

# The role of work-family conflict in mediating the influence of social support on the psychological well-being of career women

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## Abstract

As time progresses, the participation of women in the workforce is no longer considered taboo. Psychological well-being has become a focal point for experts due to its crucial role for career women. However, achieving it poses a challenge, especially for those with dual roles as employees and spouses/mothers. Efforts to enhance psychological well-being can be achieved through good social support. This research explores the role of work-family conflict as a mediator in the influence of social support on the psychological well-being of career women. The study employed a quantitative cross-sectional approach with purposive sampling techniques. The subjects consisted of 248 permanent female employees with families, and they were measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Work-Family Conflict Scale, and Psychological Well-Being Scale. Furthermore, mediation analysis was conducted using Hayes's PROCESS model 4. The results indicate that social support has a direct and indirect impact on psychological well-being ( $\beta = 1.27$ ; LLCI = 1.16; ULCI = 1.39) and also influences it indirectly through work-family conflict ( $\beta = 0.35$ ; LLCI = 0.18; ULCI = 0.48). The findings emphasize the role of environmental support in the psychological well-being of career women.

## Keywords

Career women, psychological well-being, social support, work-family conflict

## Introduction

One of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) proposed by the UN is to achieve Gender Equality (United Nations, 2015). As part of the 17 SDGs, the UN emphasizes environmental and socio-economic factors and promotes human well-being through gender equality (Machín-Rincón et al., 2020). Gender equality is about equal rights and creating an environment that supports women in exploring their potential. This includes efforts to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination in the workplace and ensure that women have equal access to economic opportunities. Achieving gender equality through equal job opportunities is essential for creating a more sustainable and fair society where the full potential of every individual, regardless of gender, can be fully recognized and utilized (Flood et al., 2021).

In Indonesia, women entering the workforce has become widely accepted and no longer considered taboo. Previously, women were often expected to confine themselves to roles as wives and mothers. However, societal norms have evolved over time, pushing for greater gender equality and economic independence for women. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency, women now make up 48.65% of the workforce in Indonesia (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Economic pressures are a major factor influencing this trend (Karmeli & Julisatina, 2023). Additionally, women also work to fulfill their existential needs through their careers. This phenomenon changes the old perspective that a woman's role is limited to housekeeping, showing that they are also actively seeking and pursuing professional career opportunities. Career women do not only focus on the financial aspect but also

strive to fulfill their potential and personal ambitions through achievements in their careers (Muamar, 2019).

When discussing the work environment, psychological well-being plays a vital role. Throughout history, experts have often discussed psychological well-being. In ancient Greece, Aristotle defined well-being as happiness or material possessions and leading a good and fulfilling life (Dierendonck & Lam, 2022). This idea continues to evolve, and understanding this concept deepens further. Building on Aristotle's ideas, psychological well-being is an individual's ability to find meaning in life and realize their full potential (Ryff, 2013). Ryff identifies six aspects of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, life purpose, and personal growth. Individuals with high psychological well-being are characterized by mastery of these aspects. On the other hand, individuals with low psychological well-being may feel dissatisfied with themselves, struggle in relationships, rely heavily on others, find it challenging to adapt or control their environment, lack a sense of life purpose, and have limited awareness or ability to develop themselves.

This concept is not only relevant in the context of personal life but also in the surrounding environment. Following Ryff's research, other studies investigate psychological

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well-being related to the workplace (Bartels et al., 2019). In the workplace, psychological well-being encompasses the satisfaction, happiness, and fulfilment that employees experience in their roles. More and more studies and current practices show that workers' psychological well-being plays a significant role in the workplace. The psychological well-being of employees contributes positively to achieving optimal performance and high productivity and fostering positive work relationships (Kinderen & Khapova, 2019). In addition to benefiting individuals directly, psychological well-being also impacts the work environment. Employees who experience happiness and satisfaction in their work tend to collaborate more effectively within teams. This helps create a positive work environment that supports collective professional growth. By comprehending and nurturing the psychological well-being of employees, companies can attain improved results and establish a more positive and enduring work environment.

