçı, M. (2026). Life balance among working mothers: The role of social support, parenting stress, and family relationships. *Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 28(2), 389-409. <https://doi.org/10.32709/akusosbil.1842314>

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Giriş

Engagement in professional life, participation in the workforce, and contribution to household income can impose significant physical and psychological demands on individuals. For women, these demands are often compounded by expectations to fulfill domestic responsibilities upon returning home from work, leaving limited opportunities for rest and personal time. Occupational pressures, work-related stress, and ongoing household obligations can collectively intensify the challenges women face in their daily lives.

Women who are also mothers encounter additional responsibilities that may further increase stress levels. Alongside household tasks such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, and other domestic duties, many mothers assume primary responsibility for childcare activities, including supporting their children's education, attending to their physical and emotional needs, and ensuring their overall well-being. Although domestic and caregiving responsibilities can be shared among family members, research suggests that women often continue to shoulder a larger proportion of these duties. Consequently, many working mothers experience difficulties balancing the demands of their professional and family roles, which may affect both their well-being and family functioning.

Motherhood is a transformative life experience that introduces new psychological, emotional, and practical demands. After completing a full day of work, mothers frequently transition into caregiving and household roles, creating what has been described as a "second shift." Managing these multiple responsibilities may contribute to elevated parenting stress and challenges in maintaining life balance. In this context, social support becomes particularly important. Support from spouses, family members, and childcare providers can help alleviate stress by reducing the burden of household and caregiving responsibilities. Active involvement of fathers in childcare and domestic tasks, as well as access to reliable childcare services and support from extended family members, can facilitate a more balanced distribution of responsibilities. When mothers perceive that adequate support is available, they are better equipped to cope with occupational and family demands and maintain a healthier balance between their personal and professional lives.

Among these support mechanisms, the opportunity for women to allocate personal time for themselves is particularly important. Given that many working mothers struggle to find time for self-care, even brief engagement in leisure activities can provide substantial psychological benefits. Activities such as exercising, taking walks, meeting friends, or simply taking short breaks at home may serve as restorative experiences that support overall well-being and contribute to life balance. Therefore, facilitating opportunities for personal time, reducing parenting-related burdens, and providing adequate domestic support are essential for helping working mothers maintain a balance between their professional and family responsibilities.

Within this framework, the present study examines the factors that contribute to life balance among working mothers, focusing on the interconnected domains of workplace responsibilities, domestic responsibilities, and motherhood. Specifically, the study investigates the roles of perceived social support, parenting stress, and parent-child relationship quality in shaping life balance. By addressing the challenges associated with combining employment and motherhood, this study contributes to the literature through a multidimensional examination of psychosocial factors affecting working mothers' well-being. Furthermore, it addresses a notable gap in the literature by exploring life balance among working mothers within the context of parenting stress, while also considering the influence of social support and parent-child relationships.

1. Life Balance and Social Support

Work-life balance refers to the interaction between paid employment and unpaid responsibilities within the family and community, including leisure time and personal development (Maiya & Bagali, 2014, p. 166). In the 21st century, work-life balance has become a significant yet persistent challenge for women. This issue is often conceptualized as "double shift," referring to the situation in which many women are engaged in both professional employment and domestic duties, requiring them to divide their time and energy between the workplace and the home. This dual burden affects not only their physical and mental well-being but also limits their personal aspirations and professional development, as women frequently prioritize the needs of others over their own. Many women struggle to achieve a balance between work and family life, facing obstacles such as childcare responsibilities, long working hours, inadequate support networks, and prevailing social and cultural expectations. Due to gender-role norms,

women are often expected to assume primary responsibility for both domestic and professional duties, which may reinforce workplace inequalities and limit opportunities for career advancement (Bocanegra & Granados, 2025, p. 2).

These circumstances contribute to the difficulties women face in achieving work-life balance. Managing multiple responsibilities simultaneously can have substantial physical and psychological consequences. In many contexts, women are expected to maintain high levels of productivity both at work and at home, and these expectations are often perceived as obligations rather than choices. Such pressures may negatively affect their ability to maintain a healthy balance between professional and personal life. Previous studies have similarly reported that women experience challenges in managing the demands of both work and family life (Umutlu & Öztürk, 2020; Gürel, 2018; Bakıcı & Aydın, 2020). Consequently, the accumulation of occupational, domestic, and caregiving responsibilities represents a significant barrier to achieving work-life balance. Furthermore, factors such as workforce participation and the availability of social support may influence how successfully women manage these competing demands.

Beyond working women in general, the present study specifically focuses on the difficulties experienced by working mothers in achieving work-life balance. Having children increases the demands associated with both work and family life. To improve work-life balance, working mothers should be supported in setting priorities, managing responsibilities, and allocating time for leisure and self-care. Such support can help reduce fatigue and enhance overall well-being. Achieving a sustainable balance requires coordinated efforts from families, workplaces, and mothers themselves. Social networks play a crucial role in enabling working mothers to fulfill their multiple responsibilities effectively (Khairunnisa & Nurdiansyah, 2025, p. 4).

Social support providers are particularly important for working mothers at this point. A study involving both working and non-working mothers found that working mothers reported higher levels of perceived social support (Bağcı Çetin, 2023, p. 8). Another study conducted with working mothers showed that support from both spouses and the environment positively contributed to the balance between work and family life (Beyenal, 2019, p. 87). Current literature findings also demonstrate how important social support is, especially for working mothers. With this support, working mothers can achieve a better work-life balance.

With the support of social networks, working mothers may be better able to achieve work-life balance. Increased involvement of spouses in household responsibilities and childcare provides valuable assistance, enabling employed mothers to manage both their professional and domestic roles more effectively. In addition to spousal support, friendships, childcare services, and assistance from extended family members can contribute significantly to balancing work and family responsibilities. Such support may help reduce stress, improve daily organization, and enhance both family functioning and occupational engagement (Babahanoğlu, 2020, p. 527).

Being a working mother entails numerous challenges. In addition to balancing professional and personal responsibilities, mothers are often required to coordinate childcare arrangements, household tasks, and daily routines while simultaneously managing work-related obligations. Many working mothers strive to pursue successful careers while fulfilling their parenting responsibilities, yet maintaining both roles effectively can be demanding. As a result, mothers may experience difficulties in sustaining work-life balance and may occasionally encounter feelings of guilt arising from expectations imposed by spouses, family members, or society. Work-life balance serves as a mechanism that enables working mothers to navigate between career aspirations and personal life domains, including family, leisure, and self-development (Maiya & Bagali, 2014, pp. 165-166; Güneş, 2025, p. 286).

