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Factors Mediating Work-Family Balance to Job Satisfaction in Higher Education during Pandemic

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Abstract. *The covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on the family and work domains and has forced married employees to adapt to the new condition and strive to achieve the workplace's established goals. However, given the health risk involved in this situation, can they be satisfied with their job? This question arose because some studies showed that flexibility and more incentive payments were considered to support job commitment, and therefore job satisfaction. Thus, our main concern is whether job satisfaction can be compensated solely through incentive payment, which is economics. Although job satisfaction is intended to measure the quality of employment, those studies presumably amplified the imbalance between work and family relationships. This current study investigates job satisfaction for married employees by highlighting the family domain and exploring the intervening factors that play significant roles during the pandemic. The results of multiple regression analysis of 264 married employees of (with sig 0.1 or 0.05) and path analysis bring our attention to work aspects that appear to be more worrisome than family concerns. As an effort to monitor the quality of employment, it will be ambiguous if, for the sake of job satisfaction, the organization have to pay more incentive payment for increasing commitment without paying more attention to a broader context of the situation. Practical policy implications of the findings of this study are also discussed.*

Keywords: *family balance; job satisfaction; married employee; work balance.*

INTRODUCTION

The covid-19 pandemic has been going on for over a year. It has resulted in significant changes in how people interact with others, do activities, and work. In the context of the workplace, the pandemic inevitably altered how people perform their duties for the reasons of safety and risk. This condition has indirectly or directly affected a person's income, expenses, and psychological condition. In this situation, every organization or institute has dealt with the uncertainty that impacts both economic and social aspects (Carnevale, Hatak, Carnevale, & Hatak, 2020). It follows that the family-related perpetuity with the surrounding activities undergoes significant challenges. Concerning these challenges, specifically within educational institutes, lecturers and education staff who attempt to continue an educational process while also trying to keep everyone safe require more attention, economically and psychologically.

Job satisfaction is one of several factors to consider. Research shows that the higher the level of job satisfaction, the more people commit to their tasks (Pillay & Abhayawansa, 2014; Seashore,

1974; Sloane & Williams, 2000). However, in the presence of this pandemic, those results seem to call into doubt. Strictly speaking, can a person achieve most satisfaction in work or task while dealing with a health crisis that threatens him/her and the family? Family and job are like two sides of the same coin that must be treated equally. Those who play double roles, wife or husband and employee or employer, certainly have to be steady in managing their work-family responsibilities. Making an important decision will be difficult when they have to divide their time between family and work as a commitment to both family and work (Liu, Wang, Li, & Zhou, 2019).

In contemporary society, the concept of work-family balance gains more attention, with the primary assumption of this balance being low conflict and high enrichment (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003). While some research proposed a role in balancing family and job aspects (Lu, Siu, Spector, & Shi, 2009), other research focused on job demand, family income, and personality traits that influence the balance (Lu et al., 2009). According to Churiyah, the conflicting role correlates directly and significantly with job satisfaction (Tarigan & Ratnaningsih, 2018). This statement confirmed Luthans' notion that a role in social-family life is an expected position that stems from an existing norm (Tarigan & Ratnaningsih, 2018). These studies show that one's role in family and work correlate, resulting in conflict or enrichment.

Meanwhile, another study showing success in life as a result of the commitment to the job and family reveals a growing job demand in which people begin to use talent management pools to balance work and family life (Valcour, 2007). On the other side, working duration is considerably accounted for how people seek to accommodate job demand and their role in the family to avoid giving one-sided weight (Valcour, 2007). In terms of demand and role, married women are more likely to get involved in this conflicting role (Yamuna, 2018). Although education, income, professional experience, and couple conflict are all factors influencing work-family balance in married women, the workload is widely regarded as the most influential factor (Yamuna, 2018). As Macinnes indicated, organizational policies on working hours become a major concern for employees who have a child or children. Indeed, he stated that there is a low relationship between family life and working duration (Macinnes, 2005). A similar study conducted in France found that time allocation implies work-family balance, job satisfaction, and vice versa, demonstrating the same patterns but for a different type of job (French, Allen, Hughes, & Sook, 2020).

