



UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

The Work and Family

Reconciliation of Single Parents

A Qualitative Meta-Analysis

Diana Martins Barbosa

Católica Porto Business School

April 2022



UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

The Work and Family Reconciliation of Single Parents A Qualitative Meta-Analysis

Final Work in Academic context presented
to Universidade Católica Portuguesa
in order to obtain the master's degree in Human Resource Management

by

Diana Martins Barbosa

under the guidance of
Professor Eva Oliveira

Católica Porto Business School

April 2022

Acknowledgements

The accomplishment of my thesis would not have been possible without the continuous support, commitment and wisdom of my supervisor, Professor Eva Oliveira, throughout the entire process.

I couldn't miss the opportunity to thank my friend Sara Silva, who always supported me. I wouldn't have made it through the two years of the master's without her friendship.

Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to my family, my boyfriend and my dog for their unconditional encouragement and support. They definitely contributed to a much more enjoyable learning path.

Abstract

The present paper aimed to understand how single parents reconcile their work and family life. With the increase of single-earner families, greater importance has been placed on how single parents succeed in working and taking care of their family obligations, what difficulties they experience and how these affect their well-being. Since the Covid-19 pandemic required many parents to work from home, increased attention was also paid to how they managed to work from home and look after their home-schooled children.

The methodological option used to address the research question was qualitative meta-analysis, as it provides an in-depth analysis and an unbiased interpretation of qualitative data collected from scientific studies. It was thus possible to identify, interpret and analyse the results of the research conducted on the topic between 2016 and 2021. An overall sample of 18 articles were selected according to the qualitative meta-analysis protocol. A content analysis of these articles was then performed. The findings indicate that most single parents struggle to reconcile their work and family responsibilities. Since most of them encounter difficulties to find a job because of their parental status, they accept a low-income job with non-standard working hours. Being a single-earner family, they face financial difficulties as they have to pay their bills on their own. The lack of family-friendly strategies and financial support add to the high level of stress and anxiety. Therefore, Human Resource Management may play an important role on reconciling single parents' work and family life through policies and practices that support and create better conditions ensuring single parent workers' well-being.

Keywords: Single Parents, Work, Family, Reconciliation, Family-Friendly Policies.

14.250 words

Resumo

O presente trabalho visava compreender como os pais solteiros conciliam a sua vida profissional e familiar. Com o aumento das famílias monoparentais, foi dada maior importância à forma como os pais solteiros conseguem trabalhar e cuidar das suas obrigações familiares, que dificuldades têm e de que forma é que estas afetam o seu bem-estar. Uma vez que a pandemia Covid-19 exigiu que muitos pais trabalhassem a partir de casa, foi também dada maior atenção à forma como conciliam este trabalho com os cuidados que têm de prestar aos seus filhos.

A opção metodológica utilizada para abordar a questão da investigação foi a meta-análise qualitativa, uma vez que proporciona uma análise aprofundada e uma interpretação imparcial dos dados qualitativos, recolhidos a partir de estudos científicos. Assim, foi possível identificar, interpretar e analisar os resultados da investigação realizada sobre o tema entre 2016 e 2021. Foi selecionada uma amostra global de 18 artigos de acordo com o protocolo da meta-análise qualitativa. Foi então realizada uma análise de conteúdo destes artigos. Os resultados indicam que a maioria dos pais solteiros lutam para conciliar as suas responsabilidades profissionais e familiares. Uma vez que a maioria deles apresenta dificuldades em encontrar um emprego devido ao seu estatuto parental faz com que eles aceitem um emprego de baixo rendimento com horários de trabalho atípicos. Sendo uma família com um só rendimento, enfrentam dificuldades financeiras, pois têm de pagar as suas contas por conta própria. A falta de estratégias favoráveis à família e de apoio financeiro contribuem para o elevado nível de stress e ansiedade. Por conseguinte, a gestão de recursos humanos pode desempenhar um papel importante na conciliação da vida profissional e familiar dos pais solteiros através de políticas e práticas que

apoiem e criem melhores condições para assegurar o bem-estar dos trabalhadores que são pais solteiros.

Palavras-chave: Pais solteiros, Trabalho, Família, Reconciliação, Políticas de recursos humanos

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	v
Abstract.....	vii
Resumo.....	ix
Table of Contents.....	xii
Index of Figures.....	xvi
Index of Tables.....	xviii
Introduction.....	20
1. Theoretical Framework.....	25
1.1. Exploratory Research.....	25
2. Methodology.....	30
2.1. Definition of the Research Question and Keywords.....	30
2.2. Definition of the Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.....	32
2.3. Selection of Articles for the Qualitative Meta-Analysis.....	32
2.4. Eliminated Titles.....	33
2.5. PRISMA Diagram.....	35
3. Content Analysis.....	36
4. Results.....	44
5. Discussion of the Results.....	53
5.1. Labour Force.....	53
5.1.1. Labour Force Participation.....	53
5.1.2. Temporary Employment Contract.....	54

5.1.3.	Employment Barrier	54
5.2.	Balancing Work and Family Life.....	55
5.2.1.	Work-Family Conflict.....	55
5.2.2.	Family-Work Conflict.....	56
5.2.3.	Work From Home	57
5.3.	Work-Family Balance.....	57
5.3.1.	Family-Friendly Working-Time Arrangements	59
5.4.	Financial Insecurity	60
5.4.1.	Low Income.....	60
5.4.2.	Income Insecurity	61
5.4.3.	Financial Help.....	62
5.5.	Parenthood Ideology	62
5.5.1.	Parenting Perspectives	62
5.5.2.	Patriarchal Family System	64
5.5.3.	Role Performance	64
5.6.	Mental Health.....	65
5.7.	Childcare	66
5.7.1.	Formal and Informal Childcare.....	66
5.8.	Social Support	68
5.8.1.	Formal and Informal Social Support.....	68
5.9.	Family-Friendly Strategies	69
6.	Conclusion.....	70
7.	References	75
8.	Appendix	85

Appendix A - Overview of the categorisation process of the articles selected
for Qualitative Meta-Analysis and presentation of outstanding extracts 85

Appendix B - Overview of journals in which the articles were published.... 114

Index of Figures

Figure 1 : Representation of the categories and subcategories developed for the Qualitative Meta-Analysis.....	52
---	----

Index of Tables

Table 1: Number of articles found on EBSCO Discovery Service.....	33
Table 2: Determination of categories and subcategories of the articles selected for the Qualitative Meta-Analysis.....	37
Table 3: Gender representation of the single parents included in the articles selected for the Qualitative Meta-Analysis.....	44
Table 4: Representation of the single parents included in the articles selected for the Qualitative Meta-Analysis.....	46
Table 5: Overview of the categorisation process of the articles selected for Qualitative Meta-Analysis and presentation of outstanding extracts.....	47

Introduction

Over the last years, work-life balance has gained interest and has been widely employed. In fact, an individual who is unable to reconcile their personal and professional responsibilities can suffer from a reduction of their overall well-being and productivity (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). Although the concept is widely studied, there seems to be no consensus on its definition. Whereas Marks (1977) defines work-life balance as an individual's tendency to fully engage in both their personal and professional commitments, Greenhaus et al. (2003) believe that work-life balance is reached when they can devote equal effort to their different responsibilities. Alternatively, Byrne (2005) characterises work-life balance as the fulfilment of an individual when they have full control over their working responsibilities. Given the many definitions, we may consider that work-life balance broadly relates to decisions made by employees to prioritise their professional, personal, and family commitments considering their personal and environmental resources (Munn, 2013).

There are multiple factors that influence an employee's decision to prioritise their personal and professional responsibilities. Munn (2013) identifies three overall factors including individuals, organisations, and the government. In fact, employees' choices in terms of work-life balance are influenced by the development of family-friendly policies by the government and by the

willingness of the organisation they work for to implement work-life initiatives (Munn, 2013). Reaching work-life balance seems to be beneficial for employees because it plays a key role in their health and well-being. Indeed, according to Grawitch et al. (2006) and Parkes & Langford (2008), an employee who is able to successfully balance their personal and professional life will be less stressed, more involved and feel more fulfilled at work, thus contributing to enhanced work performance and a lower turnover rate. Yet, employees are being asked to work more and more hours, depriving them from spending time with their families (Parkes & Langford, 2008). Therefore, an increasing number of companies have been more aware regarding work-life balance and have implemented family-friendly strategies (Parkes & Langford, 2008).

Family-friendly strategies aim to promote their employees' well-being, improve their ability to attract and retain their employees, and ensure the increase of their competitiveness (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Munn, 2013; Kalysh et al., 2016). For instance, many countries have adopted flexible or part-time working hours, especially with the introduction of women in the labour market (Fagan et al., 2012). Nevertheless, women still find it difficult to achieve work-life balance compared to men, as they are the ones who continue to take care of the family, thus leading to the existence of a gender gap (Fagan et al., 2012). Furthermore, although they benefit from flexible working hours, it may still not fit their family schedule (Fagan et al., 2012). Female employees can also benefit from maternity leave, but paternity leave is less often offered to male employees as it is often perceived as culturally unacceptable (Fagan et al., 2012). In fact, a low percentage of fathers have requested paternity leave (Wall, 2014) because not all countries in Europe apply the same duration of parental leave and do not promote them equally because of their cultural beliefs (Moss & Deven, 2020). This reinforces the idea that women are held responsible for the family (Fagan et al., 2012), because family-friendly initiatives seem to be mostly

beneficial for women even though they were designed for both men and women. In fact, managers still hold on to the common belief that women are in charge of the family sphere, while men focus on the work domain (Vandello et al., 2013). Family-friendly strategies are not necessarily useful for every employee, as not everyone needs help in balancing their personal and professional life (Fagan et al., 2012). Besides, companies take fewer work-life balance initiatives as it raises their expenses (Munn, 2013).

Working from home seems to be a cheap alternative for companies to promote work-life balance initiative. It is intended to improve employees' productivity, give them more flexibility and reduce the time spent on the road (Sullivan & Smithson, 2007). Nevertheless, it can be even more stressful for employees, especially when they have to do it for an extended time frame, as their home usually doesn't offer the same working conditions as their office (Sullivan & Smithson, 2007). In addition, they have to work and look after their children simultaneously (Dex, 2001; Spinelli et al., 2020). However, it seems that men are more willing to work from home compared to women, because they are less likely to be disturbed (Sullivan & Smithson, 2007).

Work-life balance is even more important for single parents who feel overwhelmed given that they have to raise a family and carry out household tasks by themselves (Jacobs & Gerson, 2001; Hilton & Kopera-Frye, 2006; Parkes & Langford, 2008). Nonetheless, they remain reluctant to request a decrease of their working hours as they fear that they could potentially be perceived by their employer as less engaged at work and less involved with their colleagues and superiors (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). These are the reasons why they could eventually be denied a salary increase and promotion in the future (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). In addition to the increase of the working hours, the fact that not every employee benefits from flexible working hours seems to make it even more difficult for parents, especially single parents (Tausig & Fenwick, 2001). In fact,

considering that children require a lot of care and attention, it is difficult for employees to successfully manage work-life balance (Tausig & Fenwick, 2001). This leads to an increase of their level of stress (Tausig & Fenwick, 2001).

Given that single parents face difficulties in maintaining a work-life balance, this paper aims to answer the following research question: How do single parents reconcile their work and family life? It will allow us to gain a better understanding of the difficulties single parents have been confronted with, but it will also help us analyse how these difficulties impact their well-being and whether specific family-friendly policies have been implemented to date to support them.

1. Theoretical Framework

1.1. Exploratory Research

The end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century marked changes in both work and parenting responsibilities (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). With the introduction of mainly middle class and poor women in the labour market and the obtainment of qualification diplomas, women could no longer stay at home to carry out domestic tasks and look after their children (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). The most prevalent underlying factor which influenced women's decision to start working were the economic necessity (Rosenfeld, 1965). As a matter of fact, a study conducted by Rosenfeld (1965) to analyse the reasons for which married women took jobs, found out that 319 out of 734 women who had children up to the age of six decided to work due to financial needs. As a result, families where the father used to be the only one earning a salary were replaced by dual-earner families (Bakker & Karsten, 2013). Since both parents have a paid job and spend most of their time outside of the house, they are obliged to take care of their children and domestic duties after work (Bakker & Karsten, 2013). This leads to an increase of their working hours, pressure and complexity when trying to organize their schedules (Bakker & Karsten, 2013), although according to Barnett & Hyde (2001), there is still a disparity between the number of domestic duties performed by men and women.

Single parents experience even greater conflict compared to married parents when trying to balance their work and family commitments (Byron, 2005). In fact, single parents don't have a partner with whom they can arrange their schedules and share parenting responsibilities (Minnotte, 2012). For instance, according to Hilton & Koperafrye (2007), following a divorce, both fathers and mothers have to raise a family and carry out household tasks without their partner's help. In addition, they incur a

loss of income, although as pointed out by Hilton & Kopera-Frye (2006), women generally experience greater financial difficulties, since the pay gap between men and women still exists. As a consequence, single mothers struggle to find affordable childcare (Hilton & Kopera-Frye, 2006). They often move to a less attractive home to pay less rent, or they decide to change or keep several jobs (Hilton & Kopera-Frye, 2006). For those reasons, some single mothers end up relying on their parents for financial and emotional support (Hilton & Kopera-Frye, 2006).

The number of single parent families has increased over the last years. While in 1994, Europe accounted 18.7% of births outside marriage, in 2000 there were already 25.4% and more recently in 2019, Europe reached 42.7% (Eurostat, 2020). The children stay mostly with their mother, either because of the death of one of the parents or births out of marriage, but mostly because their parents decide to divorce (Glick, 1979). According to Hilton & Kopera-Frye (2006), a single parent's personal, family and professional roles become confusing after a divorce. In fact, as discussed, single mothers often have financial difficulties and therefore feel the pressure to find another job or increase their working hours, thus leaving them with fewer hours to spend with their family (Hilton & Kopera-Frye, 2006). Single fathers also require more flexibility for parenting responsibilities, however, they do not usually get much understanding from their employer, as they are more used to single mothers requiring work arrangements (Hilton & Kopera-Frye, 2006). This leads both single mothers and fathers experiencing lower role satisfaction and even depression (Hilton & Kopera-Frye, 2006).

There are currently two main types of arrangements that single parents can make (Smyth, 2017); children may either live with one parent and keep in touch with the other parent who doesn't live in the same household, or children may live with both parents alternately, which in this case parents divide their responsibilities equally.

According to Minnotte (2012), three variables determine a single parent's ability to balance their work and family commitments:

- (1) Gender: In fact, single fathers normally don't have as many financial difficulties as single mothers, because they have a higher income (Bianchi et al., 1999; Hilton & Kopera-Frye, 2006). For instance, if they want to reduce their working hours to spend more time looking after their family, they will struggle less than single mothers.
- (2) Control over working hours: According to Schieman & Glavin (2008) and Bakker & Karsten (2013), single parents who have flexible working hours experience less difficulties when trying to find time to take care of the family or any emergency that may occur.
- (3) Number of other adults in the household: While married parents can usually arrange their schedule and share parenting responsibilities, as stated by Minnotte (2012), single parents without an adult in their household (e.g. a family member) have to take care of everything by themselves.

