

Social Support and Job Stress in Female Police Officers: Full mediation from Work-Life Balance

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Abstract

Women's dual roles as workers and housewives render them particularly susceptible to work stress. The objective of this study was to ascertain the role of work-life balance in female police officers. The research hypothesis posits that work-life balance plays a mediating role in the relationship between social support and work stress among female police officers. The present study employed a quantitative survey-cross-sectional design. The data were collected using a questionnaire disseminated via Google Form and subsequently distributed through social media with a purposive sampling technique. A total of 190 female police officers participated in the operation. The instruments employed in this study included the Revised-Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, the Work-Life Balance Scale, and the Job Stress Scale. The data analysis technique employed utilized the PROCESS macro model 4 mediation analysis by Hayes. The findings indicated that work-life balance effectively mediated the relationship between social support and work stress. This finding underscores the significance of social support, defined as the presence of conditions that promote effective work-life balance, in mitigating work stress among female police officers. The limitations and recommendations are delineated in the section's conclusion.

Keywords: social support, female police officers, work stress, work-life balance

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INTRODUCTION

Job stress is defined as an adaptive response of each individual, resulting from actions taken (Putro et al., 2020). Female police officers are among the professions most susceptible to stress. Research indicates that women experience elevated levels of stress relative to men, attributable to demands stemming from professional and familial contexts (Medaris, 2023; Rojuaniah, 2020). Based on data from October 25, 2024 (correspondence with the Indonesian National Police's HRD), the number of additional female police officers in 2023 was 1,171, and in 2024, another 2,031 were added, resulting in a yearly increase in the number of female police officers in Indonesia. The increase in the number of female police officers has complex consequences. On the one hand, women have the opportunity to develop their potential and contribute to the economy. However, on the other hand, women face a double burden that can lead to work stress. Not only married policewomen, but also single policewomen with family responsibilities can experience work stress.

Indonesian Law No. 2 of 2002 concerning the Indonesian National Police explains that policewomen have the same duties, functions, vision, mission, and responsibilities as male police officers and are required to comply with existing regulations within the police organization, including working hours. Field operations can last until late at night, and even lead to days without returning home due to flexible working hours, overtime, and sudden and mandatory state duties. This makes it difficult for female police officers who are also mothers to balance their family and career roles (Hidayat & Rozana, 2021). Therefore, the act of balancing the responsibilities inherent in both law enforcement and motherhood frequently gives rise to work-family conflict, a state of affairs that has the potential to exert a detrimental influence on performance and mental health (Sari & Maulida, 2021).

Concurrently, gender discrimination (Schafer et al., 2024) and a paucity of social support (Shabrina et al., 2024) have also been identified as salient factors. Social support can be defined as the comfort, care, and appreciation given to a person by another person or group (Sarafino & Smith, 2011). Social support is a critical factor in the effective mitigation of the adverse effects of occupational stress and work-family conflict (Olivia & Frianto, 2020). A negative relationship between social support and work stress has been documented among female police respondents, indicating that increased social support is associated with reduced perceived work stress (Prasinta & Widyastuti, 2022). A similar phenomenon has been observed in the field of elementary education (Werenfridus et al., 2023), yet this phenomenon is not evident among Generation Z (Attiq & Kristanto, 2024).

The inconsistent findings of the present study suggest the presence of other variables that influence the relationship between social support and work stress in female police officers, including work-life balance. Work-life balance is defined as the extent to which an individual is equally engaged and satisfied in both their professional and familial spheres (Rojuaniah, 2020). The hypothesis suggests that work-life balance functions as a mediator (Zellawati & Fasha, 2021). Consequently, an enhancement in social support has been demonstrated to be associated with elevated work-life balance scores among female police officers (Nuramalia et al., 2023). In contrast, work-life balance has been shown to be inversely associated with work stress (Hani, 2020) and contributes significantly to job stress reduction, with a percentage of 66.2% (Asyura, 2024).

