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## Marital Satisfaction and Father Involvement on Company X's Employees: The Role of Workplace Flexibility

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### Abstract

Father involvement has a positive impact on children's cognitive, emotional and social development. However, the level of this involvement is low in the Asian context, particularly in Indonesia, where traditional gender roles often reduce paternal involvement. The role of fathers in children's development is increasingly recognized, but there remains a research gap in understanding how factors such as marital satisfaction and workplace flexibility jointly influence fathers' involvement. This research aims to determine the moderating role of workplace flexibility on the relationship between marital satisfaction and father involvement with surveyed fathers who work at Company "X", have children aged 1-21, live with their children and their wife. This research was conducted to 123 respondents. Measurement tools used in the research include the Father Involvement Inventory (IFI), the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale, and the Workplace Flexibility Scale. Each measurement instrument has been tested for validity and reliability. The data analysis technique used is Moderation Process Analysis: Model 1 of Hayes (2013) using the SPSS Statistics program version 29. Based on the hypothesis testing results, there is a significant role of marital satisfaction on father involvement at 33%, but workplace flexibility does not moderate the relationship between marital satisfaction and father involvement. Demographic factors in this research also do not play a role in father involvement. These findings highlight the important role of marital satisfaction in promoting fathers' active participation, suggesting that improving marital relationships may be more effective than simply increasing workplace flexibility in encouraging fathers to become involved with their children. These results could also be interesting for exploring other factors likely to predict father involvement.

**Keywords:** father involvement, marital satisfaction, work flexibility

### Abstrak

Father involvement memberikan dampak positif terhadap perkembangan kognitif, emosional, dan sosial anak. Namun, tingkat keterlibatan ini rendah di konteks Asia, khususnya di Indonesia, di mana peran gender tradisional sering kali mengurangi father involvement. Father involvement dalam perkembangan anak semakin diakui, namun masih terdapat kesenjangan penelitian dalam memahami bagaimana faktor-faktor seperti marital satisfaction dan workplace flexibility secara bersama-sama mempengaruhi keterlibatan ayah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui peran moderasi workplace flexibility terhadap hubungan marital satisfaction dan father involvement pada ayah yang bekerja di Perusahaan "X", memiliki anak dengan rentang usia 1-21 tahun, tinggal bersama anak dan juga istri. Penelitian ini dilakukan kepada 123 responden. Alat ukur yang dipakai dalam penelitian diantaranya Inventory of Father Involvement (IFI), ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale, dan skala Workplace Flexibility. Setiap alat ukur sudah diuji validitas dan reliabilitas. Teknis analisis data yang digunakan adalah menggunakan analisis Moderation Process Analysis : Model 1 oleh Hayes (2013) dengan menggunakan bantuan program SPSS statistic version 29. Berdasarkan hasil uji hipotesis adanya peran yang signifikan dari marital satisfaction terhadap father involvement sebesar 33%, dan untuk workplace flexibility

*tidak memoderasi hubungan antara marital satisfaction dengan father involvement. Faktor demografi dalam penelitian ini juga tidak memberikan peran terhadap father involvement. Temuan ini menyoroti peran penting marital satisfaction dalam mendorong father involvement, dan menunjukkan bahwa meningkatkan marital satisfaction mungkin lebih efektif daripada sekadar meningkatkan workplace flexibility dalam mendorong ayah untuk terlibat dengan anak-anak mereka. Hasil ini juga menarik untuk mengeksplorasi faktor-faktor lain yang mungkin memprediksi father involvement.*

**Kata kunci:** father involvement, marital satisfaction, workplace flexibility

## Introduction

A man (father) is the guardian of his family, and is responsible for his subjects (HR Bukhari). A father holds accountability of his family, which consists of his wife and children. A father is obliged to provide a living, comfort, and warmth for his children. In the Qur'an, surah As-Shaffat 37: 102, the relationship between Prophet Ibrahim and Ismail who was 13 years old at that time is depicted as follows: "*And when he reached with him [the age of] exertion, he said, 'O my son, indeed I have seen in a dream that I [must] sacrifice you, so see what you think.' He said, 'O my father, do as you are commanded. You will find me, if Allāh wills, of the steadfast.'"* In the verse, Prophet Ibrahim is described to have a close, affectionate relationship and communicate openly with his son. Upon receiving a command from Allah, he directly communicated it and asked for his son's opinion. Prophet Ibrahim's role as a father made Ismail feel respected, loved, hence his self-esteem and responsibility grew (Hasri, 2020).