Research has shown that many mothers experience difficulty separating from their children when returning to work, a challenge that may affect both the mother and the child during working hours (Kırlioğlu et al., 2024, p. 33). Difficulties in emotionally distancing oneself from childcare responsibilities may increase stress levels and complicate the achievement of work-life balance. Furthermore, the accumulation of occupational, domestic, and caregiving responsibilities can contribute to elevated stress and reduced satisfaction in both personal and professional life, ultimately undermining overall well-being (Bocanegra & Granados, 2025, p. 12). Similarly, Kurt and Özkan (2022, p. 773) found that the simultaneous demands of work and home responsibilities reduced life satisfaction among

working mothers. Conversely, women report greater satisfaction when they are able to manage both domains effectively. In particular, the availability of leisure time and opportunities for self-care are considered important contributors to well-being and life satisfaction (Wattis, Standing, & Yerkes, 2013, p. 8). In traditional societies, where caregiving and family responsibilities are often viewed primarily as women's duties, employment conditions such as working hours and shift schedules may have a substantial impact on women's daily lives (Güder, 2019, p. 36).

Social support is considered one of the most important psychosocial resources for achieving work-life balance. It encompasses the emotional, informational, and practical assistance individuals receive from their social environment, as well as the experience of being accepted, valued, and cared for (Laksmi, Darma, & Mahyuni, 2024, p. 445; Maharani & Junifa, 2024, p. 110). Social support may originate from a variety of sources, including spouses, parents, relatives, friends, colleagues, teachers, neighbors, and professionals (Terzi, 2008, p. 8). Beyond providing practical assistance, social support functions as a protective factor against stress by strengthening individuals' coping capacities and reducing the negative effects of challenging life events (Helgeson, 2003, p. 27; Meral & Cavkaytar, 2012, p. 21).

For working women, and particularly for working mothers, social support plays a critical role in facilitating work-life balance. Support from spouses, family members, friends, and childcare providers can alleviate the burden of managing multiple responsibilities and contribute positively to psychological well-being (Küçükşen et al., 2016, p. 201; Aprilia et al., 2025, p. 3). Previous studies have demonstrated that social support reduces stress among employed women (Uddin, 2021, p. 47) and contributes to a healthier balance between work and family life (Dayatri & Mustika, 2021, p. 7). Given the additional demands associated with motherhood, working mothers may be particularly likely to benefit from strong social support networks. Consequently, social support is regarded as a key resource for promoting life balance and well-being among working mothers.

2. Parenting Stress and the Parent-Child Relationship

A review of the literature on parenting stress reveals numerous definitions of the construct. Parenting involves responding to children's behaviors, needs, and life experiences, which may expose parents to various sources of stress. Although the definitions of parenting stress differ across studies, they share several common characteristics. One of the earliest definitions suggests that parenting stress is one of the most significant factors within the family context and is often associated with children's behavioral problems. The daily demands of childcare and child-rearing can increase the risk of stress among parents and caregivers (Mak, Yin, Li, Cheung, & Oon, 2020, p. 2994). Accordingly, parenting stress is closely related to children's behavioral difficulties, caregiving responsibilities, and the challenges associated with meeting children's daily needs. Parenting stress is defined as a psychological response that arises when parents face parenting demands but lack the necessary resources, such as energy, skills, or time to meet these demands. Specifically, parenting stress may result from a parent's appraisal of contextual demands or stressors related to the parenting role. Inadequate personal resources to meet the demands of caring for young children, including depleted physical energy, limited time, or underdeveloped parenting skills, are common examples (Chung, Chan, Lanier, & Wong, 2023, p. 134). In contrast to the first definition, the second definition approaches parenting stress as the inability of parents to effectively respond to parenting demands. This inability is attributed to the inadequacy of personal resources required to cope with the challenges and responsibilities associated with child-rearing. Parenting stress, which is characterized by exhausting or mentally taxing interactions between parents and children, remains a prevalent issue encountered by many families (Ward & Lee, 2020, p. 1). According to the most recent definition, parenting stress is conceptualized as stress arising from the reciprocal relationship between parent and child. From this perspective, stress is not attributed solely to the parent but rather to the dynamics of the parent-child relationship as a whole. Parenting stress can have far-reaching consequences for both children and parents and may negatively affect the quality of the parent-child relationship (Fang et al., 2024, p. 1687). Parenthood also involves providing continuous care and support for a child from birth through various stages of development. As such, it requires substantial investments of time, energy, and personal resources. The demands and responsibilities associated with caregiving may therefore contribute to elevated levels of stress among parents.

Parenting stress refers to the distress or discomfort experienced as a result of the demands associated with the parenting role. It is a common phenomenon among parents. Estimates suggest that approximately 36,5% of parents experience some level of concern related to parenting, child behavior,