Psychological well-being shows differences between men and women (Matud et al., 2019). The study found that women generally scored higher in personal growth and positive relationships with others. Similarly, another research found that women consistently have better positive relationships with others than men (Matud et al., 2021). Furthermore, it was discovered that having a job is associated with psychological well-being in women. By fulfilling their potential through having a job and career, women have a more significant opportunity to achieve high psychological well-being.

The process of fulfilling this potential involves achieving productivity levels that align with the responsibilities entrusted to employees by the company. In the modern industrial era, employees are expected by the company to balance various roles in their lives while maintaining performance. In reality, many career women often allocate more time to work than to their families (Anggraeni & Wahyuni, 2019). This imbalance of roles is reflected in the struggle to meet expectations as a worker and as a family member, which subsequently affects their psychological well-being. This phenomenon is known as work-family conflict, which is a factor that affecting psychological well-being. The higher the work-family conflict, the lower the psychological well-being of employees. On the other hand, lower levels of work-family conflict correspond to higher psychological well-being among employees (Obrenovic et al., 2020).

In industrial and organizational psychology, risk management encompasses individuals and organizations and their interconnection with families. While an individual's job contributes significantly, various aspects of employees' personal lives also influence the situation. Individuals may experience conflicts between their roles as workers and their roles as family members, it is often referred as work-family conflict (Cavagnis et al., 2023). Failing to prevent work-family conflict can negatively affect both the company and the employees (Cazan et al., 2019). Work-family conflict is divided into two aspects: work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict. Individuals with high levels of work-family conflict typically struggle to effectively separate personal and professional matters across different contexts, including time, location, and intensity. Conversely, individuals with low levels of work-family conflict typically succeed in harmonizing their roles as employees within a company and as family members.

Although work-family conflict affects employees regardless of gender, it is more commonly experienced by women than men (Young, 2019). According to a study, women tend to experience higher levels of work-family conflict than men (Van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). Studies focusing on high levels of work-family conflict among women, even when working from home, emphasize the importance of understanding these complex dynamics. Although times continue to evolve, women in careers frequently encounter dual demands and overlapping roles in their daily lives. This ultimately has a negative impact on them.

In the context of work-family conflict, social support is crucial in affecting employees' dual-role conflict. According to a previous study, family social support reduces the pressure of role conflict experienced by employees (Pluut et al., 2018). Initially, social support was seen as a buffering mechanism, wherein the interpersonal relationships individuals maintain with those around them can help ease stressful and conflicting environments (Cohen & McKay, 2020). Social support is described as the provision of emotional, instrumental, or informational assistance through close and meaningful relationships, which plays a vital role in promoting mental health, well-being, and long-term thriving (Feeney & Collins, 2015).

For career women, social support comes from various sources, such as the work environment and their families. Social support for career women in the workplace involves organizational policies and teamwork with their colleagues. In the family environment, career women receive social support through comfort, attention, and appreciation provided by family members. A study has shown that social support influences women's psychological well-being, whether directly or indirectly (Ickes et al., 2018). Another study shows that social support significantly impacts the psychological well-being of career women (Arfianto et al., 2020). Social support emerges as a significant factor affecting psychological well-being. The social support received by career women positively affects their psychological well-being (Nazwirman et al., 2018). In line with these findings, social support from close individuals has been observed to enhance the sense of being noticed, loved, and emotionally valued among working women (Baheiraei et al., 2012; Gillman et al., 2023). As a result, they experience greater psychological well-being.

Based on the phenomena discussed above, it is known that psychological well-being, with factors such as work-family conflict and social support, is an interesting concept to research. Previous similar research has explored how social support impacts psychological well-being (Nazwirman et al., 2018). Other studies also highlight the impact of social support on work-family conflict (Anggriana et al., 2015). Furthermore, research has revealed the influence of work-family conflict on psychological well-being (Anggarwati & Thamrin, 2020). Although these studies have uncovered the relationships between each variable, no research has examined the role of work-family conflict as a mediator in the influence of social support on the psychological well-being of career women. Therefore, this research aims to explore the role of work-family conflict as a mediator in social support's influence on career women's psychological well-being.

