

WORKPLACE GENDER DYNAMICS AND MENTAL HEALTH: DOES FAMILY HARMONY MEDIATE?

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to examine the effects of workplace gender dynamics and character education on the mental health of married working women, and to assess the mediating role of family harmony. This study advances HRM literature by repositioning family harmony as a boundary condition in work–family interface models, rather than a universal mediating mechanism. Using a quantitative design, data from 180 families in Banten Province, Indonesia, were analyzed with PLS-SEM. The findings reveal that character education does not significantly influence mental health, while workplace gender conditions exert a direct effect, with inequality increasing psychological strain. External factors, including income and number of children, remain more dominant predictors. Although both predictors influence family harmony, it does not mediate the relationship with mental health. These results imply that organizations and policymakers must prioritize gender-equitable work environments and integrated work–family policies to enhance women’s mental well-being.

Keywords: Mental Health; Harmony Scale; Education; Gender; Workload

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INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality in the labor market remains a persistent structural issue across developing economies, including Indonesia. National statistics indicate that female labor force participation remains substantially lower than men, with approximately 53% of women engaged in the workforce compared to 84% of men in Banten Province (Banten Province in Figures, 2024). At the same time, divorce cases in the province reached over 21,000 in 2023 and are projected to rise sharply, reflecting increasing strain within household structures (Rostinah, 2024). These patterns highlight a dual burden faced by married working women, who are required to perform professionally in the workplace while simultaneously fulfilling domestic responsibilities, often within a socio-cultural context shaped by persistent patriarchal norms. This imbalance intensifies psychological strain and positions women as a high-risk group for work-related mental health challenges.

Mental health, encompassing emotional, psychological, and social well-being, has become a critical concern within contemporary human resource management discourse. Empirical evidence shows that prolonged working hours, job insecurity, and gender-based disparities in the workplace significantly increase stress, depression, and psychosomatic symptoms among female workers (Long et al., 2023; Park et al., 2022). While long working hours are frequently interpreted as indicators of commitment, such expectations disproportionately disadvantage women due to their additional domestic roles (Kim et al., 2023). These structural inequalities not only constrain women's career progression and income opportunities but also generate organizational inefficiencies through absenteeism, reduced productivity, and increased health-related costs (Workers et al., 2023).

Scholarly debates have increasingly explored the role of individual and contextual resources in mitigating these pressures. Education, particularly higher and value-based education, has been identified as a protective factor that enhances cognitive resilience and psychological readiness among women (Blaikie et al., 2024; Meling et al., 2023). At the same time, family-related factors have been positioned within work-family interface frameworks as critical buffers against occupational stress. Family harmony, in particular, has been associated with lower stress levels and improved mental well-being by fostering emotional support and stability (Qamar et al., 2021). However, this perspective remains contested, as economic pressures, gender role expectations, and household inequalities often undermine the stabilizing function of the family, suggesting that its role may not be uniformly beneficial across contexts.

Despite growing attention to gender, mental health, and work-family dynamics, existing studies tend to assume a linear and universally positive role of family-related constructs in mediating workplace outcomes. Limited empirical evidence has critically examined whether family harmony consistently operates as an effective mediating mechanism, particularly within socio-cultural settings characterized by strong patriarchal norms and economic constraints. Addressing this gap, the present study examines the influence of workplace gender dynamics and character education on women's mental health, while reassessing the mediating role of family harmony within an HRM framework. As indicated by the conditional and potentially limited mediating function of family harmony, this study contributes to ongoing theoretical debates by challenging its assumed universality and repositioning it as a context-dependent construct in work-family and mental health models.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Gender Equality Theory and Hypotheses Development

Gender Equality Theory focuses on the principle that all individuals, regardless of gender, should have equal rights and opportunities in various aspects of life, such as education, employment, health, and participation in decision-making (Fisher & Ryan, 2021). This theory aims to eliminate discrimination based on sex and promote equality in every sector of social and economic life (Atari et al., 2023). In the world of work, this theory emphasizes the importance of providing equal opportunities for women to participate, develop, and contribute in the field of work without any restrictions (Ahl & Marlow, 2021). Key Concepts in Gender Equality Theory Equality of Opportunity, Elimination of Discrimination Based on Sex, Changes in Social Norms, Women's

Empowerment. Women's empowerment focuses on improving women's ability to access opportunities, control over resources, and decision-making in personal and professional life (Marchlewska et al., 2019). Gender equality in women aims to eliminate inequality caused by factors such as patriarchy, social norms that limit women's roles, and inequalities in education and employment.