or child development (Fang et al., 2024, p. 1687). Parenting stress can be understood as a negative psychological response to the demands of being a parent. It cannot be indexed by a single measure; rather, it is conceptualized as a complex process that links (a) the task demands of parenting, (b) the parent's psychological well-being and behavior, (c) the quality of the parent-child relationship, and (d) the child's psychosocial adjustment. Parenting stress is experienced as negative feelings toward oneself and one's children, and these emotions are directly attributed to the demands of parenting (Deater-Deckard, 1998, p. 315). Parenting stress is influenced by a variety of factors, many of which are related to parents' perceptions of their responsibilities, psychological characteristics, and the nature of the relationships they establish with their children. At the same time, children's individual characteristics and personality traits may also shape parent-child interactions. Consequently, the experience and intensity of parenting stress may vary considerably among parents. Empirical evidence supports this view. For example, a study conducted with parents found that parenting stress increased as the number of children increased. Specifically, parents with one child ($M = 14,13$) reported significantly lower levels of stress than parents with two children ($M = 19,88$) and three children ($M = 22,28$) (Özyazıcı & Yaray, 2022, p. 53). The number of children in the family also affects parenting stress. Differences in parenting stress may also occur depending on sibling dynamics within the household, particularly based on parents' perceptions of those differences (Deater-Deckard, 1998, p. 323). In addition to these factors, changes and fluctuations in professional life also affect the stress of parenthood. Being both a working parent and having insufficient support are factors that may contribute to increased levels of parenting stress. Research further indicates that parents who experience difficulties in balancing work and family life, and who receive limited social support, are more likely to report elevated levels of parenting stress and marital conflict (Chung et al., 2023, p. 142). Since Belsky's (1984) seminal paper on the determinants of parenting in 1984, stress has held a prominent place in understanding why parents behave the way they do. The effects of stress on parenting, particularly its negative impact on dimensions of parental effectiveness, have been extensively studied over the past two decades (Crnic & Ross, 2017, pp. 263). In contrast, another study showed that parenting stress decreases as the child gets older (기쁘다, 2019, p. 180). Additionally, mothers' stress levels vary depending on the characteristics of their children. The primary factors influencing the emergence of parental stress are child characteristics, significant events in the parent's life (e.g., the mother working), and parental characteristics. High parental stress levels can lead to decreased parental sensitivity towards the child, poorer behavior and development in the child, and a decline in the quality of the parent-child relationship (Rajgariah et al., 2021, pp. 191-192). At this point, it can be said that the child or the age group of the children also plays a role in the stress experienced by the parent. Parental stress, is also influenced by the number of children, their ages, their personality traits, etc. On the other hand, factors such as the parent's own personality traits, their occupation, whether the mother is working, and their life responsibilities affect parenting stress. It is important to recognize that parenting stress should not be viewed simply as a static trait or as the immediate reaction of an individual mother or father at a given time. Rather, a parent's perception of parenting stress and its consequences reflects systemic processes within the family that are transactional, reciprocal, bidirectional, and developmental in nature (Crnic & Ross, 2017, p. 263). Therefore, becoming a parent affects family dynamics and relationships. Adding new family members to the family changes the routine. Therefore, with each child born into the world, the responsibilities of parents increase. Having experienced parenthood before does not mean the stress will not be experienced again. The parenting process spans a long period of time. This lengthy process can cause stress for parents and negatively affect their relationship.

3. Purpose of the Study and Hypotheses

The primary aim of this study is to examine the relationship between working mothers' levels of life balance and their perceived social support, parenting stress, and the quality of the parent-child relationship. Within this scope, the predictive effects of psychosocial factors such as social support and family relationships on life balance were investigated, with particular attention given to the determining role of parenting stress in this relationship. Additionally, life balance was approached as a multidimensional construct, and its associations with subdimensions (personal life, work life, and development) were also evaluated.

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between mothers' perceived level of social support and their level of life balance.

H2: There is a significant negative relationship between mothers' perceived level of social support and their level of parenting stress.

H3: There is a significant negative relationship between parenting stress and life balance.

H4: There is a significant positive relationship between the parent-child relationship and life balance.

H5: There is a strong and significant positive relationship between the total score of life balance and its subdimensions (personal life, work life, and development).

H6: Mothers' levels of life balance will be better explained as the variables of perceived social support, parent-child relationship, and parenting stress are successively added to the model.

H6a: Perceived social support significantly predicts life balance.

H6b: The parent-child relationship significantly contributes to the prediction of life balance beyond the effect of social support.

H6c: When parenting stress is added to the model after social support and the parent-child relationship, it significantly increases the explanatory power for life balance.

4.Method

4.1. Research Design

This study was conducted to examine how working mothers' life balance is related to perceived social support, the parent-child relationship, and parenting stress, as well as to investigate the predictive effects of these variables on life balance. The research adopted a quantitative approach and was designed based on the predictive relational survey model. The predictive relational survey model is a research design that aims not only to describe the existing relationships between variables but also to determine the extent to which one or more independent variables predict a particular outcome (Creswell, 2009; Karasar, 2024). In this context, social support, the parent-child relationship, and parenting stress were treated as independent variables, while life balance was considered the dependent variable. In addition, supplementary analyses were conducted to assess the multidimensional nature of the model by examining the subdimensions of life balance (personal life, work life, and development). In the study, Pearson correlation analysis was first employed to identify the relationships between the variables. Subsequently, hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to test the predictive power of perceived social support, the parent-child relationship, and parenting stress on life balance. The hypotheses developed within the framework of this predictive model were structured to demonstrate the unique contribution of each variable to the variance of life balance step by step. This study was carried out with the approval of the Scientific Ethics Evaluation Board.

In this study, social support was operationalized using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), which measures perceived support from three primary sources: family, friends, and significant others. Accordingly, the conceptualization of social support in this research is limited to these interpersonal sources. Although the broader literature conceptualizes social support to include dimensions such as spousal support, organizational support, and childcare services, these aspects were not included in the present study, as they fall outside the scope of the measurement tool employed.

In the first block of the hierarchical regression, several demographic variables were controlled for based on their documented influence on life balance in the work-family literature. Number and age range of children were included as controls as they represent varying levels of domestic demand and caregiving intensity, which significantly impact mothers' time allocation and perceived role overload (Kelliher et al., 2019; Quick & Tetrick, 2015). Weekly working hours were controlled for to account for the direct time-based conflict, as extensive work hours are consistently linked to reduced life balance and increased work-to-family interference (Shockley et al., 2017). Finally, monthly household income was included to control for the potential role of financial resources in alleviating domestic burdens through outsourced services and improved access to childcare (Wayne et al., 2017). By entering these variables first, we aimed to isolate the unique contributions of the primary psychological predictors beyond these fundamental background characteristics.

4.2. Participants

The demographic characteristics of the 350 working mothers who participated in the study are presented in Table 1. The majority of participants were between the ages of 31 and 40 years of age ($n=$