This finding aligns with the tenets of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, which elucidates the interplay between microsystems and mesosystems. The microsystem encompasses the relationship between individuals and their surrounding environment, such as their place of residence and their place of employment. The mesosystem, meanwhile, consists of the relationships between the primary settings that contain individuals. For instance, the mesosystem includes the relationship between home and workplace, home and coworkers, and home and superiors. These social structures do not directly interact with the developing person, yet they have a significant impact (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Consequently, the pertinence of this model persists in industrial and organizational settings, where female police officers encounter persistent stress stemming from their professional environment, thereby exerting a detrimental influence on their broader interpersonal relationships (Bone, 2015). The objective of this study was to ascertain the role of work-life balance in female police officers. The research hypothesis posits that work-life balance plays a mediating role in the relationship between social support and work stress in female police officers.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study employs the quantitative explanatory method. The design used was a cross-sectional survey. The survey was based on participant self-reports.

Participants

Participants in this study were female police officers in Indonesia. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling because the researchers determined the characteristics of the population of interest and then found individuals who matched the required characteristics (Christensen et al., 2015). The minimum sample size was estimated using Monte Carlo Power Analysis for Indirect Effects software using effect sizes from previous studies. The effect size between social support and work stress was calculated using the results of a study conducted by Prasinta & Widyastuti (2022) of 0.18. The effect size between social support and work-life balance was calculated using the results of a study conducted by Nurhasanah (2021). Due to the heterogeneity of previous studies, the effect size was halved to 0.23. Meanwhile, the effect size between work-life balance and work stress was calculated using the results of a study (Asyura, 2024). Due to the heterogeneity of previous studies, the effect size was halved to 0.33. If the desired power is 0.80, the minimum number of participants for this study was 160.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted from December 17th to 21st, 2024. The survey was in the form of a Google Form questionnaire distributed via WhatsApp. Before completing the questionnaire, participants were given an Informed Consent form. If they agreed, they could proceed to the next question. During this time period, 222 respondents were obtained. One person declined to participate, 23 failed the attention test, and 8 were extreme outliers, leaving a final sample of 190. The sample had a mean age of 34.53 years ($SD = 7.87$) and an average number of dependents of 2.14 ($SD = 1.69$). Educational backgrounds included high school/vocational high school (SMA) for 61 individuals, bachelor's degree (S1) for 104 individuals, and 25 individuals. Marital status included 16 individuals who were single, 161 individuals who were married, 7 individuals who were divorced, and 6 individuals who were living together. Rank-wise, 141 individuals held the rank of Brigadier, 26 individuals held the rank of First Officer, and 23 individuals held the rank of Middle Officer.

Measurements

This study uses three measurement tools: Revised Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Work-Life Balance Scale, and Job Stress Scale. All instruments used were previously used in research and therefore have undergone validity and reliability testing. The Revised-Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (R-MSPSS), developed by Ho & Chan (2017), was used to measure social support variables. This scale is an extension of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) by Zimet et al., 1988. Researchers used a scale translated by Oktarina et al. (2021). This scale contains 16 favourable items, consisting of four dimensions: perceived social support from principal (leader), perceived social support from colleagues (coworkers), perceived social support from family (family), and perceived social support from friends (non-colleagues). This scale uses a Likert-style scale with seven response options (1 = "strongly disagree," 2 = "disagree," 3 = "somewhat disagree," 4 = "neutral," 5 = "somewhat agree," 6 = "agree," and 7 = "strongly agree"). The construct validity and reliability of this scale were tested by Oktarina et al. (2021) using CFA, and the factor loading coefficients of the R-MSPSS ranged from 0.48 to 0.93. The goodness-of-fit test results indicated that the four-factor R-MSPSS had good fit criteria. Regarding its reliability, it shows that each subscale of the R-MSPSS has a Cronbach's Alpha value in the range of 0.72 to 0.83.

The Work-Life Balance was measured using the Work-Life Balance scale in accordance with the theory proposed by Fisher. The Work-Life Balance scale used refers to the Work Life Balance scale adapted by Gunawan (2019) from the questionnaire of Gwenith G Fisher, Carrie A. Bulger, and Carlla S. Smith. This scale contains 17 unfavourable and favourable items with 5 answer choices (1 = "very often", 2 "often", 3 = "sometimes", 4 "rarely", 5 = "never") consisting of two aspects, namely the resources aspect which oversees 2 sub-aspects, namely Work Enhancement of Personal Life (WEPL) and Personal Life Enhancement of Work (PLEW), the demands aspect which oversees 2 sub-aspects, namely Work Interference with Personal Life

(WIPL) and Personal Life with Interference Work (PLIW). The scale uses a Likert model with 5 choices. The validity and reliability of the Work-Life Balance scale have been tested by Gunawan (2019). The validity value for all items through CFA is $SLF > 0.5$, which means all items are declared valid. The reliability of the Work-Life Balance scale was 0.976 CR and 0.707 VE, indicating that the work-life balance score interpretation is considered reliable.