H1. Character education has a positive influence on women's mental health.

H2. Gendered work environment has a positive influence on women's mental health

Family Harmony Scale as Mediator

The Family Harmony Scale is a measuring tool used to assess the level of harmony in a family. This scale typically includes various dimensions, such as communication within the family, distribution of responsibilities, conflict, emotional support between family members, and time management (Kavikondala et al., 2016). The purpose of the Family Harmony Scale is to identify the factors that contribute to stability and harmony in family relationships, as well as to measure how these factors affect the well-being of family members, especially in maintaining the relationship between married couples and parent-children (Danielsdóttir et al., 2024). In general, family harmony includes the presence of balance in roles, effective communication, stress management, and mutually beneficial social support between family members. When family harmony is achieved, it can reduce tension, stress, and conflict that can negatively impact emotional well-being and mental health (Linardon et al., 2024). Dimensions in the Family Harmony Scale include communication in the family, distribution of responsibilities, conflict and resolution, emotional support, and work-life balance.

Character education plays an important role in forming individuals with positive values, such as responsibility, honesty, cooperation, and emotional management (Hidayat et al., 2020). Character education can contribute to family harmony by forming healthy communication patterns, improving conflict resolution skills, and supporting each other among family members (Ortan et al., 2021). The Family Harmony Scale, with its five dimensions, is able to identify conflicts and their solutions and regulate the balance of personal and work life that can affect work productivity. Gender equality in the workplace environment is also very relevant in reducing family tensions (Reich-Stiebert et al., 2023). When women are empowered in the workplace and given equal opportunities for careers, it can reduce the burden of women's dual roles and improve well-being and emotional control (Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2024). Thus, the application of gender equality principles in the workplace can contribute to better management of family roles, which has an impact on improving family harmony and reducing divorce rates.

H3: Character education has a positive influence on the FHS-24 framework

H4: Gendered environment work has a positive influence on the FHS-24 framework

H5: FHS-24 framework has a positive influence on women's mental health

H6: FHS-24 framework has a mediation between character education on women's mental health

H7: FHS-24 framework has a mediation between gendered work environment on women's mental health.

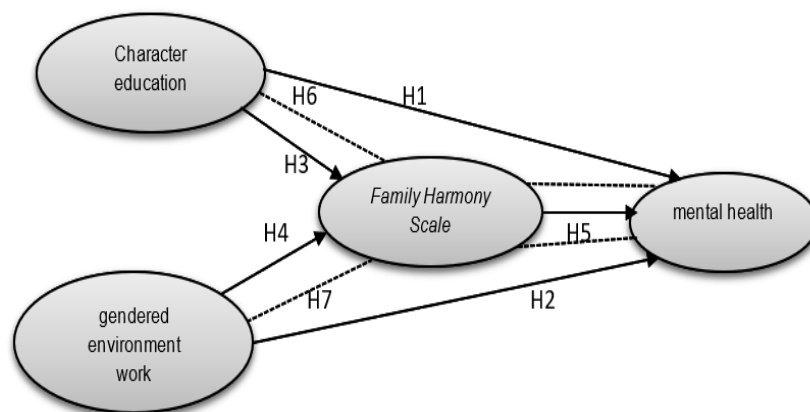


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts an associative research design within a mediation framework to examine the relationships among character education (CE), gendered environment work (GEW), mental health (MH), and family harmony (FHS). CE and GEW are specified as independent variables, MH as the dependent variable, and FHS as the mediating construct, as illustrated in Figure 1. The target population comprises 12,413,897 individuals in Banten Province, Indonesia in 2025. A sample of 180 married working women was determined using a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error (see Table 1 for clarification). Sample adequacy follows structural equation modeling (SEM) guidelines, which recommend 5–15 observations per indicator (Hu L.T. & M., 2009; Hair et al., 2021). With 36 indicators in the model, the sample size meets minimum estimation requirements. Data were collected between July and August 2025 through structured questionnaires distributed across the Banten region, ensuring accessibility to the target respondents.