194, 55,42%), married ($n=315$, 90%), and had one or two children ($n=310$, 88,57%). Regarding educational attainment, most participants held a university degree ($n=214$, 61,14%). The majority were employed full-time ($n=287$, 82%) and worked for 31 hours or more per week, and most participants resided in metropolitan areas ($n=248$, 70,86%).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Variable	Category	F	%
Age	25-30	45	12,86
	31-35	104	29,71
	36-40	90	25,71
	41-45	63	18,0
	46 and above	48	13,71
Marital Status	Single	10	2,86
	Married	315	90,0
	Divorced	22	6,29
	Widowed	3	0,86
Number of Children	1	144	41,14
	2	166	47,43
	3	35	10,0
	4 or more	5	1,43
Age Range of Children	0-3 years	90	25,71
	4-6 years	83	23,71
	7-12 years	102	29,14
	13-18 years	49	14,0
	19 years and above	26	7,43
Education Level	Primary School	10	2,86
	Middle School	8	2,29
	High School	54	15,43
	University	214	61,14
	Postgraduate	64	18,29
Weekly Working Hours	Less than 20 hours	27	7,71
	20-30 hours	62	17,71
	31-40 hours	146	41,71
	More than 41 hours	115	32,86
Work Type	On-call	8	2,29
	Shift-based	3	0,86
	Full-time	287	82,00
	Part-time	33	9,43
	Flexible	19	5,43
Monthly Household Income (TRY)	Less than 22,000	15	4,29
	22,000-40,000	59	16,86
	40,000-60,000	97	27,71
	60,000-80,000	69	19,71
	80,000-100,000	61	17,43
	100,000 and above	49	14,0
Place of Residence	Metropolitan	248	70,86
	District	56	16,0
	City	45	12,86
	Village	1	0,29

Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage distributions of the participants' demographic characteristics. Among the participants, 29,71% were between the ages of 31 and 35, and 25,71% were between 36 and 40 years old. The vast majority of the participants (90%) reported being married. Regarding the number of children, 47,43% of the participants had two children, while 41,14% had one

child. The most common age range of children was 7-12 years, accounting for 29,14% of the sample. In terms of educational attainment, the majority of participants (61,14%) were university graduates, and 18,29% held a postgraduate degree. Regarding weekly working hours, 41,71% reported working 31-40 hours per week, while 32,86% worked more than 41 hours. In terms of work type, the majority (82%) were employed full-time. When examining monthly household income, 27,71% of participants reported an income between 40,000 and 60,000 TL, while 19,71% earned between 60,000 and 80,000 TL. With respect to place of residence, 70,86% of the participants lived in metropolitan areas. These findings indicate that the study group largely consisted of well-educated individuals who are actively engaged in the workforce and mostly belong to nuclear family structures. The demographic distribution provides a critical foundation for the generalizability of the study results.

4.3. Data Collection Instruments

Four different measurement tools were used to collect data in this study. These instruments were designed to assess participants' levels of life balance, perceived social support, parent-child relationship, and parenting stress.

Parent-child Relationship Scale: The Parent-Child Relationship Scale was originally developed by Hetherington and Clingempeel (1992) and adapted into Turkish by Aytaç, Çen, and Yüceol (2018). The scale was designed to measure both the positive and negative qualities of the parent-child relationship. It consists of 15 items and is evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much). The scale comprises two subdimensions: Positive Parent-Child Relationship and Negative Parent-Child Relationship. There are no reverse-coded items. Validity and reliability analyses of the Turkish version of the scale yielded satisfactory results.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS): Developed by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, and Farley (1988), the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support measures individuals' perceived social support from family, friends, and a significant other. The Turkish adaptation was conducted by Eker, Arkar and Yıldız (2001). The scale includes three subdimensions, each consisting of four items: Family Support, Friend Support, and Significant Other Support. The scale contains a total of 12 items and is rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1= Very strongly disagree, 7=Very strongly agree). No reverse-coded items are included.

Parental Stress Scale: This scale was developed by Berry and Jones (1995) to determine the level of stress parents experience in the parenting process. The Turkish adaptation was carried out by Kaymak Özmen and Özmen (2012). The scale has a unidimensional structure consisting of 16 items and is rated using a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree). It does not include any reverse-coded items. Higher scores on the scale indicate higher levels of parenting stress. Structural validity analyses and Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients provided favorable results.

Life Balance Scale: The Life Balance Scale was developed by Yılmaz and Söyük (2022) and was originally administered to healthcare professionals. The scale is designed to assess individuals' perceptions of balance between their professional and personal lives. It consists of 15 items and includes three subdimensions: Personal Life, Work Life, and Development. Items in the first two subdimensions are reverse-coded, while items in the third subdimension are scored directly. The scale uses a 5-point Likert format (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree), where higher scores indicate a greater perceived sense of life balance. Validity and reliability analyses of the scale yielded favorable results.

4.4. Data Collection

The data for this study were collected via an online survey form created using the Google Forms platform. The sampling of working mothers, who constituted the target population of the study, was conducted using a convenience sampling method. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, that their participation was voluntary, and that their personal information would be kept confidential. Only the responses of individuals who provided informed consent were included in the analysis. The survey form consisted of a socio-demographic information section and four different measurement instruments. A total of 350 valid responses were included in the evaluation.

4.5. Data Analysis

The data obtained from the study were analyzed using the SPSS statistical software. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to identify the relationships among the variables. Hierarchical regression analyses were performed to test the main hypotheses of the study. In the hierarchical

regression analysis, perceived social support, the parent-child relationship, and parenting stress were entered into the model step-by-step to examine their incremental contributions to life balance. The significance level for all analyses was set at .05. Before the analyses, the assumptions of missing data, outliers, and normality were checked. No major issues related to missing data or violations of normality assumptions were detected.

5. Results

This section presents the statistical findings of the study, which aimed to examine the relationships between life balance and perceived social support, parenting stress, and the parent-child relationship among working mothers. The results are organized into three subsections: descriptive statistics, correlation analyses, and hierarchical regression analyses. Demographic variables presented in Table 1 were included as control variables in the first block of the hierarchical regression analyses.

Descriptive statistics for the predictor and outcome variables are presented in Table 2. The sample of 350 working mothers reported a mean perceived social support score of 59,22 (SD = 16,02, theoretical range: 12-84) and a mean parent-child relationship quality score of 55,33 (SD = 5,85, theoretical range: 15-75). The mean parenting stress score was 30,69 (SD = 7,72, theoretical range: 16-64). Life balance total scores had a mean of 51,37 (SD = 11,25, theoretical range: 15-75). Among the life balance subscales, the work life subscale had the highest mean relative to its theoretical maximum (M = 15,71, SD = 3,47, theoretical maximum = 20), followed by the development subscale (M = 13,19, SD = 3,26) and the personal life subscale (M = 22,46, SD = 7,54; theoretical maximum = 35). Bivariate correlations among the study variables are presented in Table 3, and the results of the hierarchical regression analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for key study variables (N = 350)

Variable	N	M	SD	Min	Max	Theoretical Range
Predictor Variables						
Perceived Social Support	350	59,22	16,02	17	84	12-84
Parent-Child Relationship	350	55,33	5,85	15	75	15-75
Parenting Stress	350	30,69	7,72	16	62	16-64
Outcome Variable						
Life Balance (Total)	350	51,37	11,25	18	75	15-75
Personal Life Subscale	350	22,46	7,54	7	35	7-35
Work Life Subscale	350	15,71	3,47	4	20	4-20
Development Subscale	350	13,19	3,26	4	20	4-20

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation. Perceived Social Support was measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (1-7 Likert scale). Parent-Child Relationship and Life Balance were measured on a 1-5 Likert scale. Parenting Stress was measured on a 1-4 Likert scale. Life Balance total scores were computed following the scale's official scoring procedure, whereby conflict items (items 1-11) were reverse-scored so that higher total scores reflect greater life balance. Demographic control variables (number of children, age range of children, weekly working hours, monthly household income) are presented in Table 1.