Father involvement is a multidimensional construct which encompasses affective, cognitive, ethical, and behavioral components that are observable, which includes indirect involvement such as supporting mother's role in parenting and providing the family (Hawkins & Palkovitz, in Gaby & Nuno, 2017). Father involvement in parenting has a positive impact on children cognitive, emotional, and social development (Allen & Daly, 2007). Father involvement will stimulate children's cognitive development and promote the growth of their executive function, which is the ability to plan, regulate oneself, solve problems, and pay attention (Diana, 2023). This indicates that father involvement in parenting is crucial to children development. Fathers who demonstrate high level of involvement take initiatives in building connections with their children, utilize every resources they have, including physical and cognitive affection, and exercise their emotional aspects to aid their children. Physical and cognitive elements are also involved when fathers engage with their children through touch and play (Andayani & Koentjoro, 2004).

Nonetheless, the level of father involvement in Asia is relatively low compared to mother involvement in parenting (Gaby & Nuno, 2017) since mothers are still expected to take care of their children and do household chores solely. Unfortunately, Indonesia is currently ranked third in the list of fatherless countries or countries that lack father involvement in parenting (Diana, 2023). A survey conducted by Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia (KPAI) in 2017 also revealed that father involvement in families is still low. The strong patriarchal culture here, in which males are portrayed as breadwinners and females may not work, causes parenting to be seen as mother's responsibility, making fathers less involved in and even withdrawn from it (Dannisworo, 2019).

As stated by Asy'ari and Ariyanto (2019), fathers who lack father involvement can be indicated by a low quality and quantity of communication with their children, which perhaps could be attributed to them spending more time working. According to Diana (2023), the impact of low father involvement in children includes obstruction in developing gender identity and sexual role, declining academic performance, psychosocial adjustment difficulties, low self control, low self-esteem, and the risk of developing psychological disfunctions (e.g. gadget addiction, gaming addiction, nicotine use, sexual deviance, mood disorder, and suicide).

The systematic Ecological Model of Father Involvement by Cabrera et al. (2014) explains that the relationship between father and family members and his social environment interrelates dynamically. In

broad terms, this model conceptualizes the dynamic interaction among various factors that predict father involvement, including father characteristics, family characteristics and behavior, father-mother relationship, and location characteristics father's work or work context. As explained by Doherty (in Sanjaya et al., 2022), factors that influence father involvement are father factors, mother factors, child factors, contextual factors (father's workplace), and coparental relationship factors. Mother factors refer to how mother's attitude towards father induces marital satisfaction, which then affect father's mind and strengthen his attraction to get involved in all familial aspects, including parenting (Sanjaya et al., 2020). Marital satisfaction is a subjective evaluation by husband or wife towards their marriage life, based on satisfaction, happiness, and delightful experience with their partner (Fowers & Olson, 1993). Marital satisfaction invokes a positive impact on father involvement; high levels of marital satisfaction in fathers allow higher involvement in parenting, which then increases the quality and frequency of involvement (Zhao, Liu, Li & Chen, 2017; McLeod & Tirmazi, 2017). This finding is supported by another study by Wahyuni (2020) which stated that marital satisfaction contributes to father involvement. The more satisfied fathers with their partners and marriages, the higher their involvement are.

In addition to marital satisfaction, contextual factors also play a significant role. This factor is an institutional factor, i.e. where the father works (Lamb, 2004). In particular, this factor includes workplace policy on providing flexible working hours or schedule. The longer fathers' working hours are, the less likely they are involved in parenting. On the contrary, the more flexible the fathers' workplace policy, the greater the father involvement is. As mentioned by Michael Lamb (2004), workplace flexibility gives way to father involvement. Workplace flexibility allows fathers to take parental leaves to take care of their children. Flexible culture in the workplace demonstrated by the leaders can also increase father involvement in the family. Leaders can act as a positive role model that showcase their father involvement by taking leave and do their role as parents. A study by Castillo et al (in Sanjaya et al., 2022) found out that workplace flexibility in the form of flexible working hours are related to how often fathers interact with their children in their daily routines. The similar finding was also stated by Kim (2018), that workplace flexibility facilitates work coordination and familial responsibility so fathers are involved in parenting. With flexible working schedule, fathers can take turns with their partners in parenting and maximize their time with their children (Mills & Täht, 2010).