Table 1. Respondent Description

Demographic record	Frequency	Percentage
High School/Vocational School	104	57 %
S1	40	23 %
S2	36	20 %
Age	Quantity	
>20	3	3 %
20-30	47	26 %
30-40	80	44 %
>40	50	27 %
Worked	Quantity	
3-5 tahun	74	41 %
5-10 tahun	91	50 %
>40 tahun	15	9 %

Source: Authors' Data 92025)

Measurement instruments were operationalized across all constructs using established dimensions. Character education includes emotional orientation, will orientation, trust orientation, habit orientation, and self-control. Gendered environment work captures variation in employment arrangements and working hours, differences in psychosocial exposures, differential selection out of work, and exit patterns. Mental health is assessed through depression symptoms, anxiety index, anxiety symptoms, and a general mental health index. Family harmony includes forbearance, conflict resolution, communication, family identity, and quality time. All variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with demographic characteristics such as age, education, and occupation included as control variables.

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS, following a two-stage analytical procedure to ensure reproducibility and robustness. The measurement model (outer model) was evaluated through indicator loadings, convergent validity using average variance extracted (AVE), discriminant validity, and internal consistency reliability assessed by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (Hair, 2019). Threshold criteria included AVE values above 0.50 and reliability coefficients exceeding 0.70, with values above 0.80 indicating strong internal consistency (Hamid & Anwar, 2019). The structural model (inner model) was subsequently assessed using path coefficients and significance testing through bootstrapping procedures to estimate both direct and indirect effects (Latan et al., 2023). This approach ensures stable parameter estimation and allows transparent replication of the mediation and main-effect relationships tested in the model.

RESULTS

This study uses the validity of the convergence of each construct size with its AVE. From the measurement model with indicator reflection, it is assessed based on the correlation between the item score/component score and the construct score calculated with SEM PLS. Convergent validity has a rule of thumb loading factor of >0.7 and an average variance extracted (AVE) of > 0.5 (Hair, 2019). The calculation can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2 Convergent Validity

Variable	Item	Outer loading	Rule
Character Education	CE1, CE2, CE3,CE4,CE5,CE6,CE7,CE8,CE9,CE10	0,664-0,901	AVE 0,630 CR 0,740 Cronbach α 0,934
Gendered Environment Work	GWE1,GWE2,GWE3, GWE4,GWE5,GWE6, GWE7,GWE8.	0,737- 0,838	AVE 0,606 CR 0,836 Cronbach α 0,907
Family Harmony Scale	FHS5,FHS6,FHS7, FHS8,FHS9,FHS10	0,781 -0,870	AVE 0,699 CR 0,792 Cronbach α 0,914
Mental Health	MH3,MH4,MH5,MH6, MH7,MH8	0,731- 0,831	AVE 0,627 CR 0,792 Cronbach α 0,991

Source: Adapted Smartpls 4 Statistics (2025)

All convergent validity and reliability scores are passing the threshold for further use (Hamid, R. S., & Anwar, 2019). After all constructs have been validated and are reliable, it is allowed to proceed to the next calculation. The validity of the discriminator is evaluated to determine the degree of difference between the empirical components and the arrangement of other structural components. In Table 3. From the results of the measurement test model, it is proven that there is no high correlation between the variables of discriminant validity. The results showed that the Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) ratio was less than 0.90.