5.1. Correlation Findings

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among the study variables. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between perceived social support and total life balance ($r = .27, p < .01$), indicating that mothers who perceive higher levels of social support report greater life balance. Additionally, perceived social support showed significant positive associations with all subscales: personal life ($r = .23, p < .01$), work life ($r = .19, p < .01$), and development ($r = .22, p < .01$). As expected, a significant negative correlation was observed between perceived social support and parenting stress ($r = -.26, p < .01$).

Parenting stress was significantly and negatively correlated with total life balance ($r = -.48, p < .01$), as well as with the personal life ($r = -.45, p < .01$) and work life ($r = -.45, p < .01$) dimensions. A weaker but still statistically significant negative correlation was observed between parenting stress and the development dimension ($r = -.15, p < .01$). Parent-child relationship quality was positively associated with both total life balance ($r = .15, p < .01$) and the personal-life dimension ($r = .14, p < .01$). Finally, strong positive correlations were found between the total life balance score and its subdimensions ($r = .56$ to $.93, p < .01$), providing support for the structural coherence of the scale.

Table 3. Pearson correlation coefficients among variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Perceived Social Support	-						
2. Parent-Child Relationship	.08	-					
3. Parenting Stress	-.26**	.07	-				
4. Total Life Balance	.27**	.15**	-.48**	-			
5. Personal Life Subscale	.23**	.14**	-.45**	.93**	-		
6. Work Life Subscale	.19**	.08	-.45**	.70**	.52**	-	
7. Development Subscale	.22**	.09	-.15**	.56**	.33**	.17**	-

Note. $N = 350$. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

5.2. Hierarchical Regression Findings

Table 4 presents the results of the hierarchical regression analysis conducted to examine the predictors of life balance through four successive models. In the first block, demographic control variables explained a statistically significant proportion of the variance in life balance ($R^2 = .096, F[4, 345] = 9.19, p < .001$). Among these variables, the age range of children ($B = 1.89, p < .001$) and weekly working hours ($B = -2.93, p < .001$) emerged as significant predictors.

In the second block, the addition of perceived social support significantly increased the explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = .073, p < .001$), with social support serving as a positive predictor of life balance ($B = 0.19, p < .001$). The inclusion of parent-child relationship quality in the third block also yielded a significant contribution ($\Delta R^2 = .022, p = .003$), raising the total explained variance to 19.1%.

In the final block, the entry of parenting stress accounted for the largest incremental variance ($\Delta R^2 = .160, p < .001$). The final model explained a total of 35.1% of the variance in life balance ($F[7, 342] = 26.45, p < .001$). In this model, parenting stress emerged as the strongest negative predictor of life balance ($\beta = -.43, p < .001$). Perceived social support ($\beta = .18, p < .001$) and parent-child relationship quality ($\beta = .10, p = .018$) remained significant positive predictors."

Table 4. Results of hierarchical regression analysis predicting life balance

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β
Model 1 ($R^2 = .096, \Delta R^2 = .096, p < .001$)					
Number of Children	-.175	.884	-0.20	.843	-.01
Age Range of Children	1.887	.511	3.69	< .001	.19
Weekly Working Hours	-2.928	.644	-4.54	< .001	-.23
Monthly Household Income	-.553	.412	-1.34	.180	-.07
Model 2 ($R^2 = .169, \Delta R^2 = .073, p < .001$)					
Perceived Social Support	.190	.035	5.50	< .001	.27
Model 3 ($R^2 = .191, \Delta R^2 = .022, p = .003$)					

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β
Parent-Child Relationship	.283	.094	3.01	.003	.15
Model 4 ($R^2 = .351$, $\Delta R^2 = .160$, $p < .001$)					
Perceived Social Support	.128	.032	3.99	< .001	.18
Parent-Child Relationship	.198	.083	2.38	.018	.10
Parenting Stress	-.620	.067	-9.20	< .001	-.43

Note. $N=350$. B = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error of B ; t = t -statistic; p = significance level; β = standardized coefficient. Total Life Balance is the dependent variable. Control variables (Number of Children, Age Range of Children, Weekly Working Hours, and Monthly Household Income) were entered in Model 1."

Overall, each successive block contributed significantly to the explained variance in life balance. These results highlight the multidimensional nature of the factors affecting life balance in employed mothers. Specifically, parenting stress emerged as the strongest and most consistent predictor ($\beta = -.43$, $p < .001$), underscoring its critical role in shaping mothers' sense of balance between work and personal life. Notably, the inclusion of demographic control variables in the first block strengthened the interpretability of the findings by accounting for key background characteristics before the substantive predictors were entered.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Predictors of Life Balance in Working Mothers

