

The Impact of Job Stress on Employee Performance and the Mediating Role of Work-Family Conflict

Fitri Astuti¹, Marihot Manullang^{2*}, Hardi³

¹Magister of Management, Graduate Scholl, Lancang Kuning University, Indonesia

²Magister of Management, Graduate Scholl, Lancang Kuning University, Indonesia

³Magister of Management, Graduate Scholl, Lancang Kuning University, Indonesia

Correspondence *:

manullang.prof@gmail.com

Abstract

This research explores how job-related stress influences the performance of female employees, with a particular focus on the intermediary role played by work-family conflict (WFC). Conducted among female civil servants in Indragiri Hilir Regency, Indonesia, the study adopts a quantitative, causal-explanatory design. A total of 98 participants were selected through census sampling from multiple regional government institutions. Data were obtained via standardized questionnaires and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through the SmartPLS 3.2.9 application. The empirical findings suggest that while WFC does not exert a direct influence on performance outcomes, it significantly contributes to elevated stress levels. Interestingly, job stress was found to have a positive and statistically significant impact on performance, indicating that a certain level of stress may serve a motivating function, often referred to as eustress. Nevertheless, the anticipated mediating effect of job stress in the WFC–performance relationship was not supported by the data. The study offers a valuable contribution to occupational health literature by showing that, under specific conditions, moderate stress can enhance employee output, particularly for women balancing professional and domestic roles. For policymakers and public sector leaders, these findings underscore the importance of fostering supportive work environments through flexible scheduling, family-oriented initiatives, and stress-reduction strategies. The results further point to the necessity of developing gender-sensitive workplace interventions that address the nuanced pressures experienced by female civil servants.

Keywords : Employee Performance, Job Stress, Public Sector, SEM-PLS, Work Family Conflict

I. Introduction

In today's dynamic work environment, the increasing participation of women in the labor force has brought about substantial progress in promoting gender equality and empowering female employees. However, with this advancement arises a complex challenge: the need to balance professional responsibilities with familial roles, leading to what is commonly referred to as work-family conflict (WFC). This conflict manifests when the demands of work and family roles are mutually incompatible, making it difficult for individuals—particularly working women—to effectively perform in both spheres (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). As the dual role of women becomes more prominent, the psychological strain resulting from managing professional and domestic obligations intensifies, subsequently influencing their job performance. Data from Indonesia's Central Statistics Agency (BPS) highlights a steady increase in female labor force participation, yet this development is accompanied by heightened stress levels and decreased performance indicators among working women, particularly those employed in the public sector (BPS, 2023).

Numerous studies have explored the negative consequences of WFC on employees' well-being and organizational productivity. In particular, job stress emerges as a critical outcome of work-family imbalance. Stress experienced in the workplace—originating from conflicting role expectations—has been shown to significantly impair employees' cognitive functioning, emotional stability, and overall job output (Kahn et al., 2016; Choi et al., 2022). These effects are even more pronounced among female civil servants in regional government institutions, where structural and societal expectations often demand that women fulfill traditional domestic roles alongside their formal employment duties. Evidence from the Indragiri Hilir Regency illustrates this dilemma: rising cases of domestic disputes and marital breakdowns among female civil servants point to the substantial burden of balancing work and family life (BKPSDM Indragiri Hilir, 2025).

Despite the growing volume of research in this area, a significant research gap remains in understanding the mediating role of job stress in the relationship between WFC and employee performance, particularly within the public administration context in Indonesia. While many previous studies have focused either on the direct impact of WFC or job stress on performance, the interactive effects—specifically, how job stress channels or modifies the influence of WFC on employee performance—remain underexplored (Medina-Garrido et al., 2023; Maharani, 2024). Furthermore, most empirical analyses have been conducted in private or health sectors, leaving a critical void in studies involving female public employees in regional governance structures.