Therefore, it is important for individuals to manage their personal and professional obligations effectively as it affects their well-being and performance. Previous research suggest that work-life balance lowers their level of stress and desire to leave the company they work for, and has also a positive impact on their engagement and productivity at work (Bloom & Van Reenen, 2006; Dupré & Day, 2007; Giardini & Kabst, 2008). However, as stated in a study conducted by Adame-Sánchez et al. (2016), some companies only adopt work-life balance policies if these may for instance increase the company's performance. Moreover, although some parents may benefit from reduced working hours, they still decide to work full time out of fear of getting into trouble with their superiors or losing their job (Hochschild, 1997). As mentioned by the author, while it used to be considered normal if a woman didn't have a job in the past, it is nowadays shocking when she doesn't have one.

As soon as the whole world became aware of Covid-19 and its threat, many countries affected by the pandemic stopped all social and economic activities for a certain period of time (Bonacini et al., 2021). This situation caused huge disruptions

and the closure of many companies, which resulted in the loss of job for many people (Bonacini et al., 2021). However, others who had administrative jobs were eventually required to work from home so that the business could remain operational (Bonacini et al., 2021). It has been the only way to continue working and minimise the spread of the virus (Kaushik & Neha, 2020; Bonacini et al., 2021). Since there is still no information on the duration of the pandemic, working from home could become a new common way of working (Bartik et al., 2020; Bonacini et al., 2021).

Although working from home should allow people to gain time to combine work with their private life, previous research confirmed its negative impact, affecting not only companies, but also employees (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020). In fact, limiting social interaction with colleagues and staying isolated can reduce employees' productivity, push them to work for too many hours and harm their health (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020). Furthermore, according to Kaushik & Neha (2020), employees experience greater difficulties to reconcile their personal and professional commitments, but especially now given the current pandemic, their personal life needs as much attention as their professional life.

Due to the lockdown, as stated by Tremblay (2020), essential services such as childcares and schools were closed in March 2020. As a consequence, many parents have been working from home and taking care of their children (Tremblay, 2020), which became problematic. In fact, although the pandemic allowed families to spend more time together, it has been very difficult for parents, because they were asked to reconcile their work and family life more than ever before (Spinelli et al., 2020). Many parents have perceived this situation by far as the biggest disadvantage (Tremblay, 2020), given that they experienced stress and anxiety (Spinelli et al., 2020). This situation is even worse for single-earner families, because given the circumstances, they have been obliged to reduce their paid working hours to take care of their children (Letablier, 2011). However, these families are already known to be more at risk of poverty and social insecurity (Letablier, 2011). Indeed, single mothers are twice as likely to have financial difficulties compared to married mothers (Misra et al., 2012).

Therefore, as stated by Hertz et al. (2021), single parents have experienced an increase of their level of stress and a decrease of their satisfaction when trying to manage their personal and professional obligations.

As previously outlined, single parents find it difficult to manage their work and family life effectively and, given their financial strain, they cannot reduce their working hours to take care of their children. Consequently, this paper aims to study the following: "How do single parents reconcile their work and family life?". It will allow us to gain a better understanding of the difficulties single parents encounter when they try to reconcile their personal and professional commitments, to analyse how these impact their well-being and explore whether specific family-friendly policies have been implemented to date to support them.

2. Methodology

The main purpose of this study was to synthesise how single parents reconcile their work and family responsibilities, what difficulties they encounter and whether there are family-friendly to date which support them. The selected method which was used to answer the research question is Qualitative Meta-Analysis. This well-defined method aims to synthesise large amounts of information while allowing an in-depth analysis and an impartial interpretation of qualitative data collected from published studies (Milewski et al., 2005; Sampaio & Mancini, 2007). Thus, as Sampaio & Mancini (2007) assert, this particular method helps to clarify inconsistencies or contradictions in the literature and highlight gaps in order to possibly suggest new approaches or introduce new problematics to be studied. It also aims to suggest alternative family-friendly policies that could potentially derive from the results obtained and that could be put into practice in a real-life context (Sampaio & Mancini, 2007). The objective of this method, however, was not to develop new empirical knowledge.

2.1. Definition of the Research Question and Keywords

Qualitative Meta-Analysis requires the construction of a sample according to a number of procedures, which are described under the label of the Prisma protocol. This protocol not only functions as a quality assurance mechanism, but also clarifies the process of selecting the information collected and ensures its reliability and quality. The first step in the protocol is the definition of the research question, which in this case is "How do single parents reconcile their work and family life?", and the subsequent decision on the search, gathering and selection of articles in English on the EBSCO Discovery Service database.

Furthermore, the search required the definition of well-defined keywords and concepts in order to collect only relevant articles in line with the research question:

Single parents' Work-life/family balance or conflict working from home

("Work Life Balance" OR "Work Family Balance" OR "Work Life Conflict" OR "Work Family Conflict") AND ("Single Parent*" OR "Single Mother" OR "Single Father" OR "Monoparental Famil*" OR "Lone Parent*" OR "Lone Mother" OR "Lone Father") AND ("Work from Home" OR "Remote Work*" OR "Mobile Work*")

Single parents' Work-life/family balance or conflict

("Work Life Balance" OR "Work Family Balance" OR "Work Life Conflict" OR "Work Family Conflict") AND ("Single Parent*" OR "Single Mother" OR "Single Father" OR "Monoparental Famil*" OR "Lone Parent*" OR "Lone Mother" OR "Lone Father")

Single parents' Family-friendly policies to manage work/life and family

("HR Polic*" OR "Human Resources Polic*" OR "HR Practic*" OR "Human Resources Polic*" OR "Family-friendly Polic*" OR "Family-friendly Practic*") AND ("Single Parent*" OR "Single Mother" OR "Single Father" OR "Monoparental Famil*" OR "Lone Parent*" OR "Lone Mother" OR "Lone Father") AND ("Work Life Balance" OR "Work Family Balance" OR "Work Life Conflict" OR "Work Family Conflict")

2.2. Definition of the Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

After selecting the database and defining the keywords, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were determined. In fact, these are important as they select only relevant articles that address the research question, thus allowing to build a sample while clarifying the selection process. For the purpose of this study, only peer-reviewed articles in English published between January 2015 and December 2021 were considered in order to identify only the most recent studies regarding single parents' work and family reconciliation, as not only the number of single parents has increased in recent years, but the parenting roles have evolved and family-friendly policies have altered. Furthermore, only articles regarding single parents' work and family reconciliation in Europe were analysed, as the European Union has well-defined family-friendly policies. To ensure the quality of the study, non-peer-reviewed articles were excluded, as well as articles dealing with the work-life balance of students, parents with a partner or single parents living with an adult in the same household.

2.3. Selection of Articles for the Qualitative Meta-Analysis

On 21st February 2022, the research was carried out on EBSCO Discovery Service using the three research equations listed above with the defined keywords and concepts. As a result, 12.140 articles were generated. In order to select relevant articles answering the research question, only peer-reviewed articles in English published from January 2015 to December 2021 about single parents' work and family reconciliation in Europe were considered. This reduced the number of articles to 196 as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of articles found on EBSCO Discovery Service

Research equations	Number of articles
("Work Life Balance" OR "Work Family Balance" OR "Work Life Conflict" OR "Work Family Conflict") AND ("Single Parent*" OR "Single Mother" OR "Single Father" OR "Monoparental Famil*" OR "Lone Parent*" OR "Lone Mother" OR "Lone Father") AND ("Work from Home" OR "Remote Work*" OR "Mobile Work*")	44
("Work Life Balance" OR "Work Family Balance" OR "Work Life Conflict" OR "Work Family Conflict") AND ("Single Parent*" OR "Single Mother" OR "Single Father" OR "Monoparental Famil*" OR "Lone Parent*" OR "Lone Mother" OR "Lone Father")	138
("HR Polic*" OR "Human Resources Polic*" OR "HR Practic*" OR "Human Resources Polic*" OR "Family-friendly Polic*" OR "Family-friendly Practic*") AND ("Single Parent*" OR "Single Mother" OR "Single Father" OR "Monoparental Famil*" OR "Lone Parent*" OR "Lone Mother" OR "Lone Father") AND ("Work Life Balance" OR "Work Family Balance" OR "Work Life Conflict" OR "Work Family Conflict")	14
Total	196

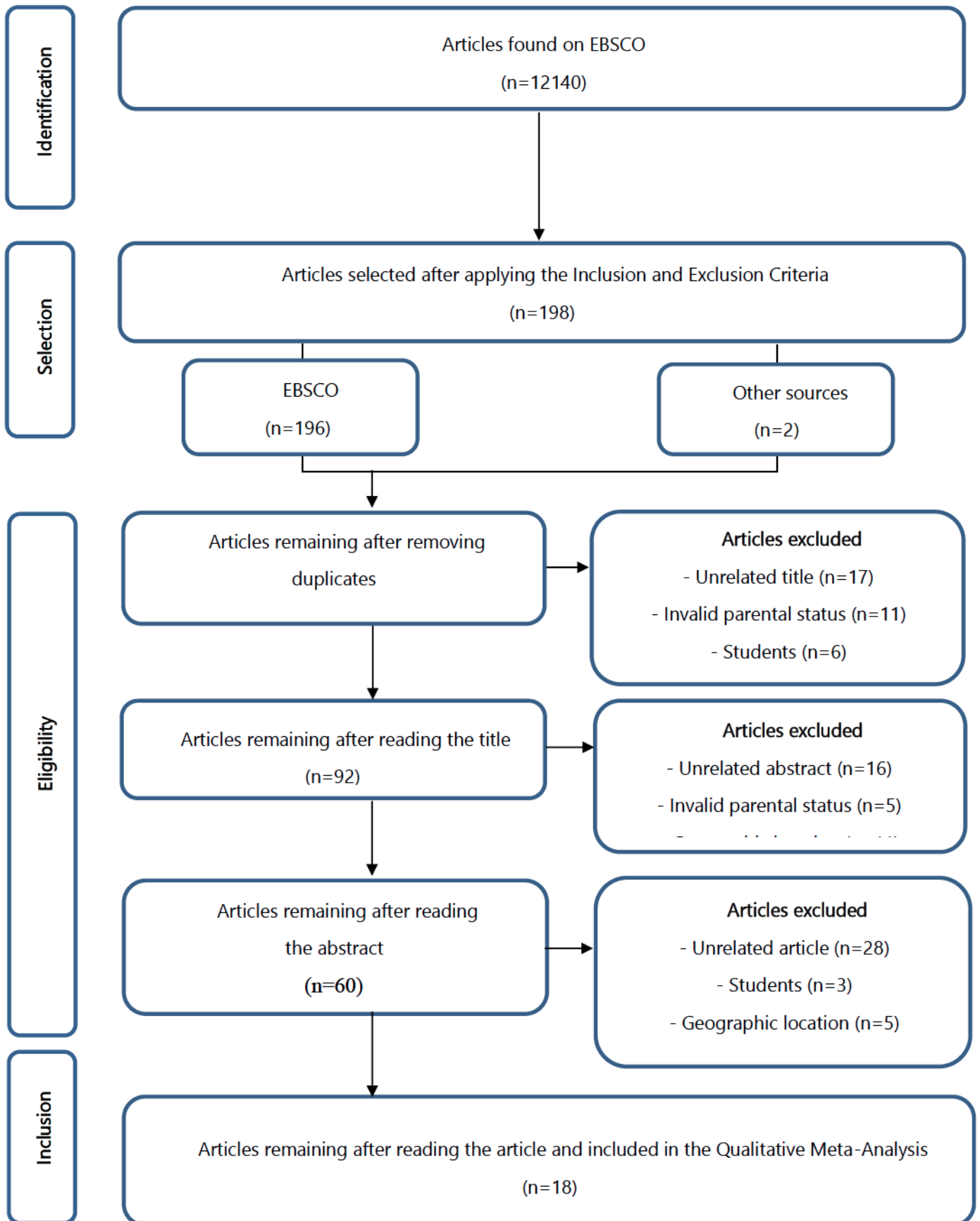
Two more articles which seemed to be relevant for the study were added to the 196 articles from EBSCO, thus leading to 198 articles. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 52 duplicates were removed, thus leaving us with 146 articles.

2.4. Eliminated Titles

After eliminating duplicates, the final steps of the PRISMA protocol were the exclusion of articles based on the title, then based on the abstract and finally based on the reading of the article. The exclusion of each article had to be justified consistently.

An Excel table was therefore created to record each article read and the reason why it was selected or excluded. Out of the 146 articles, 54 articles were excluded as 17 titles were unrelated to the research topic, 11 articles were not related to single parent status, 6 articles were about studying single parents and 20 articles were not conducted in Europe as intended for this paper. The remaining 92 articles were then analysed on the basis of the abstract to see if they were suitable for the study. In fact, 32 articles were excluded as 16 were unrelated to the research topic, 5 articles were not about single parents and 11 articles had not been conducted in Europe, giving a total of 60 remaining articles. The final step was to analyse articles based on the reading of the article. Out of the 60 articles, 28 articles were excluded because they were unrelated to the research topic, 3 articles were about single parents who were a student, 5 articles were not conducted in Europe and 6 articles were systematic reviews, thus leading to a total number of 18 articles. These remaining articles were studied in depth, evaluating their relevance in answering the research question. This ultimately resulted in the construction of the PRISMA diagram (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) which summarised the protocol. It clarified how the sample was constructed based on the selection criteria and ensured the quality of the Qualitative Meta-Analysis.

2.5. PRISMA Diagram



3. Content Analysis

The objective of this paper was to answer the research question "How do single parents reconcile their work and family life? For this purpose, the method chosen was Qualitative Meta-Analysis to synthesise and analyse a total of 18 articles in depth. This involved the use of content analysis, which has three defined phases: 1) pre-analysis, 2) exploration of the material and 3) treatment of the results (Silva et al., 2017). The first phase focused on gathering the articles and ensuring that they were of high relevance for the research objectives, in order to then analyse and systemise the findings. The second phase involved exploring, coding the statements, and establishing categories and sub-categories for the analysis, while ensuring that each statement fell into only one category or sub-category. The final phase of the content analysis consisted of the processing of the results, in which the statements were thoroughly presented and critically analysed (Negura, 2006; Silva et al., 2017). Thus, table 2 provides a summary of the categorisation process that was carried out in order to perform the content analysis.

Table 2: Determination of categories and subcategories of the articles selected for the Qualitative Meta-Analysis

Category	Subcategory	Articles
Labour Force	Labour Force Participation	The Long-Term Costs of Family Trajectories: Women's Later-Life Employment and Earnings Across Europe
	Temporary Employment Contract	Work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts among employed single parents in Germany.
	Employment Barrier	Types of work-related behavior and experiences and stress coping strategies among single mothers and mothers in relationships differentiating role of work satisfaction.
Family-Friendly Time Arrangements	Working-	Mental health among single mothers in Cyprus: a cross-sectional descriptive correlational study
		Association of social support and socio-demographic characteristics with poor self-rated health and depressive symptomatology among single mothers in Cyprus: a descriptive cross-sectional study
		Work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts among employed single parents in Germany.
		Combining career and care-giving: The impact of family-friendly policies on the well-being of working mothers in the United Kingdom.
		Self-reported Health among Lone Mothers in Switzerland: Do Employment and Education Matter?
		Between Money and Love: Work-family Conflict Among Swedish Low-income Single Mothers.
		Single Mothers' Perspectives on the Combination of Motherhood and Work.