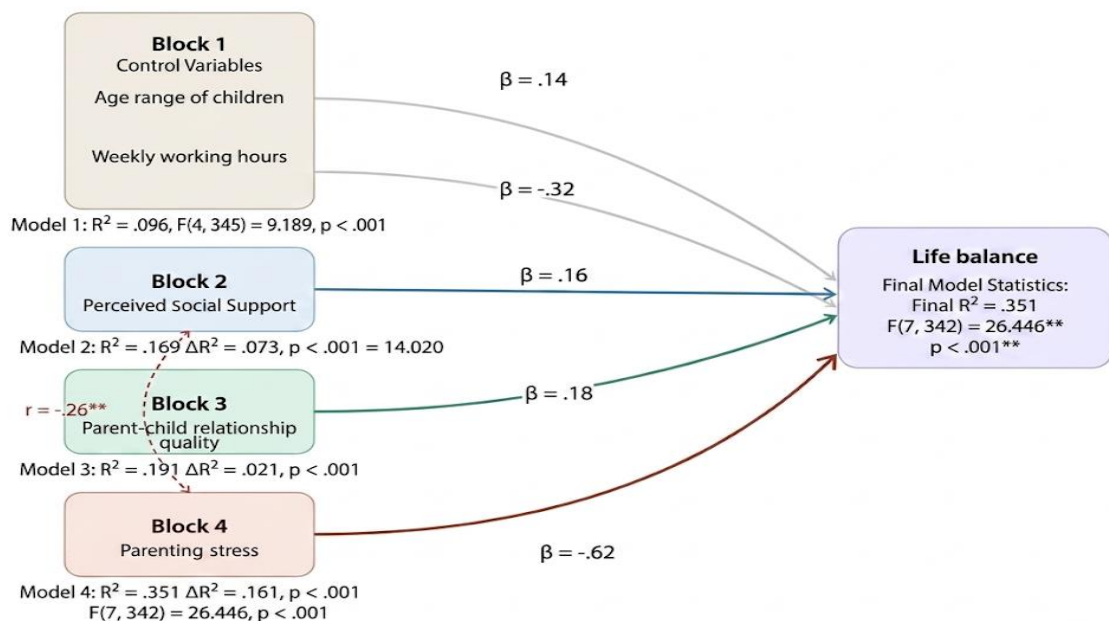


Figure 1. Hierarchical regression models predicting working mothers' life balance. Values on arrows represent standardized coefficients derived from the final model (Block 4). For clarity, non-significant control variables (number of children and monthly household income) are omitted from the paths. The dashed red arrow indicates the correlation between perceived social support and parenting stress ($r = -.26$, $p < .01$), which was not included as a direct path in the regression model.

Note, Figure 1 presents a conceptual diagram illustrating the standardized coefficients from the final block of hierarchical regression. It should be noted that this diagram is intended solely for the visual synthesis of the regression blocks and does not represent a structural equation model or path analysis.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study shows that the average total life balance score of working mothers participating in the research ($M = 51,37$) is above the upper limit of the theoretical range. A noteworthy finding is that the work-life sub-dimension ($M = 15,71$) has the closest average value to the theoretical maximum compared to the other dimensions (personal life and development). This finding indicates that working mothers have a relatively positive perception of work-life balance. However, this positive perception reveals a striking paradox when considered together with the lower scores in the personal life and development dimensions. Alverina, Hanami, and Abidin (2024) state that working mothers can perceive the workplace as an escape from the endless responsibilities at home and as a personal space. In this context, the more positive scores mothers give for work-life balance may stem from their viewing the workplace, even if not a true resting place, as a role reversal and a space for demonstrating individual competence. Indeed, Akçınar and Özbek (2021) state that in the Turkish context, work-family conflict restricts the space a mother can dedicate to her own psychological well-being, leading to the abandonment of developmental activities. Consistent with these findings, a study conducted with working mothers in Payakumbuh, Indonesia, found that the majority of participants had a moderate perception of work-life balance, and a positive and significant relationship was found between flexible work arrangements and work-life balance ($r = 0,194$, $p = .038$; Hada et al., 2020). Similarly, a study conducted with working women in Pakistan revealed that women perceived work-life balance as a personal philosophy and effectively managed both roles. Participants evaluated the balance on an event-by-event basis, expressed positive perceptions, and emphasized their religious beliefs as an important coping strategy (Kibriya, Hassan & Koussr, 2021).

On the other hand, the relatively lower averages for the personal life sub-dimension ($M = 22,46$) and the development sub-dimension ($M = 13,19$) indicate that working mothers experience more difficulties in terms of time allocated to themselves and personal development. This is consistent with the study by Riekert and Taute (2009), where working mothers reported that maintaining existing friendships and forming new ones was difficult due to long working hours and family demands. Bedejim et al. (2019) highlighted that although 25 mothers claimed to maintain work-life balance, many experienced guilt and insecurity due to perceived inadequacy in their parenting, with work demands conflicting with family responsibilities, leaving insufficient time for personal development. Similarly, Sabir et al. (2024), in their study with 150 working mothers, showed that participants faced significant difficulties in balancing their professional and private lives, which often led to insufficient time for personal development. According to researchers, factors such as long working hours, lack of family support, and societal expectations exacerbate these challenges; consequently, working mothers experience increased stress, fatigue, and mental health problems, which hinders their ability to focus on their personal development (Sabir et al., 2024).

Our study found that participants had high levels of perceived social support ($M = 59,22$). This finding is consistent with studies showing that social support is a protective factor for working mothers. For example, a study of working mothers in China revealed that characteristics such as social relationships, support networks, and social participation play a moderating role between parenting stress and depressive symptoms (He et al., 2025). Similarly, it has been shown that social support directly protects work-life balance by enhancing the psychological well-being of working women (Kurtuluş et al., 2023). Supporting these findings, Arfianto, Mustikasari, and Wardani (2020), in their correlational cross-sectional study with 374 working mothers, confirmed that perceived social support from family, friends, and significant others was significantly associated with psychological well-being ($p < .001$) and functioned as a protective factor. The authors emphasize the importance of social support in reducing stress and improving the mental health of working mothers, thus enhancing their overall well-being (Arfianto, Mustikasari & Wardani, 2020). Similarly, Mariyanti, Lunanta, and Ratnaningtyas (2024), in their quantitative study with 201 married working mothers, concluded that social support is a protective factor; they showed that working mothers were able to balance their home and work responsibilities with social support ($p < .001$). All these findings are quite remarkable in that studies conducted in different cultural contexts (China, Indonesia, Turkey) consistently show that social support is a protective factor for working mothers.

