



# The Role of Work Family Balance as Mediator on the Relationship Between Spousal Support and Subjective Career Success

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Work and family are two domains that cannot be separated in human life as they influence each other. The objective of this study was to examine the mediating role of work-family balance on the relationship between spousal support and subjective career success. Data were collected via survey questionnaire method from 416 nurses of hospitals in Jambi, Indonesia. To test the hypotheses, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) of statistical technique using Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS) version 22 and Preacher and Hayes's method were employed. The result of the study showed that all four hypotheses are supported. With regards to the theoretical contributions, this study brings together the literature on role theory, spillover theory and conservation of resources theory in one model. Practical contributions are also divided.

**Keywords:** Spousal Support, Work-Family Balance, Subjective Career Success.

IP: 182.255.1.5 On: Wed, 02 May 2018 14:35:03  
Delivered by Ingenta

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Work and family are two different domains which are closely interwoven; therefore, both must be balanced as they are equally important. It is recognized that to achieve the balance of multiple roles, support from both work and family domains are needed.<sup>1-3</sup> However, most previous research focused on social support from work domain such as organizational, supervisory, and co-worker supports.<sup>4,5</sup> Many researchers have also investigated social support as an antecedent of work-family conflict.<sup>5,6</sup> To the best of my knowledge, studies on the role of spousal support as an antecedent of work-family balance in relation to partner's career success are still at its infancy. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between spousal support and subjective career success using work-family balance as mediator. By investigating the process, the findings are expected to explain how and why spousal support and work-family balance are related to career success. It can also identify the mediating variables that explains the mechanism through which spousal support influences work-family balance and career success, providing a new perspective to the existing literature on work and family.

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## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Reference [7] define career as an evolving sequence of a person's work experience over time. Then, the meaning of success is mainly influenced by the judgment of the person who assesses it. People will perceive their success with subjective and less visible criteria such as satisfaction, interest, and feelings about work life roles that individuals occupy (8). Meanwhile, a society will assess someone's success based on the objective and visible criteria—high salary and quick promotion.<sup>8</sup>

There are two reasons why recently career success has been evaluated subjectively. First, career success is now becoming more complex following the change of career goals and aspirations over time.<sup>9</sup> Since the 1990s, high pay, frequent promotions, and fast track upward mobility within the organizational hierarchy have been less prominent.<sup>8</sup> People have the heterogeneity of career success criteria. For instance, some people pursue financial success as the primary criteria; while others do not. Second, there is no absolute criterion for evaluating career success in the modern business context. It may be conducted correctly by a person based on his or her own particular criteria.<sup>10</sup>

Spousal support can be defined as the direct and indirect assistance that is given by a spouse that can enhance performance at work and performance at the household.<sup>4</sup> Indirect assistance means the activity that spousal help may enable their partner

to spend more time at work or to motivate a person in facing obstacles at work. For instance, by freeing the household tasks may enable their partner to spend more time at work. Giving moral support also may enhance the performance a person at work. Direct assistance such as clerical help and access to information through personal contacts and other means also contribute to help their partner at work domain directly.<sup>4</sup>

Several previous studies have provided evidence on the effects of spousal support to career success. The study that investigated 12 main predictors of career success conducted by Ref. [11] showed that family support is the most important predictor of career success after work experience, education and personality. Another study by Ref. [12] concluded that individual's domestic life correlate significantly with the level of career success. The moral support provided by the spouse, will affect the employees' work. Since the present study has viewed career success from the individual perception, based on the theoretical and empirical evidence above, the following hypothesis is proposed.

**HYPOTHESIS 1.** *There is a direct positive relationship between spousal support and subjective career success.*

The imbalance of work and family roles means there is an incompatibility between the work and family roles.<sup>13</sup> It occurs because the usage of resources in one role can lead to a diminution of resources in another role,<sup>14</sup> hence, the inadequacy of resources arises. Conservation of resources theory proposes that lose or insufficient of resources will impact to psychological stress, hence, individual will strive to attain and sustain resources that help them reduce the inconvenient situation.<sup>14</sup> As resource gain and loss are continual and revolving processes, one mechanism to attain and maintain the resource is the accumulation of resources.<sup>15</sup>