		A work-life conflict perspective on telework
		Between Money and Love: Work-family Conflict Among Swedish Low-income Single Mothers.
Balancing Work and Family Life	Work-Family Conflict	The parenting and economising practices of lone parents: Policy and evidence
		Work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts among employed single parents in Germany.
		Types of work-related behavior and experiences and stress coping strategies among single mothers and mothers in relationships differentiating role of work satisfaction.
		The Reshaping of Daily Time during the COVID-19 Pandemic/ Lone Parent's Work-Family Articulation in a Low-Intensity Lockdown.
		Nonstandard Work Hours and Single Versus Coupled Mothers' Work-to-Family Conflict
	Family-work conflict	Work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts among employed single parents in Germany.
		Work-family conflict: comparing the experiences of Turkish and native Belgian women
		A work-life conflict perspective on telework
		The Reshaping of Daily Time during the COVID-19 Pandemic/ Lone Parent's Work-Family Articulation in a Low-Intensity Lockdown.
	Work From Home	The Reshaping of Daily Time during the COVID-19 Pandemic/ Lone Parent's Work-Family Articulation in a Low-Intensity Lockdown.

	Gender differences in unpaid care work and psychological distress in the UK Covid-19 lockdown.
Work-Family Balance	The parenting and economising practices of lone parents: Policy and evidence
	Work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts among employed single parents in Germany.
	Work-family conflict: comparing the experiences of Turkish and native Belgian women
	Types of work-related behavior and experiences and stress coping strategies among single mothers and mothers in relationships differentiating role of work satisfaction.
	The Reshaping of Daily Time during the COVID-19 Pandemic/ Lone Parent's Work-Family Articulation in a Low-Intensity Lockdown.
Family-Friendly Working-Time Arrangements	Mental health among single mothers in Cyprus: a cross-sectional descriptive correlational study
	Association of social support and socio-demographic characteristics with poor self-rated health and depressive symptomatology among single mothers in Cyprus: a descriptive cross-sectional study
	Work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts among employed single parents in Germany.
	Combining career and care-giving: The impact of family-friendly policies on the well-being of working mothers in the United Kingdom.

		Self-reported Health among Lone Mothers in Switzerland: Do Employment and Education Matter?
		Between Money and Love: Work-family Conflict Among Swedish Low-income Single Mothers.
		Single Mothers' Perspectives on the Combination of Motherhood and Work.
		A work-life conflict perspective on telework
		Between Money and Love: Work-family Conflict Among Swedish Low-income Single Mothers.
Financial Insecurity	Low Income	The parenting and economising practices of lone parents: Policy and evidence
		Combining career and care-giving: The impact of family-friendly policies on the well-being of working mothers in the United Kingdom.
		Mothering alone: cross-national comparisons of later-lifedisability and health among women who were singlemothers
		Between Money and Love: Work-family Conflict Among Swedish Low-income Single Mothers.
		Mental health among single mothers in Cyprus: a cross-sectional descriptive correlational study
	Income Insecurity	The Reshaping of Daily Time during the COVID-19 Pandemic/ Lone Parent's Work-Family Articulation in a Low-Intensity Lockdown.
		Between Money and Love: Work-family Conflict Among Swedish Low-income Single Mothers.

	Poverty Risk	Gender differences in unpaid care work and psychological distress in the UK Covid-19 lockdown.
		The Diminishing Power of One? Welfare State Retrenchment and Rising Poverty of Single-Adult Households in Sweden 1988–2011
	Financial Help	The parenting and economising practices of lone parents: Policy and evidence
		The Diminishing Power of One? Welfare State Retrenchment and Rising Poverty of Single-Adult Households in Sweden 1988–2011
		Mental health among single mothers in Cyprus: a cross-sectional descriptive correlational study
Parenthood ideology	Parenting Perspectives	Single Mothers' Perspectives on the Combination of Motherhood and Work.
	Patriarchal Family System	Between Money and Love: Work-family Conflict Among Swedish Low-income Single Mothers.
		Work–family conflict: comparing the experiences of Turkish and native Belgian women
	Role Performance	Single Mothers' Perspectives on the Combination of Motherhood and Work.
		Between Money and Love: Work-family Conflict Among Swedish Low-income Single Mothers.
Mental health		Mental health among single mothers in Cyprus: a cross-sectional descriptive correlational study
		Work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts among employed single parents in Germany.
		Association of social support and socio-demographic characteristics with poor self-

		<p>rated health and depressive symptomatology among single mothers in Cyprus: a descriptive cross-sectional study</p> <hr/> <p>Self-reported Health among Lone Mothers in Switzerland: Do Employment and Education Matter?</p> <hr/> <p>Mothering alone: cross-national comparisons of later-lifedisability and health among women who were singlemothers</p> <hr/> <p>Family and organization roles in disaster risk reduction: Burnout reduction on workers</p> <hr/> <p>Single Mothers' Perspectives on the Combination of Motherhood and Work.</p>
Childcare	Formal and Informal Childcare	<p>The Long-Term Costs of Family Trajectories: Women's Later-Life Employment and Earnings Across Europe</p> <hr/> <p>Work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts among employed single parents in Germany.</p> <hr/> <p>Between Money and Love: Work-family Conflict Among Swedish Low-income Single Mothers.</p> <hr/> <p>The Reshaping of Daily Time during the COVID-19 Pandemic/ Lone Parent's Work-Family Articulation in a Low-Intensity Lockdown.</p>
Social support	Formal and Informal Social Support	<p>Work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts among employed single parents in Germany.</p> <hr/> <p>Mothering alone: cross-national comparisons of later-lifedisability and health among women who were singlemothers.</p> <hr/> <p>The Reshaping of Daily Time during the COVID-19 Pandemic/ Lone Parent's Work-Family Articulation in a Low-Intensity Lockdown.</p>

**Family-
friendly
policies**

Work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts among employed single parents in Germany.

Self-reported Health among Lone Mothers in Switzerland: Do Employment and Education Matter?

Types of work-related behavior and experiences and stress coping strategies among single mothers and mothers in relationships differentiating role of work satisfaction

4. Results

This paper focused on addressing the research question "How do single parents reconcile their work and family life?" and subsequently, 18 articles were identified through the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the Qualitative Meta-Analysis. The number of single-income families has increased over the years (Eurostat, 2020) and, as a result, their reconciliation difficulties have also become more prominent. The reading of the articles highlighted that more articles investigate single mothers' personal and professional reconciliation than that of single fathers as shown in the Table 3 below.

Table 3: *Gender representation of the single parents included in the articles selected for the Qualitative Meta-Analysis*

Article	Single Fathers	Single Mothers
Work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts among employed single parents in Germany	65	281
Combining career and care-giving: The impact of family-friendly policies on the well-being of working mothers in the United Kingdom	0	825
Association of social support and socio-demographic characteristics with poor self-rated health and depressive symptomatology among single mothers in Cyprus: a descriptive cross-sectional study	0	316
Self-reported Health among Lone Mothers in Switzerland: Do Employment and Education Matter?	0	298
Gender differences in unpaid care work and psychological distress in the UK Covid-19 lockdown	2.837	5.736

Mothering alone: cross-national comparisons of later-life disability and health among women who were single mothers	0	25.125
Work–family conflict: comparing the experiences of Turkish and native Belgian women	0	23
Between Money and Love: Work-family Conflict Among Swedish Low-income Single Mothers	0	39
Types of work-related behavior and experiences and stress coping strategies among single mothers and mothers in relationships differentiating role of work satisfaction	0	186
Single Mothers’ Perspectives on the Combination of Motherhood and Work	0	202
A work-life conflict perspective on telework	2.045	2.067
The Reshaping of Daily Time during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Lone Parent’s Work-Family Articulation in a Low-Intensity Lockdown	2	24
Nonstandard Work Hours and Single Versus Coupled Mothers’ Work-to-Family Conflict	0	662
The Long-Term Costs of Family Trajectories: Women’s Later-Life Employment and Earnings Across Europe	0	3.376
Mental health among single mothers in Cyprus: a cross-sectional descriptive correlational study	0	316
The parenting and economising practices of lone parents: Policy and evidence	30	343
Total	4.977	39.819

However, it was not possible to identify the number of single fathers and single mothers for two articles, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Representation of the single parents included in the articles selected for the Qualitative Meta-Analysis

Article	Single parents
Family and organization roles in disaster risk reduction: Burnout reduction on workers	23
The Diminishing Power of One? Welfare State Retrenchment and Rising Poverty of Single-Adult Households in Sweden 1988–2011	405.736
Total	406.492

Based on the analysis of the extracts, it is clear that single parents usually work under short-term contracts and non-standard working hours, which implies that they have to constantly adjust their family arrangements to accommodate their work obligations. Furthermore, they experience financial hardship, as they often have a low income and do not have the financial support of a partner as dual-earner families do. This affects their work and family reconciliation since they need to work more hours to cover their expenses.

The Covid-19 pandemic has aggravated the situation, as many single parents were compelled to work from home and look after their home-schooled children, resulting in a breakdown of their mental health. The judgement single parents face from society because of their single parent status intensifies the pressure as they do not spend as much time with their families as expected and have to rely on formal and informal childcare and social support. These challenges which have become more pronounced over time, call for interventions and measures from the Human Resource Management to encourage the implementation and use of family-friendly practices to support these families. In this sense, Table 5 outlines the categorisation process that guided the

content analysis, mentioned above, thus highlighting a number of outstanding extracts. The detailed table is available in Appendix A.

Table 5: *Overview of the categorisation process of the articles selected for Qualitative Meta-Analysis and presentation of outstanding extracts*

Category	Subcategory	Definition	Examples of extracts
Labour Force	Labour Participation	Force People active in the labour market who provide their labour capacity for the production of goods and services and who receive a salary in return (Anker, 1983)	"Single mothers and childless women (with or without children) did not have higher employment rates than partnered mothers." (Muller et al., 2020)
	Temporary Employment Contract	The employment of individuals for a limited period of time, where a protection deficit tends to exist (Campbell & Burgess, 2001)	"Single parents more often had temporary employment contracts and had fewer supervising responsibilities." (Reimann et al., 2019)
	Employment Barrier	Career-related barriers that either actually exist or that an individual assumes they will encounter and will make it difficult to find and keep a job, based on their perceptions or convictions, and that can may shape their behaviour	"Employers who employ single mothers should not fear that their family situation will transfer to their performance at work." (Napora et al., 2017)

and performance (Kalil, 1999; Corbière et al., 2004)

Balancing Work and Family Life	Work-Family Conflict	Frustration and pressure arise when an individual's work related activities, over which they have little control, require a lot of their time and energy and interfere with the fulfilment of family responsibilities (Duxbury et al., 1994)	"Professional activity contributes both to increased well-being and a sense of achievement for mothers, but it is also the source of a sense of overburdening by the family and professional roles " (Napora et al., 2017)
---------------------------------------	-----------------------------	--	--

Family-work conflict	Frustration and tension emerge when an individual's family commitments, over which they have little control, interfere with work-related responsibilities (Duxbury et al., 1994)	"Parents with younger children tended to experience a greater increase in family demands as home-schooling took up more of their time than that of parents with older children able to work more independently." (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)
-----------------------------	--	--

Work From Home	Type of work implemented by companies, allowing employees to access documents and work on the computer from their home (Salazar, 2001)	"Parents working from home were required to make the most adaptations to articulate conflicting demands and strategies ranged from reducing working hours, working around children's needs, and heavily resorting to informal support. " (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)
-----------------------	--	--

Work-Family Balance	An individual experiences work-life balance when there is little or no	"Effective fulfilment of professional and family obligations depends on numerous factors. The major ones
----------------------------	--	--

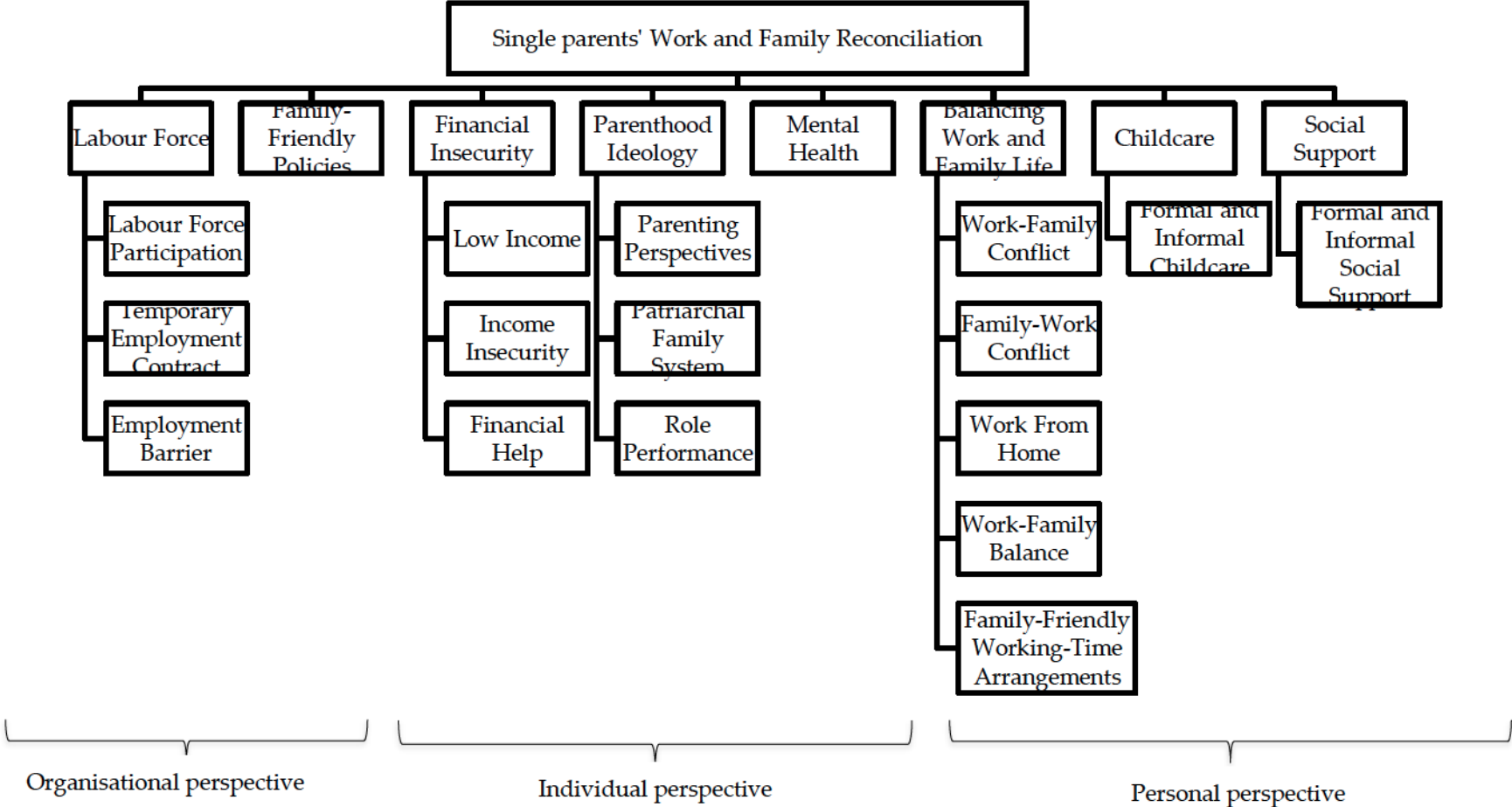
		interference between work and family demands, thus leading to engagement, productivity and satisfaction (Jain & Nair, 2013)	include support of the professional environment, family support, age, the length of marriage, type and model of relationship, and the number of children." (Napora et al., 2017)
	Family-Friendly Working-Time Arrangements	Type of arrangements which aim to improve workers' performance and enhance work-family balance (Chung, 2018)	"Low income, in combination with inconvenient and/or unpredictable working hours, split shifts, and insecure employment, thus significantly reduced the mothers' opportunities to be the kind of mother they wished to be " (Roman, 2017)
Financial Insecurity	Low Income	People who consistently have a low income face financial struggles to pay their bills and are therefore considered to be poor (Jarvis & Jenkins, 1997)	"financial hardship has an important impact on single parents' status and psychological well-being " (Javed, 2019)
	Income Insecurity	Individuals with income insecurity are particularly exposed to financial losses and increased financial burdens, affecting their well-being (Vulkan, 2012)	"Income insecurity was another major problem for the mothers employed on an hourly basis. For this reason, they strived to work as many hours as possible. So I really don't know how to make it work [to combine work and family], but, as I said, you have to [make it work]; you really don't have a choice." (Roman, 2017)
	Financial Help	Financial assistance when income is too low to cover	"working-age single-adult households are much less likely to be able to rely on

		living expenses (Heintz-Martin, 2020)	a second earner to escape poverty." (Alm et al., 2020)
Parenthood ideology	Parenting Perspectives	This relates to how parents allocate their time, their financial and emotional resources to nurture and raise their children (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020)	"The combination of this strict motherhood ideology and flexible workplace behavior results in a family-centered lifestyle in which everything is a function of parenting. Therefore, single mothers who opt for a work-family symbiosis also seem to alter their career aspirations." (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020)
	Patriarchal Family System	Female discrimination and gender inequality (Fulcher & Scott, 2011)	"Apart from the additional responsibilities single mothers have to deal with, Turkish women also face the pressures of social control. As single mothers in a strong patriarchal family system, they often confront disapproval from the wider community." (Yılmaz et al., 2019)
	Role Performance	Objective judgment of role performance refers to an external judgement of whether a parent's parenting skills or role meet societal norms and expectations, while subjective judgment refers to parents judging their own parenting performance (Sabatelli & Waldron, 1995)	"They had internalized the idea that 'good' parenting means spending a large amount of time with their children. However, in practice, the money-care dilemma meant that these parents had to spend long hours at work, leaving them less time to devote to their children. This discrepancy between the notion of 'good' mothering and the means to attain that goal was a source of conflict that fostered feelings of guilt and inadequacy." (Roman, 2017)