The Job Stress Scale (ISS), developed by Parker & DeCotiis (1983), is used to measure symptoms of work stress experienced by workers. Researchers used the JSS scale, which has been adapted into Indonesian by Sarah (2018). This survey consists of 13 favourable items covering two dimensions: Time Pressure and Anxiety. The scale uses a Likert model with four response options (1 = "never," 2 = "rarely," 3 = "sometimes," 4 = "often," 5 = "very often"). In the study (Sarah, 2018), construct validity and reliability were tested for each dimension using CFA. The Time Pressure dimension yielded a chi-square value of 9.15 ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$), and the anxiety dimension yielded a chi-square value of 101.95. The $p\text{-value}$ was > 0.05 , indicating that each dimension accurately measures only one factor. Reliability was demonstrated by the Cronbach's Alpha value for each dimension, with the anxiety dimension being 0.74 and the time pressure dimension being 0.86.

Data Analysis

This study examined the effect of social support on work stress in female police officers, with work-life balance as a mediator. To ensure data integrity, a data cleaning procedure was required, with participants who responded incorrectly to the attention check being excluded from the study. The analysis included a common method bias test, descriptive statistics, matrix correlation, assumption testing, and hypothesis testing. To test for common method bias, Harman's Single Factor Test was conducted. All items and variables were entered into an exploratory factor analysis using SPSS 25. The results showed that a single factor only explained 32.28% ($< 50\%$) of the total variance in the measurements, thus concluding that common method bias did not occur.

Hypothesis testing was conducted using Process macro model 4 by Hayes (Hayes & Little, 2022) in SPSS 25. This test will determine whether work-life balance has an indirect effect in mediating the relationship between social support and work stress in female police officers.

RESULTS

The data in Table 1 shows that age is negatively correlated ($r = -0.180$) with the work-life balance variable, and rank is negatively correlated ($r = 0.200$) with the work-life balance variable. Meanwhile, the number of dependents correlated negatively ($r = -0.175$) with work-life balance and positively ($r = 0.154$) with work stress. Therefore, age, rank, and number of dependents were controlled for in the hypothesis testing.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

| | | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|----------|-------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1 | DS | 5.892 | 0.815 | - | | | | | | | |
| 2 | WLB | 4.389 | 0.497 | 0.502** | - | | | | | | |
| 3 | SK | 1.533 | 0.534 | -0.384** | -0.702** | - | | | | | |
| 4 | Age | 34.53 | 7.872 | -0.107 | -0.180* | 0.074 | - | | | | |
| 5 | Rank | 1.38 | 0.693 | -0.095 | -0.200** | 0.088 | 0.427** | - | | | |
| 6 | Edu | 2.49 | 1.078 | -0.059 | -0.123 | 0.141 | 0.044 | 0.381** | - | | |
| 7 | SP | 2.02 | 0.498 | -0.017 | -0.007 | -0.033 | 0.417** | 0.120 | 0.104 | - | |
| 8 | JT | 2.14 | 1.688 | -0.089 | -0.175* | 0.154* | 0.333** | 0.213** | 0.106 | 0.180* | - |

Note: N=19B: Rank = 1 (Brigadier), 2 (First Officer), 3 (Middle Officer): Education = 1 (High School/Vocational High School), 2 (D3), 3 (S1). 4 (S2): Marital Status = 1 (Unmarried), 2 (Married), 3 (Divorced), 4 (Divorced): DS = Social Support: WLB Work-Life Balance: SK - Work Stress, Edu - Education: SP = Marriage Status; JT = Number of Dependents: (* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$)).