Spousal support is one of the resources that may accumulate. Talking and sharing experience with spouse may significantly reduce the psychological stress that was caused by the imbalance of roles. It should help recharge one's resources to enable an employee to better focus on the work domain and sharing in doing the task at home. Through the accumulation of resources, spousal support may help employees to achieve the balance of role.<sup>2</sup>

Previous research showed that the increased spousal support is related to lower levels of work-family conflict.<sup>5</sup> Although work-family balance and work family conflict is different in meaning, minimizing work family conflict, in essence is similar to achieve work-family balance.<sup>16,17</sup> Therefore I propose the hypothesis:

**HYPOTHESIS 2.** *There is a direct positive relationship between spousal support and work-family balance.*

Positive spillover theory emphasizes the tendency of employee to carry their emotions, attitudes, skills and behavior that they establish at home into their work and vice versa.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, positive affective in achieving the balance of work and family role will carry over to influence perceptions their achievement in work domain.

Some empirical studies support the link between work-family balance and career success. For instance, a study by Ref. [19] concluded that work-family balance is strongly and positively linked to career satisfaction. Work life balance has a positive relationship to career advancement outcome

also is found by Ref. [20]. Therefore, I propose the hypothesis:

**HYPOTHESIS 3.** *There is a direct positive relationship between work-family balance and subjective career success.*

Role theory posits that people have multiple roles in work and family domain. On the other hand, people also have the scarcity of resources such as time and energy to meet the demand of multiple roles. The time and energy that was used in one role will affect to the availability of time and energy for other roles. Hence, the multiplicity of roles tendency produces role conflict and role overload.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, people that have multiple roles will have the opportunity toward the imbalance of roles.

One of the ways to reduce the imbalance of the role is through negotiating and sharing between an individual and his/her role related partner such as spousal support.<sup>1,3</sup> There are two ways on how the role of spousal support as the antecedent of work-family balance. First, spousal support can provide emotional support by listening and empathizing with each other concerning work-family struggles hence the perceived of work-family conflict reduced and work-family balance achieved.<sup>6</sup> Second, spousal support actively accepts family responsibility to reduce the workload of household. For instance, by sharing the task of household and offering suggestions on how to better manage the multiple roles in achieving the balance of work and family role.<sup>1,4,6</sup> Therefore, by supporting role theory, it can say that work-family balance occurs when there is the spousal support.

Refers to spillover theory, if employee perceives they achieve work-family balance with helping spousal support, it means they have a positive experience at family domain. This positive spillover will influence their performance at work, including their positive perception about their career achievement and satisfied feeling toward their career. In other word, work-family balance is the bridge between the family domain (where partner support occurs) and the work domain (where the career success occurs).

Previous studies have shown that spousal support is an antecedent of work-family conflict.<sup>5,17</sup> Then, the study was conducted by Ref. [21] has shown that work family conflict is a crucial antecedents of career satisfaction, where higher the work family conflict has been found to result in lower career satisfaction. Similar to this finding,<sup>16</sup> demonstrated that work family conflict contribute to job and career satisfaction negatively. Indeed, extant research on work-family balance has largely used work family conflict as a proxy for work-family,<sup>2</sup> although those concepts are theoretically and empirically distinct.<sup>1</sup> Based on these relationships, this study proposes the hypothesis:

**HYPOTHESIS 4.** *Work-family balance partially mediate the relationship between spousal support and subjective career success.*

## 3. METHOD

### 3.1. Research Design

This study chose a quantitative research design because this study tested a predictive model developed on the basis of existing theory. The main data consisting of spousal support, work-family balance and career success were collected at one time simultaneously.

### 3.2. Measurement

Spousal support reflects the four types of support as conceptualized by Ref. [15]. They are emotional, instrumental, informational and appraisal support that was given by one's spouse to assist enhancing performance at work and in the households.

Work-family balance is measured using six items of questionnaires to reflect the overall degree of balance the respondents experience between their work and family lives. These items are adapted from Ref. [1].

Subjective career success reflects the third types of career success criteria, namely financial success, hierarchical success and career satisfaction as conceptualized by Ref. [19]. Financial and hierarchical success is the perception of the respondents about their financial success and hierarchical success which adapted from Ref. [12]. Career satisfaction refers to the perception of the respondents about their career satisfaction and is adapted from Ref. [22]. All of item used a 5-point of Likert scales.