This research is expected to contribute to expanding, enriching, and developing the body of knowledge in

psychology, particularly in the fields of Industrial and Organizational Psychology and Clinical Psychology, focusing on social support, work-family conflict, and psychological well-being. Furthermore, this research is expected to serve as a reference for career women regarding their psychological well-being and the predictors that influence it, specifically social support and work-family conflict.

## Method

### Participants

This research involved 248 female employees who were permanently employed in Indonesia. The sample size was determined using saturated sampling, which enabled generalization while minimizing potential errors. This research utilized a non-probability sampling technique known as convenience sampling, in which the researcher announces the study and participants self-select if they wish to participate (Stratton, 2021).

### Research Instruments

The independent variable (X) used in the study was social support. Social support is about how interactions in the environment could enhance individual well-being. The instrument used to measure variable X was the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support questionnaire (Zimet et al., 1988). This scale reveals three aspects: partners, family, and friends. There were 12 favourable items measured using a Likert scale. The Likert scale used 5 points, from 1 for strongly disagree to 7 for strongly agree. According to the analysis, this measurement tool demonstrated a reliability of 0.83, indicating a high level of reliability (Hasbi & Alwi, 2022). An example item from this scale was "I receive the emotional assistance and support I require from my family."

The mediator variable (M) used in this study was Work-family conflict. Work-family conflict refers to the extent of conflict arising from the mismatch of roles experienced by individuals in their work and family life. The instrument used to measure variable M was the Work and Family Conflict Scale questionnaire (Haslam et al., 2015). This scale revealed two aspects: Work-to-family Conflict and Family-to-work Conflict. Ten favorable items were measured using a Likert scale. The Likert scale used 7 points, from 1 for strongly disagree to 7 for strongly agree. The reliability coefficient of this measurement tool was 0.75, indicating a high level of reliability (Hartika et al., 2019). An example item from this scale was "My job prevents me from spending enough quality time with my family."

The dependent variable (Y) used in this research was Psychological well-being. Psychological well-being refers to the extent to which an individual can have positive relationships with oneself and others, have self-autonomy, create and manage environments suitable to their needs, persistently strive to meet life goals and strive for self-development. The Psychological Well-being Scale questionnaire measures variable Y (Ryff, 1989). This scale revealed six aspects: self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and personal growth. The questionnaire consisted of 18 items measured using a Likert scale. Ten items were favorable,

while eight items were unfavorable. The Likert scale used 7 points, from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree. The reliability test showed a score of 0.89, indicating a high level of reliability (Sofyanty & Setiawan, 2020). An example item from this scale was "I am confident in my own opinions, even if they differ from the opinions of most people."

### Data Analysis Technique

The final stage was the data analysis, where the data obtained from the survey through Google Forms was processed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25 on the Windows system. The data analysis was conducted using the mediation analysis method through the bootstrapping PROCESS approach, randomly selecting samples from the available data to create a more significant number of simulated datasets (Hayes, 2013). This method aimed to assess the role of the mediator variable (M) in mediating the influence of the independent variable (X) on the dependent variable (Y). Once the statistical analysis was completed, the researcher proceeded to compile the research findings, conduct discussions, draw conclusions, and detail the implications of the collected data.

## Result

The first analysis was descriptive to obtain an overview of the data distribution among relevant categories. The description data of research variables are presented in Table 1.

Based on the findings, it is known that the Social Support variable has an empirical mean of 77.19 (SD = 8.45), which falls into the high category. This does not align with the hypothetical mean value of 48.00, which is in the moderate category. The data distribution shows that most respondents, 97.60% or 242 people, are at a high level. Meanwhile, only 2.40% or six people are at the moderate level. The Psychological Well-being variable had an empirical mean value of 115.47 (SD = 14.57), indicating it falls within the high range. This does not align with the hypothetical mean value of 72.00, which is in the moderate category. Most respondents, 95.82% or 236 people, are at a high level. Meanwhile, only 4.80% or 12 respondents are at the moderate level. A different finding was observed for the Work-Family Conflict variable, which has an empirical mean of 17.44 (SD = 6.99), falling into the low category. This does not align with the hypothetical mean value of 40, which is in the moderate category. Most respondents, 93.50% or 232 people, are in a low category, while only 6.00% or 15 people, are at the moderate level, and only 0.40%, or one person, is in the high category.