Cabrera et al (2014) also considers how other changes outside the family system (e.g., workplace rules) can trigger changes in the parent-child system. This model explains the relationship between the characteristics of the father's work and his involvement with his children, starting with a study by Kohn (1969) in his research which showed a close relationship between the nature of the father's work, his social network and the amount and type of involvement with one's children (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Hook & Wolfe, 2012). Apart from this, the father's employment and the characteristics of the father's workplace (workplace flexibility) can also influence the time spent with his children (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001), so that this contributes to the dispositions of the father in the parenting process (Belsky, 1984).

Currently, research on parental leave and workplace flexibility has become a growing international topic of study. This consistently shows a strong association between fathers' time off from paid work to care for children and also an increase in the more equitable distribution of household chores and childcare between the sexes (e.g., Almqvist & Duvander, 2014; Doucet & McKay, 2020; However, in reality, in many countries, including Indonesia, the flexibility fathers have to take paid parental leave is not available to all parents, and public policies limit fathers' opportunities to take leave paid. Yet, research shows that parents often require more flexible working arrangements, both in terms of time and location, according to their childcare needs (e.g. Doucet et al., 2020; Qian & Fuller, 2020). This shows the need for flexibility in the workplace so that fathers can take care of their children. Consistent with de Laat and Gerhardt (2023), who argue that flexible working arrangements may provide additional opportunities to increase father involvement after the first months of parenthood. Fathers who have flexibility in time and place have greater opportunities to participate in the child's physical care and play, help with schoolwork, take the child to various activities, and ensure general supervision of the child (de Laat & Gerhardt, 2023).

This suggests that fathers' job flexibility can improve child-parent interactions (Kim, 2018) as well as father-mother interactions, due to satisfaction in the division of roles in the household (Petts et al., 2023), and further increased family interactions can increase marital satisfaction (Wang & Zhao, 2022; Simonelli et al., 2016; Medellu & Azzahra, 2022). However, to our knowledge, there is currently little research on how workplace flexibility may influence fathers' involvement at home (Lott, 2020; Thébaud & Pedulla, 2022), and how this affects marital satisfaction. To fill these gaps in research, this study focuses on the dynamic interaction between many factors predicting father involvement, and in particular explains how marital satisfaction can also interact with workplace flexibility to predict how involved fathers are with their children (Cabrera et al., 2014; Holmes & Huston, 2010). Based on previous statements, it can be implied that marital satisfaction are positively correlated with father involvement, but it depends on the fathers' workplace policy.

Therefore, this study aims to test two hypotheses, which are: 1) marital satisfaction has a role in father involvement, and 2) workplace flexibility strengthen the role of marital satisfaction towards father involvement.

## Methods

The population of this study are 123 fathers working in Company "X". Characteristics of the samples of this study are fathers with children aged 1-21 years old who live with their wives and children. Previous studies stated that children who are 1-21 of age still highly require father involvement in parenting to increase their wellbeing (Brotherson, Yamamoto, & Acock, 2003; Day & Padilla-Walker, 2009; Flouri et al., 2016), and fathers play an important role in optimal completion of children developmental tasks (Dien, 2019).

The sampling technique used in this study is purposive sampling, whereas fathers who are employees of Company "X" which suit the criteria are allowed to participate as respondents. Demographic data obtained by this study includes age, educational level, occupational level, length of marriage, the wives' occupation, the number of children, and children's age.

Majority of the participants (45.5%) are fathers aged 41-50 years old, with 11 to 20 years of marriage length (53.7%). The educational level is mostly high school graduates (42.3%), and their occupational level is predominantly staff (61%). Wives of the fathers in Company "X" are mostly housewives, yielding 69.9%. The number of children they have are mainly 2 children (48%). The frequency distribution of this sociodemographic data are portrayed in **Table 1**.