Our study found that parenting stress levels were low ($M = 30,69$) and the quality of parent-child relationships was high ($M = 55,33$). These finding bridges two seemingly contradictory lines of research. On the one hand, it shows that working mothers experience difficulties balancing their professional

responsibilities with parenting duties, as demonstrated by Sarker and Tasnim (2024), and on the other hand, it provides a consensus between them and Hosokawa & Katsura (2021), who argues that mothers overcome these difficulties through quality time management. Our findings demonstrate that although working mothers may experience difficulties in balancing, they can keep parenting stress low through effective coping strategies and quality relationship management. An important study supporting this finding was conducted by Ritchie (1982). Ritchie's research showed that working mothers experienced lower levels of anxiety regarding child-rearing and reported a more enjoyable child-rearing experience compared to full-time mothers. Additionally, the quality of parent-child relationships is higher among working mothers, and these mothers describe their children as happier and more satisfied. According to Ritchie (1982), the spouses of working mothers are also more involved in childcare, leading to warmer father-child relationships and supporting the idea of lower parental stress and higher relationship quality among working mothers. In a recent study, Auliyah and Kawuryan (2025), in a quantitative study of 81 mothers working in a factory, found a significant negative correlation between work-family conflict and work-life balance ($r = -0,679$; $p < 0,01$) and a positive correlation between self-efficacy and work-life balance ($r = 0,525$; $p < 0,01$). These findings highlight the challenges mothers face in managing dual roles and the importance of self-efficacy in achieving balance. The low level of parental stress found in our study may also be related to the high levels of self-efficacy among the participating mothers. On the other hand, Iniya, Karthikeyan, and Harsini (2023), in their quantitative study with 60 married women, the vast majority of whom had children, revealed that a significant portion of the participants faced difficulties in balancing professional responsibilities and parental duties, and 60% experienced work-life balance problems. According to the researchers, professional challenges such as long working hours and insufficient support negatively impact the ability of working women to effectively manage both work and family obligations (Iniya, Karthikeyan & Harsini, 2023).

Research findings have shown a significant positive relationship between perceived social support and life balance ($r = .27$, $p < .01$). The study by Radauceanu et al. (2025) revealed that social support alleviates anxiety symptoms in new mothers by reducing the negative effects of work-family conflict. This finding supports the positive relationship between perceived social support and life balance in our study and shows that social support acts as a protective buffer. A study conducted in Turkey found that perceived social support had a positive effect on life satisfaction among working women (Avcı & Günay, 2021). The findings of another study showed that social support plays a crucial role in helping working mothers effectively manage their professional and personal responsibilities and contribute to a better overall life balance (Ahmad, Kazmi & Malik, 2024). Findings from another study with working mothers also showed a positive relationship between family support and work-life balance (Ramdhanian & Yuniasanti, 2023). These findings support the positive correlation between perceived social support and work-life balance in the present study and demonstrate that social support is a fundamental resource in achieving work-family balance. The strong negative correlation found between parenting stress and work-life balance ($r = -.48$, $p < .01$) is one of the most striking findings of the study. This finding is consistent with the studies by Gawlik (2025) and Çatal (2024), which emphasize that parenting stress is one of the most important risk factors that disrupt mothers' life satisfaction and perception of balance. The study by Esterina & Jatmika (2024) also found a strong negative correlation between improving work/private life balance, an aspect of work-life balance in working mothers, and parenting stress. This suggests that mothers experience lower levels of parenting stress when they make changes to their work and personal lives. The fact that working mothers' exposure to stress negatively impacts their sense of life satisfaction-one of the most important aspects of their lives-can prevent them from maintaining balance in their daily lives.

The weak but significant positive correlation found between parent-child relationship quality and life balance ($r = .15$, $p < .01$) aligns with Galinsky's (1999) view that the primary factor determining the quality of the parent-child relationship is not the mother's employment status, but responsive parenting. Furthermore, the quality interaction mentioned by Hosokawa & Katsura (2021) supports this. Similarly, Salsabi et al. (2025), in their study with working mothers, emphasized that the quality of interaction is more important than the amount of time spent in mother-child interaction. Another study highlighted the importance of frequent activities with the child rather than the amount of time spent, for a higher quality parent-child relationship (Roeters et al., 2010). This point emphasizes the quality of time rather than the quantity. On the other hand, even short periods of time spent together can be considered important. Working mothers, by focusing on the quality rather than the quantity of time spent with their

children, increase their satisfaction with their parenting roles, and this positively impacts their overall life balance. The high correlations ($r = .56 - .93$) between the total life balance score and its sub-dimensions confirm the structural validity of the scale and its applicability in the Turkish context. In particular, the .93 correlation between the personal life sub-dimension and the total score suggests that the perception of life balance for working mothers is largely shaped by individual time and self-care opportunities. This supports the view emphasized by Doğan and Şahin (2026), that the time mothers allocate to their own development is central to life balance. Furthermore, Swastiningsih (2014) examined the coping strategies used by working and breastfeeding mothers when combining work and parenting roles (Swastiningsih, 2014).

This study aimed to examine the predictors of life balance in working mothers in the context of demographic control variables, perceived social support, quality of parent-child relationship, and parenting stress. Hierarchical regression analysis findings showed that each of the four models generated significantly explained the variance in life balance, with the final model explaining 35.1% of the total variance ($R^2 = .351$). The first finding of the study is that demographic control variables (number of children, age range of children, weekly working hours, monthly household income) explain a significant portion of the variance in life balance ($R^2 = .096$, $p < .001$). Among these variables, age range of children ($B = 1.89$, $p < .001$) and weekly working hours ($B = -2.93$, $p < .001$) stood out as significant predictors, while number of children and monthly household income did not show significant predictive power. A comprehensive review by the European Commission (2010) clearly demonstrates the negative impact of long working hours on work-life balance. The report states that well-being begins to decline significantly above 40 hours per week; another study shows that increased time spent at work (weekly working hours) directly triggers role conflict and negatively affects work-life balance. These statements directly support the findings of the study (European Commission, 2010; Greenhaus et al., 2003). A study conducted with working mothers showed that long working hours significantly disrupt work-life balance, leading to health problems such as hypertension, stress, and burnout, and negatively impacting work-life balance (Sabir et al., 2024). The data from the study by Losoncz & Bortolotto (2009) shows similar results. It was concluded that work-life balance is negatively affected, particularly for mothers working 45 hours or more per week. The study found that long working hours disrupted the life balance of participating mothers and negatively impacted their mental and physical well-being.