The present study addresses this gap by examining how job stress mediates the relationship between work-family conflict and employee performance among female civil servants in the Regional Apparatus Organizations (Organisasi Perangkat Daerah/OPD) in Indragiri Hilir. By doing so, the study introduces a novel perspective that integrates organizational psychology and gender studies to assess the indirect pathways through which WFC impacts job outcomes. This research contributes to academic literature by enriching the theoretical discourse on stress mediation in dual-role conflicts and offering a more comprehensive understanding of employee behavior in government institutions. Moreover, it adds empirical value by providing data-driven insights from a demographically unique and socially complex region, thereby extending the generalizability of WFC research.

The central aim of this study is to examine how work-family conflict directly and indirectly shapes the job performance of female civil servants, with job stress hypothesized to act as an intervening factor. This research seeks to unpack both the independent and mediated relationships among the variables under investigation. To address this objective, the following guiding questions are formulated:

1. To what extent does the experience of work-family conflict impact the performance outcomes of employees?
2. In what way does work-family conflict contribute to heightened levels of job-related stress?
3. How does job stress influence the ability of employees to perform effectively in their roles?
4. Does job stress play an intermediary role in the link between work-family conflict and employee performance?

To answer these questions, the study employs a quantitative research design using a causal explanatory approach. The target population comprises female civil servants in all OPD offices across Indragiri Hilir Regency. A total of 98 respondents were selected using a census sampling method. Data were collected through structured questionnaires adapted from validated measurement instruments. The study utilizes Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the SmartPLS 3.2.9 software to analyze the hypothesized relationships between variables. This methodological approach enables rigorous testing of both direct and mediating effects, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows: The literature review section outlines key theories, including Social Cognitive Theory, and synthesizes relevant studies on work-family conflict, job stress, and employee performance. It also identifies the conceptual framework and hypothesis development. The research methodology section details the sampling techniques, data collection methods, measurement models, and analytical procedures. The results section presents the empirical findings from the SEM analysis, including the

path coefficients and significance levels for each hypothesis. Following this, the discussion section interprets the results in light of existing literature and theoretical implications, highlighting both expected and unexpected outcomes. Lastly, the conclusion section summarizes the study's contributions, limitations, and policy recommendations, particularly for regional government institutions aiming to enhance gender-sensitive human resource management.

By delving into the mediating mechanisms between WFC and performance through the lens of job stress, this research offers practical implications for government policy-makers, human resource practitioners, and organizational leaders. Understanding the dynamics at play can facilitate the formulation of supportive work environments, flexible scheduling, and comprehensive stress management programs aimed at improving the well-being and productivity of female public servants.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Literature Review

The relationship between job stress, work-family conflict, and employee performance has attracted considerable scholarly attention, particularly in the context of female employees who often experience dual-role demands. The current study builds on a robust body of literature that has examined these variables, but distinguishes itself by integrating job stress as a mediating variable within the Indonesian public sector, specifically among female civil servants in Indragiri Hilir Regency.

Work-family conflict (WFC) is widely recognized as a form of inter-role conflict in which demands from work and family are mutually incompatible. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) first defined WFC as a situation where the demands of work and family roles are mutually irreconcilable, which can lead to significant strain in either or both domains. Numerous studies support the negative consequences of WFC. For instance, Higgins et al. (2010) and Amstad et al. (2011) found that WFC contributes to emotional distress, decreased job satisfaction, and lower employee performance.

In Southeast Asia, Warokka and Febrilia (2015) reported that WFC negatively influences job satisfaction and indirectly affects performance outcomes. Similarly, Aazami et al. (2015), studying Malaysian working women, concluded that WFC leads to psychological distress, although family satisfaction can mediate this effect. These findings highlight the psychological burden that WFC can impose, especially among women who often carry more family-related responsibilities. While some studies such as Medina-Garrido et al. (2023) focus on the moderating role of family-friendly policies, they confirm that unmanaged WFC significantly reduces workplace productivity and employee well-being.

When focusing on female employees, the adverse effects of WFC appear more pronounced. Setiawan et al. (2024), examining female nurses, found that WFC had a statistically significant negative effect on performance, while family-to-work conflict (FWC) showed no significant impact. Their findings emphasized the need for supportive policies that help balance work and domestic roles. This is particularly important given that in many developing regions, institutional support structures such as flexible work hours or childcare services are still limited.