This study uses quantitative approach with correlational method to examine the role of marital satisfaction in father involvement which is moderated by workplace flexibility in employees of Company "X". The instrument used to measure father involvement is Inventory of Father Involvement, developed by Hawkins (2002) and adapted by Dannisworo (2019). This inventory measures father involvement by means of self-assessment, consisting of 26 items with "*How good a job you think you did as a father?*" as the prompt. The scale for this instrument comprises of 0 (very poor), 1 (poor), 2 (good), and 3 (excellent). Marital satisfaction in this study is measured by Enrich Marital Scale, which was developed by Fowers and Olson (1993) then adapted by Arimbi (2021). This scale consists of 15 statement items rated by Likert scale from 1 (very disagree) to 4 (very agree), with both favorable and unfavorable statements. Workplace flexibility is measured using 3 dimensions by Galinsky (2011), which examine flextime, flexplace, time off and culture flexibility, and only used 14 items in accordance with Company "X" and Indonesia's context. The workplace flexibility measurement adaptation was done through forward translation, back translation and expert review, involving experts throughout the process.

Validity testing was completed by using expert judgment, while construct validity was tested by using Pearson's Product Moment correlation. Based on the analyses, all items are deemed valid with values of .385 – .777 for flextime, flexplace and culture flexibility dimension, .285 – .729 for marital satisfaction and .284 – .776 for father involvement. Reliability testing through Cronbach's alpha analysis showed

values of .765 for workplace flexibility scale, .885 for marital satisfaction scale, and .914 for father involvement scale. Based on these analyses, it can be concluded that all instruments used in this study are of good quality.

Data analysis technique employed in this study is Moderation Process Analysis: Model 1 by Hayes (2013), conducted through SPSS statistic version 29. To examine the moderation model, father involvement is the dependent variable, marital satisfaction is the independent variable, and workplace flexibility is the moderating variable. Prior to the hypotheses testing, classical assumption tests were conducted first, which comprised of normality test, linearity test, multicollinearity test, and heteroscedasticity test. The result of these tests showed that the result of normality test after data transformation yields in .193 value of significance, which is greater than .05 and it could be implied that this study's data is normally distributed and fulfills the assumptions. Based on linearity test, there is a linear relation between marital satisfaction and father involvement, with deviation from linearity value of  $.91 > .05$ . In addition, there is a linear relation between workplace flexibility and father involvement with deviation from linearity value of  $.612 > .05$ . Based on these results, it could be concluded that the correlation between dependent, moderating, and independent variables of this study is linear. The multicollinearity test showed that the data did not show multicollinearity, with the tolerance value of  $.94 > .10$ ,  $VIF 1.06 < 10.00$  for every variable. This indicates that the assumption of multicollinearity was not met, thus there was no multicollinearity in the data. Based on the heteroscedasticity test, it was found that samples do not have heteroscedasticity because the distribution of plots in the scatterplot diagram are scattered above and below zero, not forming any particular pattern.

**Table 1.** Participant Demographics

Sociodemographic Data		N	Percentage
Age	23 -30 y.o.	13	10.6
	31- 40 y.o.	48	39
	41 - 50 y.o.	56	45.5
	>51 y.o.	6	4.9
Educational Level	High school	52	42.3
	Associate degree	21	17.1
	Bachelor's degree	46	37.4
	Master's degree	4	3.3
Occupational Level	Director	4	3.3
	General manager	5	4.1
	Manager	20	16.3
	Supervisor	19	15.4
	Staff	75	61.0
Marriage Length	2- 10 years	43	34.9
	11- 20 years	66	53.7
	21-30 years	13	10.6
	>30 years	1	.8
Wife's Occupation	Housewife	86	69.9
	Entrepreneur	3	2.4
	Private employee	28	22.8
	Public servant	6	4.9
Number of Children	1	32	26.0
	2	59	48.0
	3	26	21.1
	4	3	2.4
	6	2	1.6
	8	1	.8

## Results and Discussion

Statistical testing results as shown in **Table 2.** and **figure 1** indicate that there is a correlation between marital satisfaction between father involvement with  $\beta = .91$  ( $p$  value=  $.00 < \alpha .05$ ). Therefore, in hypothesis 1,  $H_0$  is rejected. The regression value of workplace flexibility towards father involvement is  $\beta = .14$  with significance of  $p= .19 > \alpha .05$ . The interaction between workplace flexibility – marital satisfaction (Int\_1) towards father involvement was found insignificant, with  $\beta = -.09$  and the value of significance  $p=.81 > \alpha .05$ . Thus, in hypothesis 2,  $H_0$  is accepted.