Mental health	Refers to the state of psychological and social well-being of an individual (Sabatelli & Waldron, 1995)	"Single mothers not only face psychological challenges, such as feelings of failure after a marriage break up, but also the practical need to maintain their mothering efforts on their own. " (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020)
Childcare	Formal and Informal Childcare	The child is taken care of at a formal childcare institution or by a family or non-family member (Bertolote, 2008)
Social support	Formal and Informal Support	Formal social support is the material and emotional support provided by formal organisations and informal social support consists of help provided by individuals such as family members, friends and others (Lu et al., 2020)
Family-friendly policies	Initiatives proposed by companies such as childcare and working-time arrangements that aim help employees manage their family responsibilities (Albrecht, 2003)	"reconciliation policies may buffer the negative effects of lone parenthood on health by reducing the strain on mothers in this situation" (Struffolino et al., 2016)

Given the extent of the categories and subcategories, a concept mapping was carried out. This allowed us to divide the categories into three distinct perspectives, namely the individual, personal and organizational ones. Hence, a critical analysis of the 18 selected articles was performed for the presentation and discussion of the results.

Figure 1 : Representation of the categories and subcategories developed for the Qualitative Meta-Analysis



5. Discussion of the Results

Before proceeding with the discussion of the results, we looked at the different journals from which the articles were collected. The articles were published mainly in journals within the fields of social sciences, public health, and human resource management. This data reveals that these are the fields that have been most engaged with single parents' work and family reconciliation, as shown in Appendix B. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the articles focused mainly on single mothers' work and family reconciliation.

In order to discuss the results, the collected data from each category was analysed in order to provide an insight into single parents' work and family reconciliation from an individual, personal and organisational perspective.

5.1. Labour Force

5.1.1. Labour Force Participation

The number of employed single parents in Europe reached 84% in 2014 (Robinson et al., 2018). The underlying reason for this high percentage may be that given they are a single-income family, they do not have a partner who can contribute financially. As a result, single parents have no other alternative but to work to pay their bills and support their family. However, it seems that, according to Muller et al. (2020), the employment rate is not higher for single mothers than for partnered mothers.

5.1.2. Temporary Employment Contract

Although 84% of single parents in Europe are employed (Robinson et al., 2018), they are frequently engaged in short-term contracts, which is usually associated with a protection deficiency (Campbell & Burgess, 2001; Robinson et al., 2018). This tends to be particularly difficult for single parents, as some are eligible for Welfare to Work programs, which are formal social assistance, but as they are on short-term contracts, they have to reapply every time to benefit from them (Campbell et al., 2016). Moreover, having to search for a new position, attend job interviews and reorganize their family life to adapt to each new job, only increases the complexity and fatigue of these single parents (Campbell et al., 2016). In addition, having a short-term employment contract often implies that these parents do not hold a job with major responsibilities (Reimann et al., 2019). That can be stressful for those with higher degrees and who might not be able to pursue the career path of their choice. Given the difficulties related to short-term contracts, single parents often apply for jobs, even if they don't suit their preferences or their degree (Campbell et al., 2016).

5.1.3. Employment Barrier

Barriers to employment can either be existing or presumed obstacles that make it harder for parents to find and keep a job (Kalil, 1999; Corbière et al., 2004). According to Campbell et al. (2016), actual barriers such as mental illness, depression and children's bad conduct prevent single parents from seeking employment. As a matter of fact, a single parent who already struggles to take care of their family on their own, may already feel overwhelmed and not have the energy it takes to find a job and then manage their family and work responsibilities. However, not being employed and not getting a wage can worsen their financial situation. In addition to single parents potentially encountering obstacles that impede them from working, employers may also be unwilling to employ single parents (Campbell et al., 2016). In fact, employers

may believe that their family arrangements may negatively influence their performance at work (Napura et al., 2017). Consequently, to spare themselves from this situation, many single parents hid their parental status to avoid the possibility of not being considered for a job as they might be perceived as unreliable (Campbell et al., 2016). Not only do single parents struggle to get a permanent job, but they also struggle because society does not take them seriously.

5.2. Balancing Work and Family Life

5.2.1. Work-Family Conflict

A single parent experiences Work-Family Conflict when frustration and pressure arise because their work-related activities, over which they have little control, require a lot of their time and energy and interfere with the fulfilment of family responsibilities (Duxbury et al., 1994). According to Moilanen et al. (2019), single mothers tend to report more Work-Family Conflict than partnered mothers, primarily when they work non-standard hours. The reason is that working non-standard hours deprives them of sufficient time to engage in family activities with their children (Moilanen et al., 2019). Work ends up being a barrier to family responsibilities and adding to the workload of single parents, as they always have to do everything by themselves after work (Moilanen et al., 2019). The Covid-19 pandemic has not really improved single parents' work and family reconciliation, as some of them felt that their work schedules and demands were too inflexible (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021), thus preventing them from focusing on their families. However, the conflict felt also depended on some variables, namely their employment situation, the flexibility, and the amount of family demands (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021).

Whereas single parents generate income through work and improve their well-being and feeling of accomplishment, on the other hand, it also implies that they have considerably less time to devote to their families and that domestic duties after work

can be overwhelming for them (Campbell et al., 2016; Napora et al., 2017). Luckily, whereas younger children require a lot of energy and attention, older children are generally linked to lower work-family conflict as they are much more independent and grown up and do not need much assistance from their parents (Moilanen et al., 2019). Even though there is not much time for family activities, single parents still make sure that childrearing activities are maintained (Dermott & Pomati, 2016).

5.2.2. Family-Work Conflict

A single parent is considered to experience family-work conflict when they become both stressed and anxious as soon as their work commitments intersect with their family obligations (Duxbury et al., 1994). Indeed, the status of single parent is often attached to greater family-work conflict than the status of partnered parents (Reimann et al., 2019). After all, single parents are left without a partner to split the childcare and housework duties (Zhang et al., 2020). Hanson (2020) even characterises children as career killers, because they tend to consistently interrupt their parents, oblige them to stay at home or take their children to work when they are ill, because they could not find someone to babysit. The reality is that the current system is not adapted to single parents (Hanson, 2020). However, single parents do confess that their daily life would be much smoother if they had a partner, because they would be less tense and they could become more organised (Yılmaz et al., 2019).

Especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, single parents struggled with young children who were home-schooled, as they had to be taken care of for much longer hours and cook for them more than they were used to (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021). Children can be quite overwhelming, particularly during this period, as they were not used to home schooling and as a consequence, they did not take it seriously and did not want to study (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021). Besides, as soon as their children completed their homework, they bothered their parents, which was very exhausting for them (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021). Yet, it was significantly easier with older children

who were more independent and had more flexible schedules (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021).

5.2.3. Work From Home

Teleworking is a type of work implemented by companies to allow employees to work on the computer from their home. It has been used more extensively since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic (Salazar, 2001). Although it is alleged to offer individuals additional time to dedicate to family commitments, this was not really the case for single parents. Whereas single parents working on site maintained a structured schedule, it was the opposite for those working from home (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021). As a matter of fact, many single parents had an even harder time coping with family issues, household activities and work duties (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021; Xue & McMunn, 2021).

By closing schools and childcares, single parents found themselves under more pressure and stress because of the increased responsibilities and decreased structure (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021; Xue & McMunn, 2021). Particularly single parents practising teleworking had to adapt the most by limiting their working hours and adjusting their work schedule to accommodate family commitments (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021). The pandemic has only intensified the existing challenges encountered by single parents and the disparities between single parents and partnered parents (Xue & McMunn, 2021).

5.3. Work-Family Balance

A single parent achieves Work-Family Balance when they experience little or no interference between their personal and professional demands, thus leading to commitment, productivity, and satisfaction (Jain & Nair, 2013). A single parent's ability to manage Work-Family Balance largely depends on a number of variables,

namely both formal and informal support, but also the number of children and their respective age (Napora et al., 2017). Indeed, not only does the support of their employer provide single parents with more flexibility to deal with family emergencies, but family and friends can also assist parents by staying with the children when they are ill for instance. Besides, the number of children can worsen single parents' workload. As discussed earlier, younger children require much more attention from their parents than older children who can handle most things on their own (Moilanen et al., 2019). Some mothers have always struggled to manage both work and family arrangements because their partner didn't provide them with support (Yilmaz et al., 2019). Therefore, divorce was a relief for them because they no longer had to deal with their partner and they were used to do everything on their own (Yilmaz et al., 2019; Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021).

Since single parents are known to be much more engaged in family and work activities, they have been compelled to find a way to combine both by employing some strategies (Reimann et al., 2019; Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021). For instance, single parents arranged their limited time to be as much productive as possible, cancelled work occasions or took their children to work whenever it was possible (Hanson, 2020; Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021). Others used colouring books to keep their children entertained or promised them candy if they behaved well (Hanson, 2020). These strategies merely let parents have a limited amount of time before they were interrupted again (Hanson, 2020), so they were aware that they had to work out other ideas to distract their children. Whereas some single parents cut back on their working hours, others adapted their working hours to meet family demands without reducing their working hours (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021). Others who had high work and family demands relied on social support or were fortunate enough to have older, independent children who didn't require much assistance (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021).

Overall, the priority for single parents was to take care of their family and therefore tried to seek a job that could be adapted to their family engagements, which was close to their home, school and childcare (Campbell et al., 2016). A high percentage of the

single parents also placed great importance on sitting at the table with their children to spend time with them and cherish every moment (Dermott & Pomati, 2016).

5.3.1. Family-Friendly Working-Time Arrangements

The work arrangements that may most negatively influence single parents' work and family reconciliation are non-standard working hours (Roman, 2017). Indeed, single parents are particularly reliant on flexible working hours because of their high family commitments and the lack of a partner (Roman, 2017; Reimann et al., 2019). However, according to Campbell et al. (2016), many single parents report having non-standard working hours which do not align with the opening hours of regular formal childcare services. A single mother related that she would at times leave for work before her children woke up or arrive home after work when her children were already asleep (Roman, 2017). This experience was so exhausting that she sometimes fell asleep before her children (Roman, 2017). By working more flexibly and having more support at work, they were able to reconcile their personal and professional obligations, and to experience less anxiety (Javed, 2019; Reimann et al., 2019).

While it seemed that teleworking could potentially facilitate single parents' life, single parents didn't use it that much as it predicts higher Work-Family Conflict (Reimann et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2020). Involuntary part-time work also contributes to a higher Work-Family Conflict (Roman, 2017). In fact, as explained by Struffolino et al. (2016), full-time work is more advantageous for single mothers, as it enables them to have a higher income. However, as most of them have a low income (Rousou et al., 2016) and are often working on a fixed-term contract (Robinson et al., 2018), they are compelled to take part-time jobs (Rousou et al., 2016) to avoid putting their financial situation at further risk. In addition to often working part-time and on fixed-term contracts, some employers tend to avoid employing single parents (Napora et al., 2017). Therefore, to prevent them from not being rehired, they willingly work all the shifts they agreed to, even if they have a family emergency (Napora et al., 2017). Thus,

inconvenient working hours, associated with a low wage, a short-term contract and shift work, reduce the amount of time spent with their children and affect the mother-child relationship (Roman, 2017). Whereas single parents used to perceive additional night or weekend jobs as a chance to earn extra money, they now see it as a constraint (Hanson, 2020). Fortunately, some single parents work for a company where they have paid time off to care for their children, flexible working hours or where they are able to work the same number of hours on fewer days (Javed, 2019).

5.4. Financial Insecurity

5.4.1. Low Income

Single parents who consistently have a low income, face financial difficulties (Jarvis & Jenkins, 1997). This is the case for almost 73.4% of them even though they have a full-time job (Rousou et al., 2019). They lack financial security and are thus exposed to potential financial hardship in case they lose their job or are left without financial support (Campbell et al., 2016). Single parents encounter even greater economic difficulties when the companies they work for delay the payment of the salary and benefits (Campbell et al., 2016). Living on a low income involves having difficulties in paying the invoices and has forced single parents to cut back on their expenses, such as rent and food (Campbell et al., 2016). Hence, financial hardship negatively impacts the well-being of single parents (Javed, 2019). The longer parents remain single, the more financially complicated it becomes for them over time, as they do not have a partner to share the expenses with (Berkman et al., 2015). Single parents' children seem to add to their stress because they want to go on family trips or do family activities like other ordinary families (Roman, 2017). Even school excursions or other activities that involve spending money exacerbate single parents' situation (Roman, 2017). All of this leads single parents to take their sick children to school to avoid getting a lower wage (Roman, 2017), as well as to skip meals to save money (Dermott & Pomati, 2016).

Single parents are much less likely to have a private tutor for their children and less likely to go to the hairdresser or engage in family activities (Dermott & Pomati, 2016). They are also three times more likely to purchase second-hand clothes (Dermott & Pomati, 2016; Roman, 2017) and twice as likely to wear worn-out clothes to save money (Dermott & Pomati, 2016). Some may eventually be driven to commit criminal acts to sustain their family or push themselves to live in an abusive relationship merely to get an accommodation (Campbell et al., 2016). The reality is that single parents will do whatever they need to protect their children and ensure that they have food (Dermott & Pomati, 2016).

5.4.2. Income Insecurity

Single parents who suffer from income insecurity are particularly prone to financial losses and increased financial burdens, which affect their well-being (Vulkan, 2012). As many single parents are employed on short-term contracts and have a low income, they lack financial security (Roman, 2017). Thus, given their financial hardship, single parents try to maximise their working hours (Roman, 2017). One of the interviewed mothers reported that it was hard for her to work as much as possible and find time to take care of her family (Roman, 2017). Given her financial situation, she felt that she had no alternative, since it was her job as a mother to guarantee the well-being of her children (Roman, 2017).