Table 3. Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio

Constructs Allignment	CE	FHS	GWE
CE			
FHS	0,578		
GWE	0,208	0,275	
MH	0,236	0,292	0,275

Source: Adapted Smartpls 4 Output (2025)

The Fornell-Larcker Criterion method is used to evaluate the discriminant validity of a construct by comparing the AVE square root value of each construct with the correlation between constructs in the same column or row. The square root value of AVE (shown diagonally) of the construct is considered to have good discriminant validity (Hair, 2019). The result is indicated in Table 4.

Table 4. Fornell-Laker Criterion

Constructs	CE	FHS	GWE	MH
CE	0,794			
FHS	0,541	0,836		
GWE	0,195	0,255	0,778	
MH	0,215	0,265	0,260	0,792

Source: Smartpls 4 Adapted Output (2025)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is a measure of the model's predictive accuracy that represents the combined effect of exogenous variables on endogenous variables. R^2 denotes the proportion of variance in the endogenous construct that can be explained by all connected exogenous constructs. In SEM-PLS, the R^2 value is the main indicator to evaluate the strength of the structural model. We also provide the F-square, and Q-square scores as in Table 5.

Table 5. R-Square and Q² Value

Constructs/Measures	R Square	f-square	Q ²	Remarks
Family Harmony Scale	0,316	0,366	0,210	moderate
Mental Health	0,115	0,006	0,061	Weak
FHS. -> MH.	-	0,022	-	Weak
GWE. -> FHS.	-	0,034	-	Weak
GWE. -> MH.	-	0,042	-	Weak

Source: Adapted Smartpls 4 Output (2025)

The Adjusted R Square model for the Family Harmony Scale variable of 0.308, which indicates that the family harmony scale can be explained by character and gender education in the work environment, with a percentage of 30.8% and is in the moderate category. The R-squared value of the Mental Health variable is explained by the variables of character and gender education in the work environment of 0.100 or 10% in the weak category. Predictive Relevance (Q²) is a key indicator for evaluating the predictive capabilities of the SEM-PLS model. This metric was developed by Stone and Geisser to measure observations reconstructed by the model and its parameters. Effect Size (F) refers to the amount of contribution of each construct to the dependent variable is determined using the effect size (f^2). The value of f^2 is grouped into three categories: small (0.02), medium (0.15), and large (0.35). Effect size (f^2) is an important metric in SEM-PLS to measure the relative impact of predictive variables on endogenous variables. The results of the structural equation modeling in Table 6 indicated variation of finding, as discussed in the next section.

Table 6. Direct Hypothesis

Paths	Effect	t-value	p-value	Decision
CE -> MH.	0,084	0,922	0,356	H1 Rejected
GWE. -> MH.	0,200	2,517	0,012	H2 accepted
CE -> FHS.	0,511	8,565	0,000	H3 accepted
GWE. -> FHS.	0,155	2,468	0,014	H4 accepted
FHS. -> MH.	0,169	1,960	0,050	H5 Rejected
CE -> FHS. -> MH.	0,086	1,889	0,059	H6 Rejected
GWE. -> FHS. -> MH.	0,026	1,382	0,167	H7 Rejected

Source: Adapted Smartpls 4 Output (2025)

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine the relationship between character education and gender in the work environment to the mental health of working and homebound women and to determine whether the family harmony scale framework can mediate these relationships. In this study, Hypothesis 1 examines the relationship between character education and mental health without the effect of H1 was rejected. These results are consistent with research (Lise et al., 2024), mental health apart from education, other factors are more dominant, such as income and the number of children each family has (Ortan et al., 2021). It plays an important role in influencing Women's mental health as compared to Character education. A higher amount of income can reduce the level of stress associated with financial uncertainty (Bialowolski et al., 2021) (Dánielsdóttir et al., 2024). However, the large number of children can exacerbate psychological distress due to economic factors as the demands of responsibility for family needs increase (Fitch et al., 2011). According to (Acoba, 2024) Good social interaction will provide a low level of stress. However, according to the stress and coping theory of Lazarus and Folkem (1984), Individuals who have good coping skills, as taught through character education and a healthy work environment, can

reduce the impact of stress. Mental health begins with a profound event (Linardon et al., 2024), or the life challenges they face. In this case, while character education has the potential to increase mental resilience, more significant events in an individual's life such as household problems or stress at work can further affect their mental health directly.