The age range of children was a positive predictor, with mothers with older children reporting higher life balance, which is one of the research findings. One study revealed that the highest work-family conflict occurred when the youngest child in the home was 5 years old or younger, and the lowest conflict occurred during the empty nest period (after children leave home). This finding is directly consistent with the idea that life balance increases as children grow older (Allen & Finkelstein, 2014). Another study showed that the presence of young children primarily reduces the paid working hours of women and increases housework, while older children tend to help with housework, which particularly reduces the burden of housework for men. This mechanism is consistent with the fact that mothers with older children experience less daily workload and therefore report higher life balance (Garsztka, 2023). Findings from another study with mothers of young children show that the requirements for achieving work-life balance are closely related to the age of the children, as younger children may require more attention and care, which affects overall work-family dynamics and the psychological health of working mothers (Husna, Farida & Utomo, 2025). Millier's (2016) study also showed that mothers with young children experienced more negativity between family life and work life, while mothers with elementary school-aged children faced a higher rate of negative interaction between work and family life and reported higher work-life balance.

The inclusion of perceived social support in the second block significantly contributed to explaining the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .073$, $p < .001$). Social support remained a significant positive predictor in the final model as well ($\beta = .18$, $p < .001$). This finding is in strong consistency with studies in the literature showing that social support is a protective factor for working mothers. For example, one of the important studies examining the need for both intra-family (spouse, relatives) and institutional social support mechanisms for working mothers in Türkiye, and how this support reduces work-family conflict and life imbalance, is the study by Aycan & Eskin (2005). Another study identified family and colleague support as the most important protective factor for working mothers (Pertiwi, 2025). Yet another study shows that social support is significantly related to the psychological well-being of working mothers and emphasizes its protective role. It was found that perceived high levels of social support from family,

friends, and significant others helped reduce stress and improve mental health in working mothers (Arfianto, Mustikasari & Wardani, 2020). Another study, while discussing the protective role of social support, particularly emphasized the importance of support provided by spouses. According to the study, the support received by working mothers from their spouses is a significant protective factor and contributes 32.9% to their work-family balance (Ristianaa & Bantam, 2024).

The addition of parent-child relationship quality in the third block provided a small but significant contribution to explaining the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .022$, $p = .003$). In the final model, parent-child relationship quality retained its significance as a positive predictor ($\beta = .10$, $p = .018$). However, it is noteworthy that the effect size was lower compared to other predictors. This finding is consistent with the findings of the work-family enrichment scale developed by Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, and Grzywacz (2006). This suggests that the effect of parent-child relationship quality on work-family balance occurs through a more indirect and long-term mechanism compared to variables related to more concrete and daily experiences. The most important finding of Vieira et al. (2016) is that the direct effect of parent-child relationship quality on work-family conflict is small, but it becomes significant when evaluated within the context of its mediating effect (e.g., parenting stress, child behavior). This finding explains our finding of a small but significant contribution, as in our study.

The addition of parenting stress in the fourth and final block provided the greatest contribution to explaining the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .160$, $p < .001$). In the final model, parenting stress emerged as the strongest negative predictor of work-life balance ($\beta = -.43$, $p < .001$). This finding indicates that parenting stress plays a central and dominant role in working mothers' perception of work-life balance. Rusu et al. (2025) has shown, through meta-analysis, that the relationship between parenting stress and parental well-being is moderate to strong. Similarly, Willner, Gatzke-Kopp, and Bray (2016) revealed that parenting stress plays a central role in parent-child dynamics and functions as a significant factor in the relationship between child behavioral problems and parental well-being. Another study shows that work-life balance has a positive effect on child-rearing stress, and that higher parenting stress may affect the perception of life balance among working mothers (Zhi, Um & Jo, 2022). Similar findings are observed in another study. Esterina & Jatmika (2024) also concluded that there is a positive correlation between work-life balance and parenting stress. These findings are similar to those of this study.

In the final model, the fact that the control variables child age range and weekly working hours ($B = -2.72$, $p < .001$) retained their significance indicates that these demographic factors affect life balance independently of parenting stress. Another noteworthy finding of the study is that, even after controlling for a psychological factor such as parenting stress in the fourth and final model, the demographic control variables weekly working hours and child age range continued to retain their significance. This finding suggests that structural factors such as weekly working hours and children's age range remain important correlates of life balance even after accounting for parenting stress. Thus, both contextual and psychological factors appear to contribute to working mothers' perceptions of life balance. This finding is in complete agreement with the time-based constraints theory in the work-family literature (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Nomaguchi, 2009). Parenting stress reflects the psychological and emotional demands associated with the parenting role, whereas weekly working hours represent a time-based constraint that reduces the amount of time available for personal, family, and developmental activities. Consequently, both factors may independently contribute to lower levels of life balance among working mothers.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, all variables were collected through self-report measures at a single time point using the same measurement method, which introduces the risk of common method bias. When data on both predictor and outcome variables are obtained from the same source simultaneously, shared method variance may artificially inflate the observed relationships among variables. To reduce this potential bias, several procedural remedies recommended in the literature were employed during data collection, including ensuring participant anonymity and counterbalancing the order of the measurement scales. Nevertheless, future studies are encouraged to employ multi-source and longitudinal designs to address this concern more rigorously.

Second, the cross-sectional nature of the study precludes causal inferences. The relationships identified among perceived social support, parenting stress, parent-child relationship quality, and life

balance reflect associations rather than directional effects. Longitudinal and experimental research designs are needed to clarify the causal mechanisms underlying these relationships.

Third, the sample consisted exclusively of employed mothers, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other populations, such as fathers, unemployed parents, or individuals from different cultural contexts. Future research should examine these relationships across more diverse populations to enhance external validity.

Finally, social support was operationalized using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), which assesses perceived support from family, friends, and significant others. Although social support is widely conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that may also encompass organizational support, spousal role distribution, and formal childcare services, these dimensions were not included in the present study because they fall outside the scope of the measurement instrument employed. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as reflecting a specific aspect of perceived social support rather than its full multidimensional structure.

ARAŞTIRMACILARIN MAKALEYE KATKI ORANI BEYANI				
Yazarlar Adı Soyadı	Çalışmanın Tasarlanması	Veri Toplanması	Veri Analizi	Makalenin Yazımı
Çağla GİRGIN	%50	%50	%50	%50
Mukadder ÖZKAN BARDAKCI	%50	%50	%50	%50
ETİK KURUL İZNİ Etik kurul izni gerektiren çalışmalarda, izinle ilgili bilgileri (kurul adı, tarih ve sayı no) yöntem bölümünde ve ayrıca burada belirtmişlerdir. Kurul adı: Selçuk Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Bilimsel Etik Değerlendirme Kurulu Tarih: 08.05.2025 No: 2025\046				

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