Covid-19 certainly did not diminish the income insecurity felt by single parents, as they had previously been confronted with a reduction or fluctuations in their income (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021). Thus, the income security experienced impacts single parents' well-being and reinforces the poverty risk. Indeed, poverty risk which is the situation where an individual's income does not cover their basic needs, seems to be the reality of many working single parents (Alm et al., 2020). They are at significantly higher risk of both poverty and social exclusion than partnered parents (Bošković et

al., 2021). Any uncertainty or loss of income could be devastating and put them in a critical situation.

5.4.3. Financial Help

Financial support is typically offered to certain individuals, such as single parents, when their income is too low to cover their living expenses (Heintz-Martin, 2020). It seems that nearly half of the single parents surveyed rely on their ex-partner's financial support to overcome poverty (Rousou et al., 2019; Alm et al., 2020). Other single parents rely on financial help from relatives, pawnbrokers or moneylenders (Dermott & Pomati, 2016). Single parents are also three times more likely to have used a social fund loan or to have borrowed from friends (Dermott & Pomati, 2016). A number of single parents may benefit from public financial support, since they have a low income and children in their charge (Rousou et al., 2019). However, if they have a rise of their income, they may no longer qualify for it, which ends up reducing their total income (Campbell et al., 2016). Yet, approximately 40,8% of the interviewed single parents report that they don't benefit from any financial support from the government (Rousou et al., 2019).

5.5. Parenthood Ideology

5.5.1. Parenting Perspectives

Parenting perspectives relate to how parents allocate their time, their financial and emotional resources to raise their children (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020). These parenting perspectives are based on a number of factors (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). In fact, it depends on whether single parents have a flexible or a rigid workplace (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). In a flexible workplace, parents who used to work overtime before becoming single parents, were able to reduce their working hours or

to request flexible working hours to accommodate their family after their separation (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). The other factors that determine a single parent's parenting perspectives are lean parenting and strict parenting (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). Indeed, while lean parenting refers to single parents who are more available for their children and give them love and attention, strict parenting may be characterised as a single parent who does not spend significant time with their children and does not arrange family activities (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020).

There seem to be four distinctive parenting perspectives in terms of time devoted to work and parenting (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). The first is reinvented parenthood, which involves the adoption of a lean parenting in combination with a flexible workplace (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). This parenting perspective allows single parents to have a work-life balance and to achieve a more peaceful and less strained life (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). It also means that single parents do not necessarily have the job of their dreams, but their major goal is to combine their personal and professional obligations (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020).

The second parenting perspective is work-family symbiosis, which focuses on a more family-oriented work ethic (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). Single parents seek a job that embraces family-friendly strategies, even if it means that they have to change their career ambitions. Their ambition is to be capable to adopt a more rigid parenting (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020).

The third, more work-oriented perspective of parenthood implies that single parents invest a lot of time and energy in the workplace by working full time, in order to feel fulfilled (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). They are not willing to sacrifice their career and to work part-time (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). Their priority is to work as much as possible to generate a higher income, even if they have to skip breaks or lunch (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). While this means that single parents have a rather rigid workplace, they counterbalance it by adopting a leaner parenting (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). However, this means that single parents have to rely on someone to look after their children (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). This parenting

perspective causes single parents to feel guilty for not engaging in family activities (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020).

The final parenting perspective is work-family conflict motherhood (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). This parenting perspective entails that single parents remain dedicated to their rigid motherhood while following the instructions of their rigid workplace (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). This type of parenting perspective is most likely to be problematic, as single parents encounter difficulties in reconciling their work and family obligations, given that they do not want to give up either of them (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020).

5.5.2. Patriarchal Family System

A patriarchal family system is based on gender discrimination and inequality (Fulcher & Scott, 2011). Single parents seem to be severely negatively affected by this system, as in addition to the workload and increased responsibilities, they have to deal with social pressure (Yılmaz et al., 2019). In fact, many single mothers endure social disapproval for leaving their husband (Yılmaz et al., 2019). Given the responsibilities they have had to assume since their separation, single mothers sometimes feel guilty and hide their anxiety from their children (Roman, 2017). Indeed, according to society, mothers should hide their feelings and act like they can take care of everything on their own, so as not to put any pressure on their children (Roman, 2017).

5.5.3. Role Performance

When referring to role performance, there are either objective role performance judgments, which are external judgment of whether a parent's parenting skills meet societal norms, but also subjective judgment, which are the judgment parents make of their own parenting (Sabatelli & Waldron, 1995).

Single parents who are poor and have a low income are judged severely by society when they choose to quit their job or to reduce their working hours to better adjust to their family arrangements (Hennessy, 2015). In fact, they are accused of acting irresponsibly for no longer caring about working and relying on government financial assistance and childcare (Hennessy, 2015). They are also blamed for having children despite being financially unstable and taking advantage of the system to get financial support (Hennessy, 2015). Single parents are also called out by society because their children stay in the childcare for longer periods of time, when according to society, parents should spend a lot of time with their children (Roman, 2017). As a result, single parents frequently request relatives to pick up their children from childcare to avoid being portrayed as bad parents (Roman, 2017).

A number of single parents have rated themselves as bad parents (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). One mother believed that her children's father was much more caring because he organised many family activities, while she only focused on her work and invited the children's friends over, so that her children were entertained (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). The reality is that no matter what single parents do, and no matter how hard they try to be a good parent, they are always judged by the society.

5.6. Mental Health

Mental health refers to an individual's psychological and social well-being (Bertolote, 2008). Single parents generally tend to have a poorer mental health than partnered parents (Struffolino et al., 2016). In particular, single parents working part-time and dealing with financial hardship are at greater risk of having a poor mental health, as are those with no social support (Rousou et al., 2016). Single parents with a higher education or a high school education also seem to experience more mental strain than those with a higher degree (Rousou et al., 2019).

Since they are left without a partner, single parents have to deal with an increase of their workload and financial hardship (Campbell et al., 2016; Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). This places a lot of pressure on them, increases their level of stress, fatigue, potential to develop depression and anxiety (Campbell et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2018; Rousou et al., 2019). Indeed, almost 38,9% of single mothers claim that they suffer from depressive symptoms (Rousou et al., 2016; Rousou et al., 2019). In addition, single parents reported greater problems to sleep and burnout (Zulkifli et al., 2019).

Fatigue is sometimes so prevalent that single parents feel incapable of supervising their children (Campbell et al., 2016). As a matter of fact, one parent once admitted that he fell asleep while his child was in the bathtub, which put him at risk of diving (Campbell et al., 2016). However, although single parents' mental health has worsened, only about a third of them have visited a doctor (Rousou et al., 2016).

5.7. Childcare

5.7.1. Formal and Informal Childcare

When referring to childcare, there is either formal childcare in which the child is taken care of at a formal childcare institution, and informal childcare where the child is taken care of by a family or non-family member (Santhiveeran, 2010).

Single parents are known to have many personal and professional obligations to take care of on their own. Thus, having a childcare facility which can look after the children can ease their daily lives. However, they are almost always placed in a childcare facility located far from their home (Reimann et al., 2019), which creates even more complications for single parents, as they have to leave work earlier to pick up their child and spend considerable time on the road. Some single parents even have children who require specialised care because they have a certain condition, but given that there is no proper childcare available, seeking a job becomes very challenging for

these parents (Campbell et al., 2016). As a result, single parents experience more family-work conflict (Reimann et al., 2019).

Although private childcare could be seen as an alternative, single parents cannot afford to place their children there because of the high fees charged (Reimann et al., 2019). Since formal childcare is too expensive, some single parents regularly ask family and friends to watch their children after school (Roman, 2017; Hanson, 2020; Muller et al., 2020). Occasionally, when the children are ill, they also take care of them to spare single parents from staying at home and earning less money (Roman, 2017). Although their older children could stay at home unsupervised, single parents still fear that it could be dangerous, as some neighbourhoods are not safe, and children could be persuaded to take part in a gang (Campbell et al., 2016).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, grandparents were less requested to take care of their grandchildren in order to protect them from catching the virus (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021). Therefore, single parents requested a family member to provide care to their children when schools and childcare facilities were shut down (Campbell et al., 2016; Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021). In the absence of informal childcare, single parents would not have been able to go to work (Campbell et al., 2016; Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021). Other single parents had no family member or friends who could provide care for their children (Roman, 2017). Since childcare facilities were not operating during their non-standard or unpredictable working hours, single parents requested their older children to watch over their younger siblings (Campbell et al., 2016; Roman, 2017). This caused them to feel guilty, but they were left with no other alternative (Campbell et al., 2016; Roman, 2017). The reality is that whether children stay in a childcare, with a family member or with their older siblings, single parents have to always adapt their schedule to their children and come up with a plan to ensure that their children are safe while they are at work (Hanson, 2020).

5.8. Social Support

5.8.1. Formal and Informal Social Support

Formal social support is the material and emotional support provided by formal organisations, while informal social support consists of help provided by family members or friends (Lu et al., 2020).

Single parents can get formal social support, but the level of support provided varies between each of the single parents and over time (Campbell et al., 2016). Several single parents have never benefited from social support (Campbell et al., 2016). However, social support is essential for them as it positively affects their health (Berkman et al., 2015), meaning that if they did not have social support, their health would deteriorate.

Although single parents can access formal social support from the government, some reported that the staff operating there did not really understand their daily struggles (Campbell et al., 2016). They also felt that they were not properly treated and given the time and attention they deserved, thus having to re-explain their concerns at every meeting (Campbell et al., 2016).

Informal support consists mainly of getting emotional support from the supervisor, co-workers, family, and friends (Hanson, 2020). Some single parents appreciate the support they receive from their employer whenever they have a family emergency (Reimann et al., 2019). However, they report that they don't get the same support from their colleagues (Reimann et al., 2019). Others can count on their family or friends whenever they need them to look after their children when these are ill, or when they need to express their problems and concerns (Hanson, 2020).

5.9. Family-Friendly Strategies

Family-friendly strategies are provided by companies, such as childcare and working time arrangements, with the aim of assisting employees in the reconciliation of their work and family responsibilities. Yet, it seems that society does not recognise the relevance of introducing and implementing these strategies to help single parents (Bošković et al., 2021). Furthermore, the literature did not reveal any evidence of family-friendly policies or strategies implemented specifically for single parents. The government should in fact devote special attention to the difficulties of single parents and introduce family-friendly policies in order to increase single parents' life satisfaction (Napura et al., 2017), reduce their daily struggles and anxiety (Struffolino et al., 2016; Bošković et al., 2021). On the other hand, single parents also appear to be less likely to seek family-friendly strategies to cope with work and family responsibilities (Napura et al., 2017). Unless family-friendly strategies and policies are introduced, the birth rate and the number of working women will not increase (Bošković et al., 2021) and the welfare of single parents and their families will not improve either (Hanson, 2020; Bošković et al., 2021).

In order to have effective family-friendly policies, the government should include single parents in the process to express their views and perspectives (Hanson, 2020). Nevertheless, according to Reimann et al. (2019), family-friendly policies won't overcome the rigidity experienced by single parents, even if they may be given flexible working hours. In fact, family-friendly strategies can only be employed to reduce work-family conflict, but not family-work conflict (Reimann et al., 2019).

6. Conclusion

This paper aimed to study how single parents reconcile their work and family life by gaining insight into their daily challenges and understanding how these affect their well-being. It also attempted to uncover what measures single parents have undertaken to meet their personal and professional responsibilities as well as to identify if any family-friendly strategies and policies have been introduced so far to support single parents.

Through the in-depth analysis of the articles, it became evident that single parenthood presents a variety of significant difficulties. For instance, given that single parents are a single-earner family, most of them are employed so that they can provide for their family and pay their bills (Robinson et al., 2018). Since the majority of them can only engage in temporary contracts (Robinson et al., 2018), they undertake jobs even if these are not aligned with their qualifications or intended career path (Campbell et al., 2016). However, single parents struggle to find a job since employers believe that they are unreliable and that their family arrangements may negatively influence their performance at work (Napora et al., 2017).

Single parents who are engaged in temporary contracts and have a low income suffer from income insecurity (Vulkan, 2012). They are particularly exposed to increased financial burdens, which negatively affect their well-being (Vulkan, 2012). The longer parents remain single, the more complicated the situation becomes over time (Berkman et al., 2015). In order to survive, a number of single parents are offered financial support to overcome poverty (Rousou et al., 2019; Alm et al., 2020). Some receive financial support from family members or friends (Rousou et al., 2019). Others borrow money from pawnbrokers or moneylenders (Dermott & Pomati, 2016). Yet, many single parents report that they have never received any financial support from the government (Rousou et al., 2019).

While single parents generate an income by working, on the other hand, they have considerably less time to take care of their family (Campbell et al., 2016; Napora et al., 2017; Hanson 2020). Especially working non-standard working hours deprive them of sufficient time to engage in family activities (Moilanen et al., 2019). Involuntary part-time work also contributes to a higher work-family conflict (Roman, 2017) as they have a lower wage for not working full-time (Struffolino et al., 2016). Thus, non-standard working hours associated with a low income, short-term contracts and involuntary part-time work reduce the time spent with their children and affect the mother-child relationship (Roman, 2017).

The Covid-19 pandemic did little to improve singles parents' work and family reconciliation, especially for those who were required to work from home with their home-schooled children (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021). As a matter of fact, their work schedules and demands were too inflexible (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021), and they were constantly bothered by their children. The increase of their responsibilities combined with a decreased structure left single parents feeling tremendously exhausted and stressed (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021; Xue & McMunn, 2021). In order to manage their personal and professional obligations, single parents implemented certain strategies, such as using colouring books to entertain their children or promising them sweets if they behave well (Hanson, 2020). However, these strategies yield few results because they were interrupted again after a few minutes (Hanson, 2020). Some single parents were fortunate to have their employer's support and to be given flexible working hours in line with their children's school, paid time off to care for their children or the possibility to work the same hours across fewer days per week (Javed, 2019). This contributed to a better reconciliation of their obligations and, consequently, to a higher level of work commitment and satisfaction (Jain & Nair, 2013).

Overall, single parents' priority is to care for their families and thus, they try to look for a job which allows them to accommodate their children's school opening times (Campbell et al., 2016). However, each single parent has a different perspective regarding the time, the financial and emotional resources allocated to the care and

education of their children (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020). Out of the four parenting perspectives, the work-family conflict motherhood is the most problematic. In fact, single parents decide to adopt a rigid motherhood and to keep working in a rigid workplace because they do not want to give up on either, thus jeopardising their work and family reconciliation (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020).

It seems that no matter what parenting perspective single parents adopt, no matter how much time they spend with their families and how much they work to ensure their well-being, they still face social pressure (Yilmaz et al., 2019). Indeed, those who have a low income are judged harshly when they choose to quit their job or to reduce their working hours to better accommodate their family arrangements (Hennessy, 2015). In fact, they are accused of acting irresponsibly for not wanting to work, of having children despite their financial instability and accused of taking advantage of the system to obtain financial support (Hennessy, 2015). Single parents are also called out because their children stay in the childcare for longer periods of time (Roman, 2017). As a result, single parents frequently rely on relatives to pick up their children from the childcare to avoid being portrayed as bad parents (Roman, 2017). This leads single parents to feel guilty (Roman, 2017) and to rate themselves as bad parents because they do not spend as much time and organise as many family activities as their ex-partner (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020).