Table 2. Linearity Test Results

| | Linearity (Sig.) | Deviation from Linearity |
|---|------------------|--------------------------|
| Work Stress*Social Support | <.001 | 0.006 |
| Work-Life Balance*Social Support | <.001 | 0.001 |
| Work Stress*Work-Life Balance | <.001 | 0.901 |

Based on Table 2, the linearity value for the three variable relationships is significant. $0.00 (\leq 0.05)$. This indicates that the relationship follows a linear slope. The Deviation from Linearity value for the relationship between work stress and work-life balance was $0.901 (>0.05)$, indicating no significant deviation in the data. Meanwhile, the Deviation from Linearity value for the relationship between work stress and social support and work-life balance and social support was <0.05 , indicating a significant deviation in the data. Visual inspection of the residual scatterplot and predictions from the regression analysis revealed a linear relationship, indicating that the data could still be explained using linear regression analysis.

Table 3. Multicollinearity Test Results

| Variable | VIF | Tolerance |
|--------------------------|-------|-----------|
| Social Support | 1.337 | 0.748 |
| Work Life Balance | 1.337 | 0.748 |

Table 3 shows us that all values of VIF are below ten, and the values of tolerance are above 0.1. These mean that the assumption that there is no multicollinearity is fulfilled.

Table 4. The Results of the Heteroscedasticity Test

| | T | Sig. |
|--------------------------|--------|-------|
| Social Support | -1.498 | 0.136 |
| Work Life Balance | -1.384 | 0.168 |

To test for heteroscedasticity in the regression model, the Glejser test was used by regressing the independent variables against the absolute residual values. Based on Table 4 above, the Sig. Values for the social support and work-life balance variables are >0.05 , thus concluding that there are no heteroscedasticity symptoms.

Table 5. Residual Normality Test Results

| | Kolmogorov- Smirnov | p |
|-----------------|---------------------|-------|
| Residual | 0.083 | 0.134 |

Before conducting the hypothesis test, the researcher tested the residual normality assumption using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test with the exact approach. The results in Table S show a p-value >0.05 . This indicates that the residual data is normally distributed.

Table 6. Model Summary

| R | R-Square | MSE | F | df1 | df2 | p |
|-------------|----------|------|------|------|--------|------|
| 0.40 | 0.16 | 0.24 | 9.01 | 4.00 | 185.00 | 0.00 |

Table 6 above shows the results of the hypothesis testing for the research model. This research model was able to predict 16% (R-square 0.16) of the variance in work stress. This means that 84% of the variance remains from other predictors that have not been examined in this study.

Table 7. Direct Effect Test with Process Macro by Andrew F. Hayes

| | Work-Life Balance | | | | Work Stress | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|------|-------|------|-------------|------|-------|-------|
| | β | p | LLCI | ULCI | β | p | LLCI | ULCI |
| Social Support | 0.29 | 0.00 | 0.22 | 0.37 | -0.03 | 0.48 | -0.11 | 0.05 |
| Work-Life Balance | | | | | -0.74 | 0.00 | -0.87 | -0.61 |
| Age | 0.00 | 0.48 | -0.01 | 0.01 | 0.00 | 0.35 | -0.01 | 0.00 |
| Rank | -0.08 | 0.10 | -0.18 | 0.02 | -0.03 | 0.47 | -0.12 | 0.06 |
| Number of dependents | -0.03 | 0.17 | -0.07 | 0.01 | 0.02 | 0.30 | -0.02 | 0.05 |

Based on the mediator output (work-life balance), social support has a significant positive effect on work-life balance ($\beta = 0.29$; $p < 0.05$). Meanwhile, based on the output of the dependent variable (work stress), social support does not have a significant negative effect on work stress ($\beta = -0.03$; $p > 0.05$), and work-life balance has a significant negative effect on work stress ($\beta = -0.74$; $p < 0.05$). From several controlled variables, it was found that age ($\beta = 0.00$; $p > 0.05$), rank ($\beta = -0.08$; $p > 0.05$), and number of dependents ($\beta = -0.03$; $p > 0.05$) did not have a significant effect on the work-life balance variable. The control variables of age ($\beta = 0.00$; $p > 0.05$), rank ($\beta = -0.03$; $p > 0.05$), and number of dependents ($\beta = 0.02$; $p > 0.05$) also did not have a significant influence on the work stress variable.