Job stress, another critical variable in this study, is often the psychological consequence of prolonged WFC. According to Beehr and Franz (2015), job stress is a physiological and psychological response to work-related pressures that exceed an individual's coping capabilities. Numerous empirical studies confirm that WFC acts as a significant predictor of job stress. Parlagutan (2016) found a positive correlation between WFC and job stress among female hospital workers in Medan. Similarly, Wahyudi (2017) confirmed that increased levels of WFC contributed to higher job stress among working women in urban areas.

The influence of job stress on employee performance is also well documented. Dar et al. (2011) demonstrated that high levels of job stress lead to lower motivation and decreased job performance in corporate employees. In a more recent study, Ji An et al. (2020) affirmed the negative and significant impact of job stress on female employee performance, reinforcing that emotional exhaustion resulting from work and family pressures can reduce attention, problem-solving ability, and overall job output.

Some studies have also explored the mediating role of job stress in the WFC-performance nexus. For example, Syafrizal et al. (2020) found that job stress significantly mediated the relationship between WFC and job performance among female employees in the education sector. Their study emphasized that while WFC may not always directly impair performance, it does so indirectly by escalating job-related stress levels. In contrast, Nora and Anggraeni (2020) found that job stress, while influenced by WFC, did not serve as a strong mediator for job satisfaction, indicating that contextual and occupational differences may affect mediation strength.

This study situates itself within this scholarly tradition while offering a unique contribution by applying the model to female civil servants in Indonesia, a population underrepresented in prior research. Compared to studies in the healthcare or corporate sectors, this study provides empirical insights into how dual-role stressors manifest in the public sector. Moreover, while previous studies have focused on the direct or moderating effects

of WFC and job stress, fewer have tested the mediating role of job stress in a developing regional context with a gender-specific lens.

By integrating these diverse findings, this study positions itself to bridge the gap in literature concerning the indirect pathways through which WFC affects female employees' performance. Additionally, this research considers the broader social and cultural context wherein societal expectations of women to fulfill family responsibilities remain high, potentially intensifying WFC and job stress. Hence, this work not only confirms existing theories but also extends them by exploring under-investigated variables and contexts.

2.2 Hypotheses Development

Based on an extensive review of prior research and theoretical considerations, the following hypotheses were constructed to guide this study:

1. Hypothesis 1 (H1): Work-family conflict is expected to exert a detrimental and statistically significant influence on employee performance. This assumption is informed by empirical evidence from Triningsih et al. (2021), Ji An et al. (2020), and Widayati et al. (2021), who found that when the boundaries between professional duties and familial responsibilities blur, particularly among female employees, performance outcomes tend to suffer due to divided attention and reduced work focus.
2. Hypothesis 2 (H2): Work-family conflict is anticipated to have a significant and positive impact on job-related stress. As articulated in studies by Wahyudi (2017) and Parlagutan (2016), escalating demands in both domestic and professional domains tend to increase psychological pressure, making individuals more susceptible to stress stemming from role interference and insufficient recovery time.
3. Hypothesis 3 (H3): Job stress is hypothesized to negatively and significantly affect employee performance. This proposition is supported by earlier findings (Dar et al., 2011; Ji An et al., 2020), which demonstrate that heightened stress can impair mental functioning, increase errors and absenteeism, and ultimately degrade job effectiveness and productivity.
4. Hypothesis 4 (H4): It is further hypothesized that job stress serves as a mediating variable in the relationship between work-family conflict and employee performance. Drawing on the insights of Syafrizal et al. (2020) and Maharani (2024), this study explores how psychological strain may serve as the underlying mechanism through which work-family imbalance indirectly hampers employee outcomes, particularly within the setting of public sector institutions.