This current study seeks to explore factors mediating work-family balance to job satisfaction in the context of the pandemic situation. In an uncertain situation, people try to adjust their roles both in work and in the family. Any attempt will undoubtedly be made but inevitably result in some conflicts, especially for married employees. As a result, policies made by organizations are expected to accommodate and give each other benefits. When performing multiple roles, the balance in the work-family relationship represents a low conflict and reaps some benefits (Brough & Kalliath, 2009). It is to say that people feel satisfied in working out multiple tasks and can keep commitment, emotions, and time in a balanced way (Ayuningtyas & Septarini, 2013). In higher education, married employees are more satisfied than single employees (Denson & Szelényi, 2020). Regardless of gender divergence, this is an interesting finding, since married employees have to perform multiple roles to balance their professional and family life.

Some scholars stated that balance has different intentions with both work-family conflict and enrichment by explicating it as a global construct that can capture the interaction between job and role in the family setting (Liu et al., 2019). Based on conflict and enrichment interaction between the two domains, some studies were conducted in the frame of work to family conflict or enrichment and family to work conflict or enrichment (Yucel, 2019, 2020). On the other hand, other's scholars proposed a construct consisting of time management, psychological involvement,

and satisfaction, which denote a positive role (Carlson, Grzywacz, & Zivnuska, 2009; Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000; Carlson & Mellor, 2004). In this current study, we used the latter because it had been tested and validated.

Interestingly, while work-family balance correlates with other factors such as organizational support, family background and support, personality, job orientation, and career path. It also indicates that the higher one's position, the more difficult for him or her to achieve the balance (Ayuningtyas & Septarini, 2013). Technology advancement presents some changes in life values and shifting roles in demographic-social life, thus, research on this topic is expected to enhance organizational commitment, increase job satisfaction, and promote organizational citizenship behavior. Relating to demographic-social life, we used education, gender, marital age, children, job tenure, job specification, working site, and average working hours per week as our independent variables.

Job satisfaction is an emotional state associated with one's occupation or position in the workplace (Mehrad, 2015). It is suggested that the results or goals depend on satisfaction, which afterward can produce some profits. Job satisfaction is a type of emotional attitude that denotes a sense of delight and enjoyment in a job. This attitude is reflected by work morale, discipline, and work performance. In other words, job satisfaction can be referred to as a psychological state of acceptance based on one's self-esteem and experiences (Wright, Bennett, & Dun, 1999).

In the context of an organization, employees' mental health and well-being correlate significantly with organizational performance (Cahill, McNamara, Pitt-Catsoupes, & Valcour, 2015). Job satisfaction is important for several reasons, including pay, promotions, co-workers, supervision, and the work itself. Although many theories have been proposed to investigate factors causing job satisfaction (Kim, 2005), research on job satisfaction in a global health crisis is lacking in references. Some recent studies that advocate for more incentive payments to enhance job satisfaction during the pandemic refer obviously to the retribution exchange of job demands (Meilina & Sardanto, 2020; Rahmawati & D, 2019). Unfortunately, those suggestions focused only on one side of interest, which is personal benefit.

According to a study on health balance, the balance between work and family is not absolute because health represents perceived ability as one has to perform multiple roles in the work and family domains (Gragnano, Simbula, & Miglioretti, 2020). Other studies showed that mental and physical health mediated fully work-to-family conflict while partially mediating work-to-family enrichment (Yucel, 2017). The success of an organization in enhancing job satisfaction correlates significantly with organizational productivity (Lee & Lee, 2019). However, the employee's well-being, both married man and woman, can negatively or positively affect job performance and, to some extent, job satisfaction (Judge, Bono, Thoresen, & Patton, 2001). Thus, we proposed the following hypotheses. First, the work-family balance has a significant effect on job satisfaction. Second, education, gender, marital age, and children have a significant effect on job satisfaction and mediate work-family balance to job satisfaction. Third, job tenure, job specification, working site, and average working hours per week significantly affect job satisfaction and mediate work-family balance to job satisfaction. Lastly, the job and personal characteristics of both married men and women mediate work-family balance to job satisfaction.