Furthermore, the mediation analysis results using Hayes' Model 4 can be seen in Table 2. The chosen method was bootstrapping, eliminating the necessity of assuming normal distribution in the analyzed data (Preacher et al., 2007).

The results of the mediation analysis in Table 2 indicate that social support has a direct effect on psychological well-being ( $\beta = 1.27$ ; LLCI = 1.15; ULCI = 1.39) as well as an indirect effect through mediating work-family conflict ( $\beta = 0.35$ ; LICI = 0.19; ULCI = 0.48). Higher social support leads to lower work-family conflict ( $\beta = -0.68$ ; LLCI = -0.74; ULCI = -0.62), and lower work-family conflict, in turn, leads to higher psychological well-being ( $\beta = -0.52$ ; LLCI = -0.66; ULCI =



**Table 1.** Description of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Category	Frequency	%
Social support	77.19	8.45	High	242	97.60
			Moderate	6	2.40
			Low	0	0
Work-family conflict	17.44	6.99	High	1	0.40
			Moderate	15	6.00
			Low	232	93.50
Psychological Well-being	115.47	14.57	High	236	95.82
			Moderate	12	4.80
			Low	0	0

**Table 2.** Mediation analysis

Variable	Effect	LLCI	ULCI
Direct effect of Social Support → Psychological well-being (c')	1.27	1.15	1.39
Social Support → Work-family conflict (a)	-0.68	-0.74	-0.62
Work-family conflict → Psychological well-being (b)	-0.52	-0.66	-0.38
Indirect effect of Social Support → Work-family conflict → Psychological well-being (a*b)	0.35	0.19	0.48
Total effect of Social Support → Psychological well-being (c)	1.62	1.54	1.70

-0.38). These results confirm that the mediation process occurs partially, indicating that the aim of this research is supported.

## Discussion

Based on the hypothesis testing results presented in Table 2, the social support variable, directly and indirectly, influences psychological well-being through work-family conflict, as hypothesized in the research. This finding is supported by the hypothesis testing results, which demonstrate the significance of paths a and b. Referring to Baron & Kenny's guidelines, it can be concluded that there is a mediating role (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Although work-family conflict is included as a mediator variable, the influence of social support on psychological well-being remains significant, indicating that work-family conflict only serves as a partial mediator.

The research findings indicate that social support directly impacts the psychological well-being of career women. This implies that as career women experience greater social support, their levels of psychological well-being also increase. On the contrary, if they experience lower social support, then their level of psychological well-being decreases. Well-being is preceded by social support (Siedlecki et al., 2014). Furthermore, it can be confirmed that family and friends play a role in well-being (Harandi et al., 2017). They can make a person, especially women, feel loved, valued, respected, and empowered. Although life can overwhelm women, social support motivates them to continue striving to fulfill their potential.

These findings are in line with several other similar studies. One study investigated the influence of social support on psychological well-being among female employees (Arfianto et al., 2020). In that research, it was found that social support significantly and positively affects the psychological well-being of working mothers. Family, friends, and partners play crucial roles in supporting career women to maintain high levels of psychological well-being. This has implications for achieving optimal work performance. Other studies also indicate that social support has a positive and significant impact on the well-being of working housewives or those

who are running Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (Nazwirman et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the study also found that social support directly influences work-family conflict. This finding indicates that the higher the social support experienced by career women from their social environment, the lower the level of work-family conflict. The role conflict experienced by career women is closely related to the support they receive from their surroundings. Family plays a crucial role in providing emotional support through motivation, listening, and comforting career women during stressful times. Spouses, particularly husbands of career women, can provide instrumental support in managing household tasks. This aligns with research stating that social support negatively and significantly impacts work-family conflict among nurses (Nugraha & Kustanti, 2020). Support from husbands is essential for career women in order to create comfort and motivation. Husbands are considered strong motivators in the dual role of nurses as professionals and as wives/mothers. The presence of family inspires career women, relieves fatigue after work, and enhances their overall well-being.