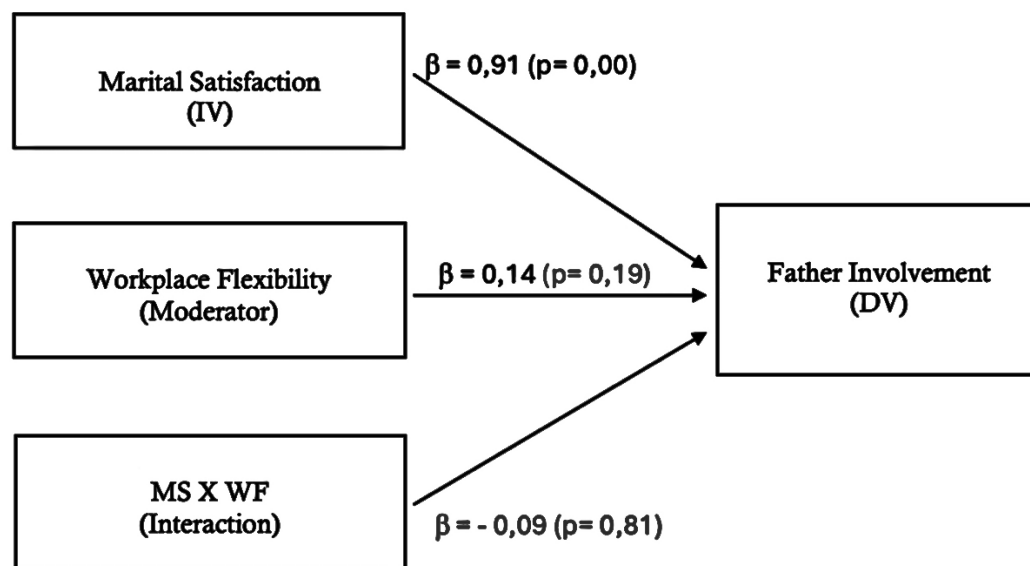
**Tabel 2.** Moderation Process Analysis model 1 Results

<i>Antecedent</i>	<i>Father Involvement</i>						<i>R</i>	<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>R<sup>2</sup> change</i>
	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>			
Marital Satisfaction	.91	.14	6.43	.00	.63	1.19	.57	.33	.00
Workplace Flexibility	.14	.11	1.32	.19	-.07	.36			
MS x WF	-.09	.39	-.24	.81	-.86	.67			
Age	.01	.01	.73	.47	-.01	.02			
Educational Level	-.03	.04	-.82	.42	-.10	.04			
Occupational Level	.06	.03	1.91	.06	.00	.13			
Marriage Length	.00	.01	-.25	.80	-.02	.02			
Number of Children	-.01	.03	-.27	.79	-.07	.05			
Constant	2.06	.32	6.47	.00	1.43	2.69			

Note:

N= 123, MS x WF: interaction between marital satisfaction and workplace flexibility

Covariate variables: age, educational level, occupational level, marriage length, and number of children



**Figure 1.** Moderation Model Results

Marital satisfaction has a significant positive role ( $\beta = .91$ ,  $p=.00$ ) on father involvement. This means, the higher the participants' marital satisfaction, the better their father involvement is. When participants feel happy and satisfied of their marriage, they are more likely to have good father involvement. This is coherent with many previous studies (Cummings et al, 2004; Lee & Doherty, 2007; Kwok, et al, 2013; Kwok & Li, 2015; Planalp & Rieker, 2016) which showed that marital satisfaction can increase father involvement in parenting. This is because fathers who feel satisfied with their marriage tend to not avoid



their roles as a parent. They will also be more likely to help take care of their children to ease their wives' burden. Fathers who feel satisfied with communication, understanding each other with their partner, good conflict resolution, good task delegation, sexual relationship, family and friendship, sharing beliefs and religious values with partner, spending time to do activities together, are more inclined to play their role in parenting well. This is also in line with a study by Wahyuni (2020), which stated that the more satisfied a father to his marriage, the higher his commitment in parenting. Father involvement can be shown by direct involvement with children, but can also be indirect such as giving emotional support to mothers in taking care of their children and providing financial aid.