METHOD

Participants and procedure

Data were collected through an online survey from 1 to 20 October 2020. Participants were

university employees, including academics and non-academic (or support) staff, across different levels in the hierarchy. The quantitative questionnaire used in this study produced one-time cross-sectional data. The data consist of age, marital age, gender, last education, number of children, job tenure, job specification, working site/spot, and average working duration per week (Table 1).

Table 1.
 Respondents' socio-demographic (N =264)

Characteristics	Participants	
	N	%
Age (mean = 43.12)	264	100
Marital Age (mean = 15.75)	Male (mean = 16.95)	96 36.4
	Female (mean = 13.65)	168 63.6
Gender	Male	168 63.6
	Female	96 36.4
Last Education	High School	62 23.48
	Bachelor or Graduate	94 35.61
	Master/Doctor	108 40.91
Children	Have not had a child yet	18 6.82
	One child	67 25.38
	Two children	109 41.29
	Three children	46 17.42
	Four children	18 6.82
	Five children	5 1.89
	Six children	1 0.38
Job Tenure	Less than 3 years	8 3.03
	3 – 6 years	25 9.47
	7 – 12 years	172 65.15
	13 - 25 years	36 13.64
	26 - 37 years	22 8.33
	more than 37 years	1 0.38
Jobs Specification	Lecturer	98 37.12
	Administration Staff	163 61.74
	Security Staff	3 1.14
Working From	Work from home	120 45.45
	Work from office	15 5.68
	Both	129 48.86
Working Hours per week	Less than 40 hours	48 18.18
	Between 40 – 60 hours	190 71.97
	More than 60 hours	26 9.85

Measures

The participants were asked to rate their job satisfaction and work-family balance as they experienced it during the covid-19 outbreak based on a 5-point scale. The work-family balance questionnaire consisted of 18 items (Carlson et al., 2000; Matthews, Kath, & Barnes-Farrell, 2010), while job satisfaction consisted of 5 items (Bérubé, Donia, Gagné, Houlfort, & Koestner, 2007).

All items were graded on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. The mean, standard deviation, min-max score, and reliability can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2.
 The descriptive statistics for mean, standard deviation, min-max score, and reliability

Questionnaire	M	SD	Min	Max	<i>a</i>
Work-Family Balance (18 item)	60.85	7.24	37	72	0.92
Jobs Satisfaction (5 item)	15.45	2.29	9	20	0.75

Data Analysis

In addressing the proposed hypotheses, an initial procedure was performed by checking regression assumptions. Since the results did not show a normal distribution, we had to remove three outliers and the age variable from the early model because they were highly correlated. Then, as the data model had a normal distribution, we considered it a valid model to conduct multiple regression (Buyukgoze-Kavas, Duffy, Güneri, & Autin, 2014; Shin & Jung, 2014). By using multiple regression, we intended to comprehend each variable towards job satisfaction as the dependent variable. The path analysis model was then used to predict the direct and indirect effects of each variable on job satisfaction (Hoff, Song, Wee, Phan, & Rounds, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As shown in Table 3, gender, children, and job specification have no significant effect on job satisfaction, education, job tenure, and working site, while average working hours per week significantly affect job satisfaction with a negative coefficient. In the meantime, marital age and work-family balance have a significant positive effect on job satisfaction. Thus, all independent variables explain 47.1% of job satisfaction in our model.