All the struggles single parents face daily lead to a poorer mental health (Struffolino et al., 2016). Not only do single parents report feelings of failure after their divorce or separation, but they also have to figure out how to cope with the burden on their own (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). This places a lot of pressure on them, increases their anxiety levels and the likelihood of developing a depression (Campbell et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2018; Rousou et al., 2019). Single parents also report exhaustion and greater difficulty to sleep (Zulkifli et al., 2019). Fatigue is sometimes so significant that single parents feel incapable to supervise their children (Campbell et al., 2016).

Given the daily challenges faced by single parents from a personal, individual and organisational perspective, and the lack of family-friendly practices to support them, the government and the organisations should consider measures to ensure their well-being. By implementing family-friendly practices, single parents' life satisfaction would improve (Napora et al., 2017) and their daily difficulties, stress and anxiety would decrease (Struffolino et al., 2016; Bošković et al., 2021). Besides, the birth rate and the number of working women would increase (Bošković et al., 2021). In order to have effective family-friendly policies, the government should include single parents in the process so that they can express their opinion and perspectives (Hanson, 2020). Any family-friendly practice or policy carried out should then be reviewed after a certain amount of time to evaluate its impact and whether it has succeeded in improving single parents' work and family reconciliation (Beauregard & Henry, 2009).

Furthermore, greater support should be given to single parents with younger children, as they require a lot of energy and attention (Moilanen et al., 2019). Single parents should be all systematically granted access to a childcare facility located close to their home and at a reduced fee. This would prevent their older children from having to look after their younger siblings. It would also spare single parents from stressing about who could take care of them and from approaching any family member or friend. Their children would be surrounded by trained personnel who would assist them with their homework, organise leisure activities and cook for them.

One of the most positive findings of this paper is the knowledge it provided about single parents' work and family reconciliation. Thus, it was possible to understand that single parents encounter many difficulties to manage their personal and professional responsibilities and that it negatively affects their mental health. This leads us to recognise the significant role that human resource management plays in the wellbeing of their employees. It has the ability to offer good working conditions along with a supportive work environment and caring managers.

Although there are a number of published scientific studies which focus on single parents' work and family reconciliation, there are existing gaps that raise single

parents' work and family reconciliation which need to be addressed. The existing literature did not really provide us with information on how they managed to work from home with their home-schooled children. In addition, we did not really gain insight into what measures the government or the organisations have undertaken to support single parents. There clearly is a disparity between single and partnered parents, which has become even more pronounced with the Covid-19 pandemic. Given that single-earner families are becoming more prevalent and that the current system is not adapted to them, more attention and support should be given to them (Dornbusch et al., 1985; Hennessy, 2015; Hanson, 2020).

7. References

- Adame-Sánchez, C., González-Cruz, T. F., & Martínez-Fuentes, C. (2016). Do firms implement work–life balance policies to benefit their workers or themselves? *Journal of Business Research*, 69(11), 5519–5523. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.04.164>
- Albrecht, G. H. (2003). How Friendly are Family Friendly Policies? *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 13(2), 177–192. <https://doi.org/10.5840/beq200313213>
- Alm, S., Nelson, K., & Nieuwenhuis, R. (2020). The Diminishing Power of One? Welfare State Retrenchment and Rising Poverty of Single-Adult Households in Sweden 1988–2011. *European Sociological Review*, 36(2), 198–217. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcz053>
- Anker, R. (1983). *Female labour force participation in developing countries: A critique of current definitions and data collection methods*. 122(6), 709–723.
- Bakker, W., & Karsten, L. (2013). Balancing paid work, care and leisure in post-separation households: A comparison of single parents with co-parents. *Acta Sociologica*, 56(2), 173–187. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0001699312466178>
- Barnett, R. C., & Hyde, J. S. (2001). Women, men, work, and family: An expansionist theory. *American Psychologist*, 56(10), 781–796. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.10.781>
- Bartik, A. W., Cullen, Z. B., Glaeser, E. L., Luca, M., & Stanton, C. T. (2020). *What Jobs are Being Done at Home During the Covid-19 Crisis? Evidence from Firm-Level Surveys*. 26.
- Beauregard, T. A., & Henry, L. C. (2009). Making the link between work-life balance practices and organizational performance. *Human Resource Management Review*, 19(1), 9–22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2008.09.001>
- Belzunegui-Eraso, A., & Erro-Garcés, A. (2020). Teleworking in the Context of the Covid-19 Crisis. *Sustainability*, 12(9), 3662. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12093662>

- Berkman, L. F., Zheng, Y., Glymour, M. M., Avendano, M., Börsch-Supan, A., & Sabbath, E. L. (2015). Mothering alone: Cross-national comparisons of later-life disability and health among women who were single mothers. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 69(9), 865–872.
<https://doi.org/10.1136/jech-2014-205149>
- Bertolote, J. (2008). The roots of the concept of mental health. *World Psychiatry*, 7(2), 113–116. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2051-5545.2008.tb00172.x>
- Bianchi, S. M., Subaiya, L., & Kahn, J. R. (1999). *The gender gap in the economic well-being of nonresident fathers and custodial mothers*. 36(2), 195–203.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2648108>
- Bloom, N., & Van Reenen, J. (2006). Management Practices, Work--Life Balance, and Productivity: A Review of Some Recent Evidence. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 22(4), 457–482. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxrep/grj027>
- Bonacini, L., Gallo, G., & Scicchitano, S. (2021). Working from home and income inequality: Risks of a ‘new normal’ with COVID-19. *Journal of Population Economics*, 34(1), 303–360. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-020-00800-7>
- Bošković, B., Churchill, H., & Hamzallari, O. (2021). Family Policy and Child Well-Being: The Case of Montenegro in the European Perspective. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(17), 9118.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18179118>
- Byrne, U. (2005). Work-life balance: Why are we talking about it at all? *Business Information Review*, 22(1), 53–59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266382105052268>
- Byron, K. (2005). A meta-analytic review of work–family conflict and its antecedents. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 67(2), 169–198.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2004.08.009>
- Campbell, & Burgess, J. (2001). Casual Employment in Australia and Temporary Employment in Europe: Developing a Cross-National Comparison. *Work, Employment & Society*, 15(1), 171–184.

- Campbell, M., Thomson, H., Fenton, C., & Gibson, M. (2016). Lone parents, health, wellbeing and welfare to work: A systematic review of qualitative studies. *BMC Public Health*, *16*(1), 188. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-016-2880-9>
- Chung, H. (2018). Dualization and the access to occupational family-friendly working-time arrangements across Europe. *Social Policy & Administration*, *52*(2), 491–507. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12379>
- Corbière, M., Mercier, C., & Lesage, A. (2004). Perceptions of Barriers to Employment, Coping Efficacy, and Career Search Efficacy in People with Mental Illness. *Journal of Career Assessment*, *12*(4), 460–478. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072704267738>
- Dermott, E., & Pomati, M. (2016). The parenting and economising practices of lone parents: Policy and evidence. *Critical Social Policy*, *36*(1), 62–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018315602198>
- Dex, S. (2001). *Review of future of paid and unpaid work, informal work, homeworking, the place of work in the family (women single parents, workless households), benefits, work attitudes motivation and obligation*. 31.
- Dornbusch, S. M., Carlsmith, J. M., Bushwall, S. J., Philip, L., Leiderman, H., Hastorf, A. H., & Gross, S. M. (1985). Single Parents, Extended Households, and the Control of Adolescents. *Society for Research in Child Development*, *56*(2), 326–341.
- Dupré, K. E., & Day, A. L. (2007). The effects of supportive management and job quality on the turnover intentions and health of military personnel. *Human Resource Management Review*, *46*(2), 185–201. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm>
- Duxbury, L., Higgins, C., & Lee, C. (1994). Work-Family Conflict—A comparison by gender, family type and perceived control. *Journal of Family Issues*, *15*(3), 449–466.
- Eurostat. (2020). *42% of births in the EU are outside marriage*. Eurostat. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20200717-1>

- Fagan, C., Lyonette, C., Smith, M., Saldaña-Tejeda, A., International Labour Office, & Conditions of Work and Employment Branch. (2012). *The influence of working time arrangements on work-life integration or 'balance': A review of the international evidence*. ILO.
- Fulcher, J., & Scott, J. (2011). *Sociology*.
- Giardini, A., & Kabst, R. (2008). Effects of work-family human resource practices: A longitudinal perspective. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19(11), 2079–2094. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190802404312>
- Glick, P. C. (1979). Children of Divorced Parents in Demographic Perspective. *Journal of Social Issues*, 35(4), 170–182. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1979.tb00820.x>
- Grawitch, M. J., Gottschalk, M., & Munz, D. C. (2006). The path to a healthy workplace: A critical review linking healthy workplace practices, employee well-being, and organizational improvements. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 58(3), 129–147. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1065-9293.58.3.129>
- Greenhaus, J. H., Collins, K. M., & Shaw, J. D. (2003). The relation between work–family balance and quality of life. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 63(3), 510–531. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0001-8791\(02\)00042-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0001-8791(02)00042-8)
- Hanson, A. (2020). *Career Killer Survival Kit: Centering Single Mom Perspectives in Composition and Rhetoric*. 19.
- Heintz-Martin, V. K. (2020). Economic Situation, Financial Strain and Child Wellbeing in Stepfamilies and Single-Parent Families in Germany. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 17.
- Hennessy, J. (2015). Low-income and Middle-class Mothers Gendered Work and Family Schemas: Gendered Work and Family Schemas. *Sociology Compass*, 9(12), 1106–1118. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12333>
- Hertz, R., Mattes, J., & Shook, A. (2021). When Paid Work Invades the Family: Single Mothers in the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Family Issues*, 42(9), 2019–2045. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X20961420>

- Hilton, J. M., & Koperafrye, K. (2006). Loss and Depression in Cohabiting and Noncohabiting Custodial Single Parents. *The Family Journal*, 14(1), 28–40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480705282053>
- Hilton, J. M., & Koperafrye, K. (2007). Differences in Resources Provided by Grandparents in Single and Married Parent Families. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 47(1–2), 33–54. https://doi.org/10.1300/J087v47n01_03
- Hochschild, A. R. (1997). When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work. *California Management Review*, 39(4), 79–97. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41165911>
- Jacobs, J. A., & Gerson, K. (2001). Overworked Individuals or Overworked Families?: Explaining Trends in Work, Leisure, and Family Time. *Work and Occupations*, 28(1), 40–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0730888401028001004>
- Jain, S., & Nair, S. K. (2013). *Research on Work- Family Balance: A Review*. 16.
- Jarvis, S., & Jenkins, S. P. (1997). Low Income Dynamics in 1990s Britain. *Fiscal Studies*, 18(2), 123–142. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-5890.1997.tb00257.x>
- Javed, U. (2019). Combining career and care-giving: The impact of family-friendly policies on the well-being of working mothers in the United Kingdom. *Global Business and Organizational Excellence*, 38(5), 44–52. <https://doi.org/10.1002/joe.21950>
- Kalil, A. (1999). *Barriers to the Employment of Welfare Recipients*. 1193–1199.
- Kalliath, T., & Brough, P. (2008). *Work–life balance: A review of the meaning of the balance construct*. 6.
- Kalysh, K., Kulik, C. T., & Perera, S. (2016). Help or hindrance? Work–life practices and women in management. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27(3), 504–518. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.12.009>
- Kaushik, M., & Neha, G. (2020). The Impact of Pandemic COVID -19 in Workplace. *European Journal of Business and Management*. <https://doi.org/10.7176/EJBM/12-15-02>

- Kitchenham, B., & Charters, S. (2007). Guidelines for performing Systematic Literature Reviews in Software Engineering. *IEEE Access*, 1–53.
<https://doi.org/10.1109/ACCESS.2016.2603219>
- Letablier, M.-T. (2011). *La monoparentalité aujourd'hui: Continuités et changements*. 37.
- Lu, S., Wu, Y., Mao, Z., & Liang, X. (2020). Association of Formal and Informal Social Support With Health-Related Quality of Life Among Chinese Rural Elders. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(4), 1351.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17041351>
- Marks, S. R. (1977). Multiple Roles and Role Strain: Some Notes on Human Energy, Time and Commitment. *American Sociological Review*, 42(6), 921.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2094577>
- Minnotte, K. L. (2012). Family Structure, Gender, and the Work–Family Interface: Work-to-Family Conflict Among Single and Partnered Parents. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 33(1), 95–107. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-011-9261-4>
- Misra, J., Moller, S., Strader, E., & Wemlinger, E. (2012). Family policies, employment and poverty among partnered and single mothers. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 30(1), 113–128.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rssm.2011.12.001>
- Moilanen, S., Aunola, K., May, V., Sevón, E., & Laakso, M.-L. (2019). Nonstandard Work Hours and Single Versus Coupled Mothers' Work-to-Family Conflict: Nonstandard Work Hours. *Family Relations*, 68(2), 213–231.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12353>
- Moss, P., & Deven, F. (2020). Leave policies in Europe: Current policies, future directions. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 40(5/6), 429–440.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-04-2019-0063>
- Muller, J. S., Hiekel, N., & Liefbroer, A. C. (2020). *The Long-Term Costs of Family Trajectories: Women's Later-Life Employment and Earnings Across Europe*. 1007–1034. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-02000874-8>

- Munn, S. L. (2013). Unveiling the Work–Life System: The Influence of Work–Life Balance on Meaningful Work. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 15(4), 401–417. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422313498567>
- Napora, E., Andruszkiewicz, A., & Basińska, M. (2017). Types of work-related behavior and experiences and stress coping strategies among single mothers and mothers in relationships differentiating role of work satisfaction. *International Journal of Occupational Medicine and Environmental Health*. <https://doi.org/10.13075/ijomeh.1896.01052>
- Negura, L. (2006). L'analyse de contenu dans l'étude des représentations sociales. *OpenEdition Journals*. <https://doi.org/10.4000/sociologies.993>
- Nomaguchi, K., & Milkie, M. A. (2020). Parenthood and Well-Being: A Decade in Review. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82, 198–223. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12646>
- Parkes, L. P., & Langford, P. H. (2008). *Work–life balance or work–life alignment?* 14, 267–284.
- Reimann, M., Marx, C. K., & Diewald, M. (2019). Work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts among employed single parents in Germany. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 39(5), 513–531. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-02-2019-0057>
- Robinson, L. D., Magee, C. A., & Caputi, P. (2018). Sole Mothers in the Workforce: A Systematic Review and Agenda for Future Work-Family Research: Sole Mothers in the Workforce. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 10(1), 280–303. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12249>
- Roman, C. (2017). Between Money and Love: Work-family Conflict Among Swedish Low-income Single Mothers. *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*, 7(3). <https://doi.org/10.18291/njwls.v7i3.97093>
- Rosenfeld, C. (1965). Why Women Start and Stop Working: A Study in Mobility. *MONTHLY LABOR REVIEW*, 7.