Table 8. Results of Mediation Analysis

| Direct Effect | SE | LLCI | ULCI |
|------------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| -0.03 | 0.04 | -0.11 | 0.05 |
| Indirect Effect | Boot SE | Boot LLCI | Boot ULCI |
| -0.22 | 0.04 | -0.30 | -0.15 |
| Total Effect | SE | LLCI | ULCI |
| -0.24 | 0.04 | -0.33 | -0.16 |

Based on the results of the mediation test in Table 8, it is known that the direct effect shows a value of $\beta = -0.03$, CI (-0.11 – 0.05), $p > 0.05$, the indirect effect shows a value of $\beta = -0.22$, CI (-0.30 – -0.15), and the total effect $\beta = -0.24$, CI (-0.33 – -0.16). The results of this analysis indicate that in the direct relationship, social support does not have a significant negative effect on work stress. Meanwhile, work-life balance has a significant role in mediating the effect of social support on work stress. So the form of work-life balance mediation is full mediation. Work-life balance can enhance the influence of social support on work stress, so that the total effect of social support ($\beta = -0.24$, CI (-0.33 – -0.16) has a significant negative influence on work stress if it is through work-life balance conditions. Therefore, the hypothesis that work-life balance mediates the relationship between social support and work stress is supported by the data.

DISCUSSIONS

The results of the study showed no significant direct effect of social support on work stress. The social support received by female police officers was not sufficient to reduce their work stress. This finding aligns with research done by Attiq & Kristanto (2024) and Daawi & Nisa (2021), which found that social support did not have a significant negative relationship with work stress. This means that the social support received was not significant enough to reduce work stress. This could be due to the social support received by individuals being inadequate or not meeting their needs (Sarafino & Smith, 2011).

However, this study found a significant positive effect between social support and work-life balance. This finding aligns with research conducted by Nurhasanah (2021), which explains the significant positive effect of social support and work-life balance among police officers in Samarinda. The greater the social support received, the easier it is to create a balance between work and personal life. Despite the high workload faced

by police officers, the presence of those around them, such as family, superiors, and co-workers, helps police officers balance their personal and work lives. Paula, Brought, and Michael in Nugraha & Rini (2021) explain that social support can reduce conflicts experienced by individuals in their work and home lives, making it easier for them to achieve work-family balance.

Work-life balance has a significant impact on reducing work stress. The higher an individual's work-life balance, the lower their perceived work stress. This finding aligns with research conducted by Asyura (2024), which found a significant relationship between work-life balance and work stress among police officers at Payakumbuh City Police Resort. A balance between work and personal life allows workers to relax after work and reduces work-related stress. This balance fosters happiness, which can reduce stress, increase productivity, and provide satisfaction in both personal and professional lives (Marecki, 2024).

The results of the mediation analysis indicate that work-life balance significantly mediates the relationship between social support and work stress in female police officers. This means that social support will significantly reduce work stress if it creates a work-life balance. A balance between personal and work life can be achieved through appropriate social support. When individuals achieve a balance between personal and work life, they are better able to manage their time and effectively handle the demands of both work and personal life, thereby minimizing stress. This finding aligns with research conducted by Anandari et al. (2018) that found that work-life balance and social support play a role in reducing work stress levels in Balinese women working in a 4-star hotel in Badung Regency.

The results of the study on the relationship between social support and work stress mediated by work-life balance in female police officers indicate that differences in age, rank, education, marital status, and number of family dependents are not significant factors determining the relationship between social support and work stress. These findings indicate that work stress experienced by female police officers in their demographic context (age, rank, education, marital status, and number of family dependents) tends to be the same when faced with social support received and the condition of work-life balance perceived.

CONCLUSION

This study found that work-life balance plays a significant role in mediating the relationship between social support and job stress. Social support can reduce job stress if it creates a work-life balance for female police officers. Recommendations for future research include incorporating other factors that can influence job stress, such as workload, length of service, working hours, and the work environment, to better predict the causes of job stress. Police agencies are advised to develop policies as a form of social support that can encourage a work-life balance for female police officers, thereby reducing the effects of job stress.

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Declaration of Potential Conflict of Interest

Imelda Permila Buhari and Suryanto do not work for, consult for, own shares in, or receive funding from any company or organization that might profit from the publication of this manuscript.

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