Table 3.
 Multiple regression analyses of satisfaction (N=264)

Characteristics	Coef.	St. Err.	t-value	95% Conf Interval		
Education	-0.54	0.23	-2.33	-0.99	-0.08	**
Gender	0.22	0.23	0.94	-0.24	0.67	
Marital Age	0.03	0.02	1.84	-0.00	0.06	*
Children	-0.11	0.11	-1.04	-0.32	0.09	
Job tenure	-0.29	0.15	-1.90	-0.59	0.01	*
Job Specification	-0.48	0.38	-1.28	-1.22	0.26	
Working Site	-0.38	0.12	-3.14	-0.61	-0.14	***
Average Working Hours	-0.42	0.21	-2.00	-0.82	-0.01	**
Work-Family Balance	0.21	0.02	13.65	0.18	0.24	***
Constant	4.81	1.01	4.79	2.83	6.79	***
Mean dependent var	15.45			SD dependent variable		2.28
R-squared	0.47			Number of participants		264

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The lower education, the fewer job tenure in an organization, and the fewer working hours

in a week, the more respondents are likely to feel satisfied in their job. Conversely, the longer marital age and the higher balance between work and family, the higher job satisfaction. Interestingly, we find that work-family balance has a highly significant effect on job satisfaction compared to other independent variables ($p < 0.01$). Hence, it is somewhat difficult to determine the effect size between work-family balance and job satisfaction without analyzing the direct and indirect effect of other independent variables with work-family balance as a mediating variable to job satisfaction. Thus, to address this, we performed path analysis.

Before understanding the correlation between the variables, it is necessary to compare the model's standardized direct, indirect, and total effects. First, as shown in Table 4, work-family balance ($b = 0.66$, $p < 0.01$) directly affects job satisfaction. While education ($b = -0.18$, $p < 0.05$), job tenure ($b = -0.11$, $p < 0.1$), and working site ($b = -0.16$, $p < 0.01$) have negative direct effect on job satisfaction, and marital age ($b = 0.11$, $p < 0.1$) has positive direct effect on job satisfaction. In other words, these results are not significantly different with multiple regression above.

Table 4.
 Path Analysis with Work-Family Balance as the mediator

Characteristics	Direct Effect		Indirect Effect		Total Effect	
	Coef.	p	Coef.	p	Coef.	p
Work-Family Balance	0.66	***	No path		0.66	***
Education	-0.14	**	0.09		-0.09	
Gender	0.05		0.04		0.08	
Marital Age	0.11	*	0.15	***	0.27	***
Children	-0.05		0.00		-0.05	
Job Tenure	-0.11	*	0.03		-0.08	
Job Specification	-0.11		0.16	**	0.06	
Working Site	-0.16	***	0.07		-0.09	
Average Working Hours	-0.09	**	-0.07	*	-0.17	***

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Second, work-family balance, marital age ($b = 0.15$, $p < 0.01$), and job specification ($b = 0.16$, $p < 0.05$) have a positive coefficient, whereas average working hours ($b = -0.07$, $p < 0.1$) have a negative coefficient and have an indirect effect on job satisfaction. Interestingly, in this indirect model, job specification, for being non-significant, increases job satisfaction only through work-family balance.

Path analysis was then conducted to understand the effect of the hypothesis of gender divergence for direct and indirect effects, as shown in Table 5. From this result, it is obvious that females directly affect job satisfaction, while males show some mediation effects on job satisfaction. Using Baron and Kenny's approach, which is then adjusted by Iacobucci et al. (2007), we found that male's marital age and job specification completely mediate work-family balance to job satisfaction. Another finding is that male's average working hours per week partially mediates work-family balance to job satisfaction. However, we also discovered that the female-related items do not show any mediation to job satisfaction.

This study explores factors mediating job satisfaction through a work-family balance among married employees during the pandemic. First, as predicted, a work-family balance has a significant relationship with job satisfaction during the pandemic, indicating that the more balance between

work and family domains, the higher job satisfaction. Second, regardless of gender divergence, job satisfaction is significantly related to education, marital age, job tenure, working site, and average working hours per week. As the finding shows, the lower the education, fewer job tenure, fewer hours of work per week, and working from home, while a higher marital age significantly affects job satisfaction.