The next finding is that work-family conflict has a direct impact on psychological well-being. In other words, the higher the work-family conflict experienced by career women, the lower their level of psychological well-being. In addition to the workload they must handle, career women with families often have to work harder to meet the demands of their roles as employees, wives, and mothers. This phenomenon is caused by the inability of career women to self-actualize by managing their time between public (work) and domestic (household) matters. Career women are then faced with a choice between their careers and their contribution to the family. This dilemma leads to a decline in their psychological well-being, aligning with a study that found a negative relationship between work-family conflict and psychological well-being in working mothers (Anggarwati & Thamrin, 2020).

Additionally, the results of the mediation test indicate that work-family conflict partially mediates the relationship between social support and psychological well-being. Although social support has a direct impact, work-family

conflict is a mediator in this relationship. Although no study has specifically investigated the mediating role of work-family conflict on the relationship between social support and psychological well-being, the researcher identified several comparable studies for comparison. The results of this research align with similar studies, which show that work-family conflict acts as a mediator in the influence of family social support on well-being (Drummond et al., 2017).

Based on the descriptive analysis, The average scores of respondents indicate that they are in the high category for social support and psychological well-being variables. In contrast to both variables, the average subjects are in the low category for the work-family conflict variable. This finding illustrates that when career women have high psychological well-being, they also experience high levels of social support. Furthermore, at the same time, their level of work-family conflict is low.

This research has several identifiable strengths. First, the use of correlational mediation analysis allows researchers to investigate the direct influence of Social Support variables on Psychological Well-being and indirectly through the mediator variable, namely Work-family Conflict. Another advantage of this study lies in the online questionnaire deployment method, which enhances the efficiency of data collection in terms of both time and location. Expanding on these advantages, online data collection enables real-time monitoring of questionnaire completion, allowing the researcher to promptly address changes in research topics or details. Moreover, all measurement instruments used in this research demonstrate high validity and reliability. These strengths have implications for the accuracy and consistency of data collection.

Nevertheless, similar to other academic studies, this research has its limitations. The cross-sectional research model used by the author merely explores correlations between variables without deeply exploring the causal relationships of these influences. Additionally, online data collection methods can pose challenges for this research. The absence of supervision during the questionnaire completion by respondents can lead to biased or careless responses. Finally, although the subjects' backgrounds tend to be heterogeneous, the findings of this study only include respondents mostly concentrated in Java Island, thus not comprehensively representing conditions across all regions of Indonesia.

## Conclusion and Implications

Through this research, it can be concluded that there is an influence between social support and psychological well-being. This indicates that career women in Indonesia who receive social support from their surroundings tend to have high psychological well-being. Additionally, work-family conflict plays a partial mediating role in how these two variables influence each other. This means that even when work-family conflict is considered, the impact of social support on psychological well-being remains positive and significant.

For future studies in similar areas, it is recommended that researchers expand their sample size to ensure more comprehensive, precise, and representative findings.

Additionally, future researchers are expected to exercise greater care in data collection to mitigate potential biases and arbitrary responses from survey respondents. The practical implications of this survey are relevant to various stakeholders. Career women are encouraged to take proactive measures to enhance their psychological well-being, such as building solid relationships within their community and improving time and priority management between work and family commitments. Companies are encouraged to create supportive environments for career women. Companies can offer resources such as counselling and training programs tailored to their female employees. In addition to improving psychological well-being, solid social support can affect how career women balance their roles as employees and family members.

## Declaration

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We would like to thank all respondents for their participation in this study.

### Author contributions

SSSP conceptualizes the study, writes the introduction, data collection, data processing, and discussion sections. TMI guides the study.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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