In **Figure 1**, the value of  $\beta = -.09$  and significance  $p = .81 > \alpha .05$  showed that the interaction between workplace flexibility and marital satisfaction is insignificant and there is no negative effect towards father involvement. Workplace flexibility do not act as moderating variable in the correlation between marital satisfaction and father involvement. According to Galinsky et al. (2011), workplace flexibility in the form of flexible working hours can facilitate employees in allocating their time for work and personal life better. Workplace flexibility also gives fathers chance to be more involved in parenting. However, fathers who have flextime (flexible working schedule), flexplace (flexible workplace) and feel satisfied with their marriage do not necessarily interact with their children more often, if they do not allocate specific period in their spare time to get involved with their children. This is parallel with Kuo et al. (2018) who found that father's working hour is not a significant predictor of father involvement. Fathers who have flexibility in choosing their working hour and place which gives them more time at home can not be the sole predictor of father involvement in parenting. This aligns with a study by Dannisworo (2019) stating that the length of fathers' working hour can not significantly predict their involvement in parenting. As a result, even though a father spends most of his time working, he can still get involved with their children as long as he allocates his time to do so.

Fathers' ease to access time off and support they receive from their supervisors to solve their problems make individuals feel calmer to face their current conditions (Diego, 2023). However, those things are not necessarily the main factor that makes fathers more involved when children need urgent attention, whether when they get sick or go on a vacation together. This is adjacent to the Diego's (2023) statement that workplace flexibility only encourages fathers who have a traditional way of seeing gender roles to get involved in parenting. Based on the data in Table 1, fathers in Company "X" are predominantly gen X and Y (millennials), who according to Putra (2016) are generation born in years of technological development such as computer, cable tv, and internet. This generation has characteristics such as adaptability, good ability to adapt with changes, having open communication pattern, making them more open with cultural shift and changes. It is easier for them to gain informations on the importance of parenting to children through many platforms in internet. They are also able to accept current changes on parenting culture, making them shift from being traditional to more egalitarian fathers. Egalitarian fathers comprehend how workplace flexibility does not relate with father involvement level in pleasurable tasks (Diego, 2023). When the workplace flexibility is low, egalitarian fathers are more likely to get involved if compared to traditional fathers. This supports findings from Holmes et al. (2020) that work conditions are more important for traditional fathers' involvement compared to their egalitarian counterpart. As argued by Holmes et al. (2020), workplace flexibility is more needed by fathers who lack involvement with their children.

This study's limitation that can be a consideration for next studies is how this study is conducted to participants from the same company (Company "X" in Bandung), so newer studies should be conducted to wider population. This study also did not utilize the random sampling technique, making the generalizability limited and unrepresentative of fathers in general, so further studies are suggested to use random sampling in order to obtain higher generalizability of the study results.



## Conclusion

Marital satisfaction is correlated with father involvement in fathers who work in Company “X”. Nevertheless, workplace flexibility do not act as moderator in the correlation between marital satisfaction and father involvement. Covariates such as sociodemographics, which include age, occupational level, educational level, marriage length, and number of children do not also have significant role towards father involvement in fathers who work in Company “X”.

It is suggested to Company “X” to continue supporting fathers so they can play an optimal role in parenting, especially fathers who are originally uninvolved, by giving time flextime and flexspace; ease to access time off when there is a parenting duty; and support from leaders when employees have problems at home. The company can also conduct a special parenting seminar for fathers, which can cover topics such as effective communication with children, father’s role in supporting children’s mental health, or father involvement in children education. In addition, the fathers at company X can be provided with psychoeducation on father involvement, work flexibility, and marital satisfaction. Company “X” may also provide counseling service or psychological support for fathers who face challenges. This can help them manage stress, increase their parenting skills, and understand father’s role deeper.

Future studies can focus on other factors that affect involvement, such as father factors, children factors, and coparental relationship factors (Doherty in Sanjaya et al., 2022). Future researchers who are planning to examine workplace flexibility, marital satisfaction, and father involvement can inspect other companies with similar characteristics, so that there will be wider reach of population.

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