Table 5.
 Path Analysis with work-family balance as the mediator based on gender divergence.

Characteristics	Direct Effect				Indirect Effect				Total Effect			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Coef	p	Coef	p	Coef	p	Coef	p	Coef	p	Coef	p
Job Satisfaction												
Work-Family Balance	.605		.759						.605	.759		
Education	-.213	**	.083		.145	*	-.023		-.068		.059	
Marital Age	.141	*	.211	**	.172	***	.061		.314	***	.272	***
Children	-.002		-.206	**	-.011		.080		-.013		-.126	
Job Tenure	-.097		-.138	*	.017		.069		-.081		-.069	
Job Specification	-.016		-.008		.225	***	.002		.208		-.006	
Working Site	-.161	**	-.191	***	.059		.111		-.103		-.080	
Average Working Hours	-.038		-.225	***	-.088	*	.009		-.126	*	-.217	**

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Asterisk is used to highlight the direct or indirect mediations found in the analysis

Concerning the level of education, the negative coefficient indicates that the lecturers seemed to struggle when it came to technical skills related to how to conduct online teaching. It means that the effectiveness of teaching affects how the lecturers feel satisfied with their work. This difficulty relating to the perceived satisfaction in teaching has a negative impact when the lecturers lack a sense of control and influence over their work environment, where mentoring and support in the day-to-day activities of teaching, namely offline learning, were previously provided (Stockard & Lehman, 2004).

Here, staff members seem to be more satisfied because they are not overwhelmed by the technical instructions. Besides, during this pandemic, health issues appear to be an important factor influencing workability considering the average age of the respondents is 43 years old, as shown in Table 1. Thus, personal health issues and resources are considered to affect a perceived ability to do one's job effectively and continue doing so in the near future (Gragano, Simbula, & Miglioretti, 2020). Taken together, education for both married men and women shows a direct effect on job satisfaction.

In terms of marital age, the results of this study indicate that marital age completely mediates work-family balance to job satisfaction, with the exception of females who directly affect job satisfaction. Some explanations for this gender gap include the systematic difference in job characteristics and the importance of a job (Zou, 2015). Although Zou added a distinctive work orientation between males and females, with the latter emphasizing social relationships and flexible work hours, the results of this study did not confirm his finding. Instead, married women are more committed to their careers than men, which has a direct impact on job satisfaction. To explain this, we refer to three hypotheses concerning women's multiple roles proposed by Barnett and Hyde

(Barnett & Hyde, 2001). First, stress or disappointment in one domain can be mitigated by satisfaction in another role. Second, additional income can be beneficial if one partner loses his or her job. Third, the social support provided by a job can increase one's well-being. Our finding supports the third hypothesis, which states married women are more likely to perceive the institutional support for their career path.

When it comes to job tenure, the results are quite different. Carlson found that using job tenure as a control variable (with negative coefficient) significantly affects job satisfaction when the work-family balance was included in the model and resulted in a positive significance (Carlson et al., 2009). Similar to Carlson's finding, Wang found that fewer job tenure indicated the higher role overload with negative emotions acting as mediators (Wang & Li, 2019). These findings, however, contradict the results of this current study that the lower the job tenure, the higher job satisfaction. Thiruchelvi stated that the existing challenges as pandemic impact might be the reason for this relationship (Thiruchelvi & Supriya, 2009), while Shin Jung argued that this concern responsibility caused by the power and administration of education managerial organizations (Shin & Jung, 2014).

Two points arise from this study. First, shorter job tenure will be more profitable since the experience of managerial education, which requires a lot of activity as well as the impact of the pandemic, has changed the work environment to online activities (Šverko, Arambašić, & Galešić, 2002). Second, as more people engage in online activities, technological advancements will have an impact on the increasing demands of the employee, potentially making them even more depressed. If so, these points have to do with how married employees balance the work and family domains meaningfully for individual growth and work-family enrichment (Bragger et al., 2019).