### 3.3. Sample and Procedure

To ensure this study achieves its targeted number of respondents, 456 survey questionnaires were distributed to the nurses who have been promoted at least once in their career and who had been married and had at least one child below middle school living with them.

To test the hypotheses, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was applied using the AMOS software package version 22. To test the significance the role of WFB as mediator, the Preacher and Hayes's method was used.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Sample Description

Of 456, 442 sets of questionnaires were returned. After screening the data, only 416 data respondent were usable for analysis. The majority of respondents were female (88%) and hold a nursing diploma (81.29%). The average age was 38 years (s.d. = 7.64) and the average tenure in the current organization was 14 years (s.d. = 7.24). A total of 42.45% of their spouse's employments were as government's officers, 38.85% as private workers and others, total to 18.70%.

### 4.2. Measurement Model Assessment

A series of CFA were conducted as the first step to assess the measurement model. The result showed that the model was poorly fit, because the fit criteria, i.e., TLI = .88, IFI = 0.89 and CFI = .89 were less than the value recommended (equal to or

greater than .90). Only RMSEA = .066 and SRMR = .057 met the value recommended (between .05 until .08).

Then, data were run again after inspecting factor loading, correlation among construct and standardized residual covariance. The result of the CFA of the re-estimated measurement model showed the chi-square value ( $\chi^2$ ) = 618.91 with degree of freedom = 261 at probability = .00. Although the value of  $\chi^2$  was significant as an indication of non-fit model, other fit criteria such as RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .05, TLI = .91, IFI = .92, CFI = .92 met the value recommended. Therefore, it is concluded that the re-estimated CFA model is a good fit model.

### 4.3. Structural Model Assessment

The result of career success model showed a good fit to the data with  $\chi^2(261) = 618.91$  at  $p < .001$ , RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .05, TLI = .90, IFI = .92, CFI = .92. It indicated that the model can be categorized as a good fit model.

### 4.4. Hypothesis Testing

#### 4.4.1. Direct Effects of the Independent Variable to Dependent Variable

The following table presents the direct effect between the constructs studied.

The output of AMOS indicates that the first hypothesis, the second hypothesis, and the third hypothesis are supported.

#### 4.4.2. Indirect Effects and Total Effects of the Independent Variable to Dependent Variable

Table II shows that the relationship between spousal support and subjective career success has standardized total effect of .637. There was an indirect effect of spousal support on subjective career success that acted through work-family balance. The role of work-family balance as a mediator variable had standardized indirect effect of .273.

### 4.5. Significance Test of Mediating Effect

Using 10,000 bootstrap samples to calculate indirect effects, we ran both at 95 percent level of confidence interval for significance test of mediator variable. The following Table III shows the result of Preacher and Hayes's method output.

The result shows that there is no zero value between the confidence interval's lower and upper value at 95 confidence of interval. It indicates that work-family balance is significant as a mediator variable on the relationship between spousal support and subjective career success.

Table I. Direct effects.

Independent variable (X)	Dependent variable (Y)	Standardized direct effect	Signification/meaning
Spousal support	Subjective career success	.364***	Significant at .001/supported
Spousal support	Work-family balance	.522***	Significant at .001/supported
Work-family balance	Subjective career success	.522***	Significant at .001/supported

Table II. Indirect effects and total effects.

Standardized total effect	Independent variable (X)	Mediator variable (M)	Dependent variable (Y)	Standardized indirect effect
.637	Spousal support	Work-family balance	Subjective career success	.273

Table III. The output of preacher and hayes's method for mediating role.

Hypothesis	CI for 95	
	Lower value	Upper value
Work-family balance partially mediates the relationship between spousal support and subjective career success	.1032	.2181

## 5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have potential contributions to the existing literature. First, the previous studies reported the role of the spousal support as a negative antecedent of work-family conflict.<sup>6</sup> The results of the present study have demonstrated that spousal support is also a factor that directly relates to work-family balance. Second, the finding also demonstrate important role of work-family balance in influencing career success both direct and indirectly. Support from spouses, both direct and indirectly, enable individuals to combine work and family roles harmoniously which influence their subjective career success.

This finding implies that the career success is also influenced by family factor, not only individual and organizational factors. For these reasons, it is a compulsory for an organization to pay attention to the ability of their employees to balance between work and family roles.

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