Based on the results of the analysis of the second hypothesis it shows that the gender of the work environment on mental health has a significant effect. This is in line and has been proven by several studies (Rasool et al., 2021) (Guo et al., 2024). The mental health of working women who have a history of illness is susceptible to stress attacks and an impact on families (White et al., 2024). Indications of the length of time women and men work in the work environment are predicted to create social disparities in the work environment (Patwardhan et al., 2024). Gender balance in the work environment is very important to maintain. Although workers' mental health is sometimes less of a concern for companies.

Based on the results of Hypotheses 3 and 4, character education and work environment affect the Family Harmony Scale. The results of this analysis are in line with (Kjell & Diener, 2021), where social welfare and a good work environment interaction play a role in family harmony. According to (Brown et al., 2020) Character education between boys and girls is based on good behavior from the school environment. See also (Kes & Aydin Yildirim, 2020), which states that religious values play a good role in maintaining family harmony.

The balance of family harmony can be maintained by applying the theory of work-life balance. Greenhaus & Allen's (2011) theory, which motivates a work-life balance, is key to maintaining mental health and healthy family relationships (Landolfi et al., 2020). Their theory explains that individuals who can manage the demands of work well without sacrificing time for family will have a more harmonious family life (Goswami et al., 2025). Therefore, a supportive work environment, with flexibility and positive social interaction, contributes to family harmony.

Based on the results of the 5th hypothesis, the family harmony scale does not affect family harmony. This is because the scale of family harmony is still new, and there has not been any realization in the family harmony pattern system that should be carried out by the government to reduce the level of divorce. However, according to (Goswami et al., 2025) it is necessary to develop the concept of an antecedent of family work-life balance that has been implemented by the Italian state, where predictors of family work conflicts and family work enrichment work balance is improved (Xie et al., 2021). This can answer the dynamics of the work process and bring important changes in family harmony.

Based on the results of the 6th and 7th hypotheses, the results of indirect influences will answer the role of the mediation variable. The sixth hypothesis, the Family Harmony scale, is direct and not. The effect does not mediate between education and mental health, meaning that there is no mediating effect. However, in the seventh hypothesis, there is only a direct influence, that gender in the work environment affects mental health. This research is in line with (Sorensen et al., 2021), which states that gender inequality in the workplace can cause additional stress, affect psychological well-being, and worsen the mental health of employees, especially women. (Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2024) It found that gender discrimination can cause significant psychological distress, with women more susceptible to depression and anxiety due to more limited gender roles in the workplace. Social-Stress Theory from Pearlin et al. (1981) explains that gender differences in the workplace can add to the stress burden for individuals, especially women.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER STUDY

This research emphasizes the importance of creating an inclusive work environment and supporting work-life balance, as factors such as gender inequality in the workplace can worsen mental health and impact family harmony. Therefore, to improve family harmony, companies and governments need to develop policies that promote gender equality, work flexibility, and social support, as well as reduce stress caused by external factors such as economic problems and the number of children in the family. By creating a more supportive environment, both at work and at home, a more harmonious and prosperous family can be achieved. The existence of a Family Harmony Scale framework with complex indicators of patience, family communication, and family identity, as well as the ability to resolve conflicts, can strengthen family harmony even better. This

research contributes to the development of the concept of the Family Harmony Scale in Indonesia. The development and application of this concept in family policy can reduce social tensions and increase family harmony. Further research could also focus on other, more in-depth aspects, such as positive social interactions at home and their impact on an individual's mental health.

ETHICAL DISCLOSURE

The research process implemented written research ethics for each respondent who completed the questionnaire and safeguarded their personal data. This research also obtained ethics approval from Mathla'ul Anwar University, Banten, through Decree No. 101/TGS/LPPM-UNMA/X/2025.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

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