Working hours in a week are perceived as having a negative impact on job satisfaction by a married employee. The most important consideration seems to be health, which shows that the fewer working hours per week, the higher job satisfaction. Furthermore, in relation to the time available and the ability to do one's job, working hours are associated with an overabundance of responsibilities and expectations, which decreases job satisfaction (Wang & Li, 2019). Interestingly, working hours per week mediates partially work-family balance to job satisfaction in married men, while females only directly affect job satisfaction.

In this case, we argue that cultural factor plays an important role in which a married man as the head of a family is primarily responsible for the relationship in his family, regardless of his income. In this context, married men who are breadwinners still constitute masculinity socially and therefore have symbolic power (Oishi, Chan, Wang, & Kim, 2015; Tanquerel & Grau-Grau, 2020). The respondents' characteristics appear to be represented by conservationist type, despite being categorized into three types of conservationists, sharers, and carers, as this affects the working hours they spend adapting between work and family domains (Tanquerel & Grau-Grau, 2020).

During the pandemic, married couples who do all of their work from home are more satisfied with their jobs. In addition, pandemic conditions that create uncertainty and increase health risks can raise employees' awareness of the health impact of their work. The impact on health is perceived to directly affect job satisfaction (Gagnano et al., 2020). Furthermore, during a pandemic, perceived meaningfulness of family can help married couples reduce family conflict and enrich spousal relationships while actively seeking meaningfulness of work (Bird & Schnurman-Crook, 2005; Bragger et al., 2019). This demonstrates that involvement in family life has a significant impact on job satisfaction and reduces stress caused by job demands.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide some practical suggestions for policymakers at the organization during this pandemic. First, considering the covid-19 pandemic as a threat, we suggest that educational institutions establish a guarantee for health. Although several studies on job satisfaction suggested an additional incentive during pandemics, we do not consider it is a viable option. In an uncertain situation like covid-19, health assurance is essential. So, we propose that providing such an additional tool for employees will be more effective. Furthermore, this guarantee is expected to have a positive spillover effect on married employees, leading to improved health and well-being (Tennant & Sperry, 2003; Yucel, 2017) in both family and job domains. As the findings of this study showed, we believe that those who actively improve their work content through an educational process can make their work more meaningful and perform better in turn.

Second, to improve teaching quality and job performance in achieving satisfaction, we suggest that employee efficacy be fostered while integrating e-learning into the workplace. To provide quality education to students, it often takes more hours in designing the method or scheme and creating interactive content. Furthermore, to make the course more comprehensible for students, some training in this sort of technical learning will be beneficial. Finally, educational institution goals should not be a barrier to creativity and productivity. Indeed, taking a minimalist approach to one's job can affect one's performance. Even if someone says that he is satisfied with his job, it does not always imply an increase in performance. Instead, it is probably related to one's sense of security in the face of covid-19. To this point, we argue that demanding more incentive payment will be an ambiguous policy because one side is trying to avoid an increase in job demand.

Although these findings are interesting to discuss, this study has some limitations that should be addressed. First, this study is restricted to a small size sample. Because the questionnaire used in this study produced one-time cross-sectional data, it is impossible to draw conclusions regarding causality; therefore, longitudinal and experimental methods should be employed. In addition, this study is only applicable to married employees. The second limitation is concerning the gender gap as indicated by role shift and equality in domestic affairs. Future research should look into cultural factors pertinent to these gender roles and equality, including partner income, occupation, and motivation. Finally, we encourage future research to examine work-family and family-work balance within the changing academic environment. Since the industrial framework has been incorporated into higher educational systems, it has had a significant impact on social academic reputation and is considered as a predisposing factor for employee job satisfaction.

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