- Rousou, E., Kouta, C., & Middleton, N. (2016). Association of social support and socio-demographic characteristics with poor self-rated health and depressive symptomatology among single mothers in Cyprus: A descriptive cross-sectional study. *BMC Nursing*, *15*(1), 15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-016-0134-x>
- Rousou, E., Kouta, C., Middleton, N., & Karanikola, M. (2019). Mental health among single mothers in Cyprus: A cross-sectional descriptive correlational study. *BMC Women's Health*, *19*(1), 67. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-019-0763-9>
- Sabatelli, R. M., & Waldron, R. J. (1995). Measurement Issues in the Assessment of the Experiences of Parenthood. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *57*(4), 969. <https://doi.org/10.2307/353416>
- Salazar, C. (2001). *Building Boundaries and Negotiating Work at Home*. 9.
- Sampaio, R., & Mancini, M. (2007). SYSTEMATIC REVIEW STUDIES: A GUIDE FOR CAREFUL SYNTHESIS OF SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE. *Rev. Bras. Fisioter.*, *11*(1), 6.
- Sánchez-Mira, N., Bernardi, L., Moles-Kalt, B., & Sabot, C. (2021). The Reshaping of Daily Time during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Lone Parent's Work-Family Articulation in a Low-Intensity Lockdown. *Social Sciences*, *10*(7), 239. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10070239>
- Santhiveeran, J. (2010). Who Uses Formal, Early Child Care in California? A Comparative Study of Children from Immigrant and Nonimmigrant Families. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, *27*(2), 151–160. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-010-0195-8>
- Schieman, S., & Glavin, P. (2008). Trouble at the Border?: Gender, Flexibility at Work, and the Work-Home Interface. *Social Problems*, *55*(4), 590–611. <https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2008.55.4.590>
- Silva, A. H., Cunha, D. E., Gaspar, E., de Moura, G. L., Figueira, K. K., & Hörbe de Andrade Neves, T. (2017). ANÁLISE DE CONTEÚDO: FAZEMOS O QUE

DIZEMOS? UM LEVANTAMENTO DE ESTUDOS QUE DIZEM ADOPTAR A TÉCNICA. *Conhecimento Interativo*, 11(1), 168–184.

- Smyth, B. M. (2017). Special Issue on Shared-Time Parenting after Separation. *HeinOnline*, 55(4), 7.
- Spinelli, M., Lionetti, F., Pastore, M., & Fasolo, M. (2020). Parents' Stress and Children's Psychological Problems in Families Facing the COVID-19 Outbreak in Italy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 1713.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01713>
- Struffolino, E., Bernardi, L., & Voorpostel, M. (2016). Self-reported Health among Lone Mothers in Switzerland: Do Employment and Education Matter ? *Population*, 71(2), 187–213. <https://doi.org/10.3917/pope.1602.0187>
- Sullivan, C., & Smithson, J. (2007). Perspectives of homeworkers and their partners on working flexibility and gender equity. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 18(3), 448–461.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190601167797>
- Tausig, M., & Fenwick, R. (2001). Unbinding Time: Alternate Work Schedules and Work-Life Balance. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 14(1), 19.
- Tremblay, D.-G. (2020). Notes d'actualité - Le télétravail et le cotravail (coworking): Enjeux socioterritoriaux dans la foulée de la pandémie de COVID-19. *Revue Organisations & territoires*, 29(2), 159–162.
<https://doi.org/10.1522/revueot.v29n2.1167>
- Van Gasse, D., & Mortelmans, D. (2020). Single Mothers' Perspectives on the Combination of Motherhood and Work. *Social Sciences*, 9(5), 85.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci9050085>
- Vandello, J. A., Hettinger, V. E., Bosson, J. K., & Siddiqi, J. (2013). When Equal Isn't Really Equal: The Masculine Dilemma of Seeking Work Flexibility: Masculinity and Work Flexibility. *Journal of Social Issues*, 69(2), 303–321.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12016>

- Vulkan, P. (2012). *Labour Market Insecurity: The Effects of Job, Employment and Income Insecurity on the Mental Well-being of Employees*. 169–188.
- Wall, K. (2014). Fathers on Leave Alone: Does It Make a Difference to Their Lives? *Fathering*, 12(2), 16. <https://doi.org/10.3149/fth.1202.196>
- Xue, B., & McMunn, A. (2021). Gender differences in unpaid care work and psychological distress in the UK Covid-19 lockdown. *PLOS ONE*, 16(3), e0247959. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0247959>
- Yilmaz, S., Van de Putte, B., & Stevens, P. A. J. (2019). Work–family conflict: Comparing the experiences of Turkish and native Belgian women. *Community, Work & Family*, 22(3), 284–301. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2017.1360247>
- Zhang, S., Moeckel, R., Moreno, A. T., Shuai, B., & Gao, J. (2020). A work-life conflict perspective on telework. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, 141, 51–68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2020.09.007>
- Zulkifli, A., Ali, M., Pahlevi, C., & Taba, I. (2019). Family and organization roles in disaster risk reduction: *Burnout reduction on workers*. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 235, 012109. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/235/1/012109>

8. Appendix

Appendix A - Overview of the categorisation process of the articles selected for Qualitative Meta-Analysis and presentation of outstanding extracts

Category	Subcategory	Definition	Examples of extracts
Labour Force Participation	Labour Force	People active in the labour market who provide their labour capacity for the production of goods and services and who receive a salary in return (Anker, 1983)	«Single mothers and childless women (with or without children) did not have higher employment rates than partnered mothers.” (Muller et al., 2020)
Temporary Employment Contract	Temporary Employment Contract	The employment of individuals for a limited period of time, where a protection deficit tends to	"Single parents more often had temporary employment contracts and had fewer supervising responsibilities." (Reimann et al., 2019)

	exist (Campbell & Burgess, 2001)	
Employment Barrier	Career-related barriers that either actually exist or that an individual assumes they will encounter and will make it difficult to find and keep a job, based on their perceptions or convictions, and that can may shape their behaviour and performance (Kalil, 1999; Corbière et al., 2004)	"Employers who employ single mothers should not fear that their family situation will transfer to their performance at work." (Napora et al., 2017)
Family-Friendly Working-Time Arrangements	Type of arrangements which aim to improve workers' performance and enhance work-family balance (Chung, 2018)	"Low income, in combination with inconvenient and/or unpredictable working hours, split shifts, and insecure employment, thus significantly reduced the mothers' opportunities to be the kind of mother they wished to be " (Roman, 2017)

"The partnered parents (...) are more likely to telework than the single parents" (Zhang et al., 2020)

"Households with one adult and children are less likely to telework than households with multiple adults and children. " (Zhang et al., 2020)

"(...) they hold positions with lower earnings, or by necessity, are working part-time as they do not have the necessary support for the care of their children." (Rousou et al., 2019)

"Insecure employment was problematic in other ways. The mothers worried that they would not be hired again if they could not do a shift they had already agreed to. They were afraid of 'being a problem'. " (Roman, 2017)

"(...) her work schedule meant that she often had to leave her children alone at home, forcing her to put 'some of the responsibility' on their shoulders. When she worked early shifts, she left home before the children woke up. When she worked nights, the children had already gone to bed when she returned home. On top of that, her physically demanding job made her feel so worn out after a day's work that she would often go to bed before the children did. She was 'too tired to keep going'. Inflexible, nonstandard working hours, combined with the physically demanding job, thus aggravated the conflicts between different commitments." (Roman, 2017)

"Nonstandard hours often meant huge problems with coordinating different schedules.
" (Roman, 2017)

" (...) inflexible, physically strenuous jobs, nonstandard working hours, and insecure employment conditions are important explanations of this. Financial difficulties aggravated conflicts." (Roman, 2017)

"Part-time compared to full-time work would be more beneficial to health outcomes of mothers living with a partner, but not of lone mothers." (Struffolino et al., 2016)

"Several factors seem to affect the ability of the single-parent households' primary earner to work. These factors include the employment opportunities offered by the labor market, the adequate social infrastructure, the availability of part time jobs, the flexibility of the working schedules, the social and welfare settings, and the level of tangible support from the extended family (...)." (Rousou et al., 2016)

"flextime helps to reduce anxiety (...) and depression (...) for divorced, separated, or widowed mothers. " (Javed, 2019)

"Paid leaves to care for dependents, flextime, chances to reduce work hours, and working the same hours across fewer days per week were the most frequently available

options (...). (...) the perceived availability of flextime and working the same hours across fewer days per week was higher among never-married mothers." (Javed, 2019)

"Though single parents depend more on flexibility in their jobs because of higher family demands and less freedom in distributing their time and energy, they cannot benefit more from flexible working hours or from home-based telework." (Reimann et al., 2019)

"Telework could not be used as a resource; instead, it predicted higher WFC." (Reimann et al., 2019)

"Taking use of flexible working hours went along with lower WFC, and the greater the job autonomy and the more support from supervisors and colleagues, the lower the WFC." (Reimann et al., 2019)

"They worked part-time more often, but there was no significant difference with respect to relative overtime." (Reimann et al., 2019)

"I changed work so I had less fixed hours, like a nine to five job, but a job where it was possible to start later or leave early. The only thing that was needed was someone doing the job all the time. There is solidarity among colleagues, so no one is bothered if I arrive later and have to leave to get my children from school'." (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020)

"Working the same number of hours across fewer days per week (WSHW) reduced anxiety among never-married mothers (...) and depression among never-married mothers (...)." (Javed, 2019)

"(...) how inconvenient working hours and involuntary part-time influence the possibility of reconciling paid work and family." (Roman, 2017)

Balancing Work and Family Life
Work-Family and Conflict

Frustration and pressure arise when an individual's work related activities, over which they have little control, require a lot of their time and energy and interfere with the fulfilment of family responsibilities (Duxbury et al., 1994)

"Professional activity contributes both to increased well-being and a sense of achievement for mothers, but it is also the source of a sense of overburdening by the family and professional roles." (Napora et al., 2017)

" (...) higher child age was associated with lower WFC." (Moilanen et al., 2019)

"Gaining employment could lead to conflict; while the parent could gain money and self-worth, less time was available to spend with children." (Reimann et al., 2019)

"I may have more money but I don't have more time and time is important because you can be skint and be a wonderful mother." (Reimann et al., 2019)

"(...) single mothers experienced more WFC than coupled mothers." (Moilanen et al., 2019)

"Nonstandard work hours and WFC was stronger for single mothers than for coupled mothers (...)." (Moilanen et al., 2019)

"Single mothers who work more nonstandard hours perceive more strongly than their coupled counterparts that work time interferes with their family roles, responsibilities, and desires. Because work during nonstandard hours often takes place during family leisure time (i.e., evenings and weekends), the more a mother works during nonstandard hours, the more difficult it may be for her to arrange family activities such as shared family meals." (Moilanen et al., 2019)

"Nonstandard work hours are unlikely to decrease single mothers' total workload given that they are solely responsible for their households. (Moilanen et al., 2019)

"The time pressures faced by lone parents may mean that it is leisure and sports that are sacrificed, while activities that relate more directly to education are preserved." (Dermott & Pomati, 2016)

"Among parents who remained employed on-site, too much rigidity in employment schedules was occasionally perceived as an impediment to balancing employment and family demands." (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)

"As expected, parents who remained employed faced the most time pressures, although their experiences of work-family conflict varied significantly depending on the specifics of their employment situation (on-site or home-based work, hours worked), the degree of employment flexibility and the extent of their family demands." (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)

"As expected, parents who remained employed faced the most time pressures, although their experiences of work-family conflict varied significantly depending on the specifics of their employment situation (on-site or home-based work, hours worked), the degree of employment flexibility and the extent of their family demands." (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)

"Too much rigidity in her employment schedule and work demands an obstacle to work-family articulation." (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)

Family-work conflict	Frustration and tension emerge when an individual's family	"Parents with younger children tended to experience a greater increase in family demands as home-schooling took up more of their time than that of parents with older children able to work more independently." (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)
-----------------------------	--	--

commitments, over which they have little control, interfere with work-related responsibilities (Duxbury et al., 1994)

“In the beginning it was hard because he did not understand that it was not holidays. And so it was complicated because he was complaining, he said he didn’t want to do his homework, so we were stuck there, and then once he understood after many crises, well then there was the need to manage the meals, it seemed like nothing but suddenly having three meals a day [. . .] that was a lot of time spent making meals [. . .]. Sometimes I would be working from home and then either he had finished his schoolwork, [. . .] or either he had questions, and so I would say to him ‘But do something else while waiting or . . .’. Well, sometimes it was complicated to have such energy, how much to invest where? Do I leave him alone for a while and then it’s okay?[...] I have the impression that it was very intense [...] It was really too much.” (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)

"Having two children was associated with higher FWC for single parents than for parents in two-parent families," (Reimann et al., 2019)

"Single parents experience more family-to-work conflict (as they do not have partners to share the childcare and other household chores), but not more work-to-family conflict than partnered parents." (Roman, 2017)

"Single parents experienced significantly higher FWC compared with parents in two-parent families (...)." (Reimann et al., 2019)

"I have a feeling that if there were two, if I had a partner, I could do my job with less stress. Now I have to organise so many things and it all rests on me. If I do not do the organising, it will not work. It is not an easy job to do." (Yılmaz et al., 2019)

"A lesser degree of structuring was created by mealtimes and home-schooling activities, especially for those with younger children. Parents of older children able to undertake schoolwork more autonomously tended to have looser schedules." (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)

Work From Home	Type of work implemented by companies, allowing employees to access documents and work on	"Parents working from home were required to make the most adaptations to articulate conflicting demands and strategies ranged from reducing working hours, working around children's needs, and heavily resorting to informal support."(Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)
-----------------------	---	--

the computer from their home (Salazar, 2001)

"Schedules remained most structured for those who continued to work on-site, were more flexible for those working from home and were largely unstructured for those currently not working."(Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)

" Since younger children were less able to complete schoolwork at home unaided, parents required to home-school younger children experienced the most conflict between employment and family demands. Strategies to articulate the demands from both domains included compensating for heightened family responsibilities by reducing working hours, reorganisation of working time around family needs and heavy reliance on informal support." (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)

Work-Family Balance

An individual experiences work-life balance when there is little or no interference between work and family demands, thus leading to engagement, productivity

"Effective fulfilment of professional and family obligations depends on numerous factors. The major ones include support of the professional environment, family support, age, the length of marriage, type and model of relationship, and the number of children." (Napura et al., 2017)

and satisfaction (Jain & Nair, 2013)

"Single parents were significantly more engaged in both care and housework, as expected." (Reimann et al., 2019)

"(...) having a partner who is not instrumentally helpful can offend women psychologically since there is a sense of unfairness when they do everything alone despite being in a family unit. When they become a single mother, however, it is clear that they alone are responsible and this makes the situation more tolerable. I was doing everything myself when my husband and I were together (...) I had to because he did not help. So divorce did not make any difference for me." (Yılmaz et al., 2019)

"77% of lone parents have a meal with their children every day whereas the figure for couple parents was 68%. Eating a meal together has a lower profile as a measure of good parenting in the UK than it does in some other countries " (Dermott & Pomati, 2016)

"Many, particularly those working from home, sought to regain outline and structure in their work time, especially when family demands were elevated." (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)

"Since teenagers were able to fulfil more of their school work alone, the organisation of their time was more independent from that of their parents'." (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)

"(...) significantly reduce their working hours and adapt them flexibly (...). This reduction in work demands facilitated the articulation with family demands." (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)

" (...) adapt their employment schedules to meet family demands without significantly reducing their working hours (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)

"(...) parents who experienced both high work and family demands and for whom social support was vital in sustaining their new arrangements (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)

"(...) parents whose family demands were lower because the children were older (15 or over) so mostly autonomous" (...) Perceptions of conflict between domains were low in this group and the employment domain was central to everyday organisation but in a rather flexible manner." (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)

Financial Insecurity	Low Income	People who consistently have a low income face financial struggles to pay their bills and are	"Financial hardship has an important impact on single parents' status and psychological well-being." (Javed, 2019)
-----------------------------	-------------------	---	--

therefore considered to be
poor (Jarvis & Jenkins,
1997)

"Longer duration of single motherhood was associated with poorer outcomes."
(Berkman et al., 2015)

"Constantly short of money, Felicia found it difficult to stay at home on the days she had
promised to work. Therefore, she sometimes took her son to preschool even though he
was sick." (Roman, 2017)

"Lone parents are less likely than couple parents to have employed a private tutor for
their children in either core academic subjects or music over the last year " (Dermott &
Pomati, 2016)

"Single mothers generally have lower income, and experience financial hardship with
daily expenses" (Rousou et al., 2019)

"Regarding employment status, as much as 73.4% of the participants held full-time jobs,
and despite that, 79.7% of the sample reported economic hardship to meet their daily
expenses during the last 12 months." (Rousou et al., 2019)

"The mothers wanted their children to have 'normal childhoods', (...). Having a very tight budget made it difficult to realize this aspiration, however. Not having enough money for short vacations, visits to amusement parks, or organized activities for their children, 'like everyone else', was a source of distress for the mothers. Sometimes schools and preschools made things worse by arranging activities that cost money (trips, excursions, picnics, etc.). This tended to put the mothers in an even more problematic spot because of their tight budget." (Roman, 2017)

"A startling 27% of lone parents said that they had skimped on food for themselves 'often' compared to 9% of couple parents. " (Dermott & Pomati, 2016)

"Overall, although children are more likely to be deprived in lone parent households, our analysis presents a picture of lone parents protecting their children through their economising." (Dermott & Pomati, 2016)

"One strategy used by the low-income mothers was to try to find alternative ways to acquire things that their children wanted or needed, like buying second hand clothes and things." (Roman, 2017)

"Lone parents are also three times more likely to have bought second-hand clothes instead of new ones and twice as likely to have continued to wear worn-out clothes in order to keep their cost of living down. " (Dermott & Pomati, 2016)

"Other less stark differences include visits to the hairdresser and expenditure on hobbies as well as social visits, although differences between couple and lone parents for these items are much narrower, especially among parents in poverty." (Dermott & Pomati, 2016)

"Work increases monthly family income and restricts economic hardship, thus it might alleviate the additional economic-related stress (...), as well as provide additional opportunities for social support."
(Rousou et al., 2019)

Income Insecurity	Individuals with income insecurity are particularly exposed to financial losses and increased financial burdens, affecting their well-being (Vulkan, 2012)	"Income insecurity was another major problem for the mothers employed on an hourly basis. For this reason, they strived to work as many hours as possible. So I really don't know how to make it work [to combine work and family], but, as I said, you have to [make it work]; you really don't have a choice." (Roman, 2017)
--------------------------	--	--

"most parents in the sample have had to deal with the uncertainties associated with reduced or fluctuating income in the past and hence COVID-related changes did not represent a particular challenge." (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)

"The poverty risks of working-age (...) single parents are on average about 11 percentage points higher than that of working-age couples without children." (Alm et al., 2020)

"In addition, lone parents, the vast majority of whom are women, are at a greater risk of poverty and poor health (...)." (Xue & McMunn, 2021)

Financial Help Financial assistance when income is too low to cover living expenses (Heintz-Martin, 2020) "Working-age single-adult households are much less likely to be able to rely on a second earner to escape poverty." (Alm et al., 2020)

"Both lone and couple parents in poverty draw on financial help from relatives (more than 50%), pawnbrokers (10%) and money lenders (15%) to pay for day-to-day needs, but lone parents in poverty are three times more likely to have used a Social Fund loan (24%) than couple parents in poverty (7%) and twice as likely to have borrowed from friends (27% and 13% respectively)." (Dermott & Pomati, 2016)

Parenthood ideology **Parenting Perspectives** This relates to how parents allocate their time, their financial and emotional resources to "The combination of this strict motherhood ideology and flexible workplace behavior results in a family-centered lifestyle in which everything is a function of parenting. Therefore, single mothers who opt for a work–family symbiosis also seem to alter their career aspirations." (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020)

nurture and raise their children (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020)

"Single mothers in this category look for ways to bend their workplace behavior around a rigid motherhood ideology, which they remain committed to after divorce." (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020)

"Good motherhood, for me is [hesitates] mainly vague things. Being there for your children. Giving them a warm nest feeling, the feeling that you can be there for them. It's not really about doing things but about generating this feeling of warmth." (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020)

"In re-invented single motherhood, we find single mothers who have a lean motherhood ideology and flexible workplace behavior. This means that they find a satisfactory work-life balance through a flexible work environment and a flexible motherhood ideology, which results in a new perspective on motherhood. "When I was single, I changed my mindset. I was always struggling with those thoughts .. I am not able to be a good employee (...) I was a mess, an underachiever in all areas of my life ... Until I realized that I may not have been the mother that I wanted to be first, different things were

important. I also didn't have the career I dreamt of when I was studying, but I was doing my job in my own way." (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020)

"This position is characterized by a family-centered work ethic." (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020)

" This position may also result in more critical behavior if a single mother decides to look for new career opportunities (although not all single parents would risk changing jobs after divorce). A job has to be, in the first place, family-friendly in its organization, while the job content seems to be less important, as long as it is possible to combine it with a stricter motherhood ideology. Single mothers who have a work-family symbiosis perspective thus look for jobs that offer a flexibility that enables them to give up few of their motherhood aspirations." (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020)

"When I got divorced, I locked myself up somewhat at work. I worked hard and the appreciation at work felt so good and my parents took care of the children. Sometimes I felt bad because I was so absent [. . .] but then again, I thought, if they want food on the table, mummy needs to work and if they want a happy mummy, mummy has to work." (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020)

"I had asked [them] to let me try, I said I could do it as a full-timer, I would stay longer and take no breaks, not even a lunch break, I needed the money. I also didn't want to do

a boring part-time job, and I assumed I would get quicker in my routines. Reality proved that I just gained less time for my children, but I had to do it.'" (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020)

"Single mothers want to retain a strict motherhood ideology while still meeting the demands of a rigid workplace. This can result in a problematic situation, in which the two life spheres are in conflict." (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020)

"This perspective is often the result of not being able to adjust workplace behavior and/or not being willing to relax one's motherhood ideology." (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020)

"Others who find themselves in this category are thus often family-centered mothers who are simply not able to adjust their work environment in accordance with their strict motherhood ideology and who do not want to compromise this ideology for their work." (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020)

"Before the divorce, I was doing my job all the time. I did extra hours . . . every week! I was at the office early in the morning and I stayed really late. There was always someone with the children so I could do it, but I had to stop this after the divorce. I just do the hours I'm paid for, not trying to do things better than my colleagues, I'm gone at half past 3. The earth is still turning the same lame circles." (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020)

"Either they look for a job with a more flexible organization of labor or they change their attitude about work, or both. In some cases, the single mothers already had a flexible and family-friendly workplace that ensured they did not experience insurmountable difficulties after divorce. However, other single mothers in this category had to look for or create a more flexible and/or family-friendly workplace and succeeded." (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020)

Patriarchal Family System	Female discrimination and gender inequality (Fulcher & Scott, 2011)	"Apart from the additional responsibilities single mothers have to deal with, Turkish women also face the pressures of social control. As single mothers in a strong patriarchal family system, they often confront disapproval from the wider community." (Yilmaz et al., 2019)
----------------------------------	---	--

"The mothers typically did not want to express feelings of anguish and strain in front of their children. Their efforts to maintain a happy face indicate the existence of a social rule instructing mothers to spare their children from their own feelings of sorrow and grief." (Roman, 2017)

Role Performance	Objective judgment of role performance refers to an external judgement of whether a parent's	"They had internalized the idea that 'good' parenting means spending a large amount of time with their children. However, in practice, the money-care dilemma meant that these parents had to spend long hours at work, leaving them less time to devote to their children. This discrepancy between the notion of 'good' mothering and the means to
-------------------------	--	--

parenting skills or role attain that goal was a source of conflict that fostered feelings of guilt and inadequacy." meet societal norms and (Roman, 2017) expectations, while subjective judgment refers to parents judging their own parenting performance (Sabatelli & Waldron, 1995)

"I am a terrible mother, yes [. . .] (...) [Child name] has a much better daddy than most kids, because he plans activities with his daughter and I don't have time to plan activities. I invite her friends to come and play with her because it's easy for me . . . I can do my own thing then. I want to use my time for her, but I just can't do it the way her father does.'" (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020)

"Generally, the expectation that children should not spend long days at preschool complicated the everyday lives of the single mothers. Some mothers frequently asked friends and relatives to pick up the child in order to meet the expectation from preschool teachers." (Roman, 2017)

Mental health

Refers to the state of psychological and social well-being of an individual (Sabatelli & Waldron, 1995) "Single mothers not only face psychological challenges, such as feelings of failure after a marriage break up, but also the practical need to maintain their mothering efforts on their own." (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020)

"Younger single mothers were twice as likely and mid-age single mothers were four times as likely, to experience higher levels of stress." (Rousou et al., 2019)

" 38.9 % of single mothers in Cyprus report clinically depressive symptoms, which is nearly three times higher than the lifetime prevalence of depression among the general population according to Eurostat." (Rousou et al., 2016)

"Partnered mothers are more likely to report good health than lone mothers (89% versus 84%)." (Struffolino et al., 2016)

"Most commonly reported were depression (32.2 %), eczema (28 %) and thyroid gland disorders (24.6) Despite that, only 29.1 % of the sample reported that they have recently visited a doctor for that health problem." (Rousou et al., 2016)

"Nearly half of the sample (...) rated their level of general health as poor/fair. Additionally, 38.9 % (...) indicating clinically depressive symptoms." (Rousou et al., 2016)

"Among single mothers who reported economic hardship for daily expenses in the last 12 months, both the prevalence of poor self-rated health (...), as well as the prevalence of clinically depressive symptoms (...) appeared much higher than those who did not report economic hardship." (Rousou et al., 2016)

"Single mothers who were recipients of single mothers' allowance (...) and reported lower monthly family income (...) were more likely to experience clinically depressive symptoms." (Rousou et al., 2016)

"Single mothers who experience the lower level of social support were nearly 18 times more likely to suffer depressive symptoms." (Rousou et al., 2016)

"Single mothers who hold a part-time job were more likely to experience clinical depressive symptoms compared to those who were work- ing full time." (Rousou et al., 2016)

"Single motherhood was less consistently associated with health in Continental Western, Eastern or Southern European countries" (Berkman et al., 2015)

"There is a significant relationship between single parent and Burnout. This relationship is positive, where employees who are a single parent have a higher burnout rate than employees who are not a single parent." (Zulkifli et al., 2019)

"The single parent situation by itself has resulted in fatigue in employees." (Zulkifli et al., 2019)

"Single parent had a significant effect on sleep disorder, which was a strong predictor of burnout." (Zulkifli et al., 2019)

"Regarding the participants' health status, 49.4% of the single mothers have reported a long-standing illness, and depression was the most commonly reported one with the rate of 32.2%." (Rousou et al., 2019)

"The prevalence of mental distress was statistically significantly higher among single mothers who had higher education (63.5%) and junior high school education (60.0%), compared to those who had university education (...)." (Rousou et al., 2019)

"(...) single mothers compared to any other group of women, experience greater levels of mental distress (...), physical disability (...), poorer psychological health [20] and lower levels of life satisfaction and happiness (...)." (Rousou et al., 2019)

"The consequences of WFC and FWC, such conflicts are negatively correlated with health and well-being which are in turn important resources for dealing with competing demands in different life spheres." (Reimann et al., 2019)

Childcare	Formal Informal Childcare	and	The child is taken care of at a formal childcare institution or by a family member or non-family member (Bertolote, 2008)	"The role of grandparents as childcare providers was purposefully reduced in several families during the period to protect them from contracting the virus." (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)
------------------	--	------------	---	--

"It was precisely the fact that my sister was here. My sister, throughout the lockdown, my sister stayed with us. So it's her who stayed with the children [. . .] I think that if my sister, my sister had not been here, it would not have been possible to go to work for two half days, yes, indeed."" (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)

"Single parents experience more FWC when they have to depend on formal childcare." (Reimann et al., 2019)

"Only a place that requires a longer drive is offered to them instead of a place in a childcare facility close to their home." (Reimann et al., 2019)

"Expensive private child care that could compensate for the inflexibility of opening hours cannot be shouldered by those parents." (Reimann et al., 2019)

"Especially for single mothers, the price of childcare could be too high compared with their single-income resource level (...)." (Muller et al., 2020)

"Unpredictable working hours: "Her employer would call in the morning if they were short of staff. (...) it caused childcare problems, as some shifts began earlier or finished later than the opening and closing times of her youngest child's preschool. While Louise's colleagues had agreed that she could bring her youngest child to work in the morning if necessary, and take her to preschool when it opened, for the most part Louise depended on her mother and sister being able to turn out on short notice. Other single mothers with on-call employment shared this predicament. They repeatedly had to ask close relatives for help whenever there was a problem with dropping off or picking up their children at preschool, or when their children were sick." (Roman, 2017)

"Rakel had no access to a social support network to help her out. One of her children was old enough to take care of the younger siblings for brief periods, however. Thanks to her, Rakel was able to work long and inconvenient hours. The daughter helped with 'all these things, taking care of the younger ones, accompanying them on the bus, taking care of this and that'." (Roman, 2017)

Social support	Formal and Informal Support	<p>Formal social support is the material and emotional support provided by formal organisations and informal social support consists of help provided by individuals such as family members, friends and others (Lu et al., 2020)</p>	<p>"Support with childcare and home-schooling was central to parents' ability to sustain new arrangements for those with simultaneously high employment and family demands." (Sánchez-Mira et al., 2021)</p>
			<p>"(...) received more support from their supervisor but not from their colleagues." (Reimann et al., 2019)</p>
			<p>"Social support and cohesive networks may partially explain associations between single motherhood and health. Social support is itself an important predictor of adult health and functioning." (Berkman et al., 2015)</p>
Family-friendly policies		<p>Initiatives proposed by companies such as childcare and working-</p>	<p>"Reconciliation policies may buffer the negative effects of lone parenthood on health by reducing the strain on mothers in this situation" (Struffolino et al., 2016)</p>

time arrangements that aim help employees manage their family responsibilities (Albrecht, 2003)

"Family-friendly measures will not solve the problem of inflexibility, not even for those who would seemingly benefit from more flexible work conditions" (Reimann et al., 2019)

"The equilibration of job demands and resources discussed for the relationship with WFC does not apply for family demands and resources and their relationships with FWC." (Reimann et al., 2019)

"Single mothers experience a lower level of life satisfaction and use help-seeking strategies to cope with work-related stress with considerably lower frequency." (Napora et al., 2017)

Appendix B - Overview of journals in which the articles were published

Journal	Number of articles	Areas
An International Journal	1	Human Resource Management, Organizational Behavior
BMC Nursing	1	Public Health
BMC Women's Health	1	Public Health
Community, Work & Family	1	Family
Elsevier	1	Social Science, Public Health
European Sociological Review	1	Social Science
Global Business and Organizational Excellence	1	Human Resource Management, Organizational Behavior

Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Science	1	Family
International Journal of Occupational Medicine and Environmental Health	1	Public Health
IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science	1	Environmental Science
Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health	1	Public Health
Journal Of European Social Policy	1	Social Science
Nordic Journal of working life studies	1	Human Resource Management, Organizational Behaviour
PLOS One	1	Public Health
Population	1	Social Science, Public Health
SAGE - Critical Social Policy	1	Social Science

Social Sciences	2	Social Science, Psychology
Springer	1	Psychology, Social Science