3. Method

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a causal research design to examine the relationships between work-family conflict, job stress, and employee performance. The causal design was selected to identify the direct and indirect effects among the variables under investigation, particularly the mediating role of job stress in the relationship between work-family conflict and performance. The research was conducted in the Regional Government Organizations (Organisasi Perangkat Daerah or OPD) of Indragiri Hilir Regency. The population included all female civil servants (Aparatur Sipil Negara) working across various OPDs. A total of 98 respondents were selected as the sample using a total sampling technique, wherein all members of the population were included in the study due to the manageable size of the population and the specificity of the research focus on female employees.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to measure the key variables: work-family conflict, job stress, and employee performance. The items within the questionnaire were adapted from previously validated scales and tailored to the context of civil service employees. Each variable was operationalized using several indicators. Work-family conflict was measured based on time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based conflicts as reflected in interference between job responsibilities and family roles. Job stress was assessed through cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and physiological responses to workplace demands. Employee performance was evaluated using dimensions such as task completion, quality of work, adherence to standards, motivation, and interpersonal relations. The measurement items were rated using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Prior to the main analysis, a descriptive statistical analysis was performed to describe the characteristics of respondents and assess the distribution of responses across variables.

To test the proposed hypotheses and analyze the structural relationships among the variables, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using Partial Least Squares (PLS) was employed. The data were processed using SmartPLS software version 3.2.9. The SEM-PLS method was chosen due to its suitability for small to moderate sample sizes, as well as its ability to handle complex models with mediating variables. The model assessment included both the evaluation of the outer model (to test the validity and reliability of measurement instruments) and the inner model (to assess the structural path coefficients and determine the significance of hypothesized relationships). Bootstrapping procedures with 5,000 resamples were applied to determine the statistical

significance of the direct and indirect effects. This methodological framework enabled a comprehensive examination of how work-family conflict influences employee performance, both directly and through the mediating mechanism of job stress. By grounding the analysis in robust statistical techniques and carefully defined variables, the study contributes empirical insights into the dynamics of work-life balance and occupational well-being among female civil servants.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Respondents' Profile and Data Overview

This study involved 98 female civil servants employed across various Regional Government Organizations (Organisasi Perangkat Daerah or OPD) in Indragiri Hilir Regency. The data were gathered through structured questionnaires and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) via SmartPLS 3.2.9. The respondents' demographic characteristics revealed that most participants were married and held dual roles as employees and primary caregivers in their families. This dual responsibility makes them particularly susceptible to work-family conflict (WFC) and job stress.

4.2 Direct Effect of Work-Family Conflict on Employee Performance

Contrary to expectations and prevailing literature, the direct relationship between work-family conflict and employee performance was found to be statistically insignificant ($t = 0.871$, $p > 0.05$). This implies that higher levels of perceived conflict between work and family roles do not necessarily degrade the actual performance levels of female employees in the public sector. This finding diverges from several previous studies which documented that WFC tends to negatively affect employee outcomes (Michel et al., 2016; Ji An et al., 2020). A potential explanation for this deviation lies in cultural and contextual differences. In the case of Indragiri Hilir, it is possible that despite facing high WFC, employees continue to maintain performance due to strong public service ethics or fear of disciplinary sanctions. Moreover, coping mechanisms such as social support or religious coping might buffer the negative impact of WFC. Additionally, as noted by Medina-Garrido et al. (2023), policy environments and organizational support systems can mitigate the adverse effects of WFC. If female employees perceive institutional backing, such as flexible schedules or family leave, their performance may remain stable even under conflict pressures.

4.3 Effect of Work-Family Conflict on Job Stress

The statistical analysis revealed that work-family conflict had a significant positive effect on job stress ($t = 2.942$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that when employees experience interference between work demands and family responsibilities, they are more likely to report higher levels of job-related stress. This is consistent with prior findings from Wahyudi (2017) and Parlagutan (2016), who found that WFC significantly predicts emotional and psychological strain among working women. This result confirms the theoretical framework posited by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), which conceptualizes WFC as a bidirectional source of stress when work and family demands become mutually incompatible. The finding supports the idea that role overload and time-based conflicts are substantial stressors, especially for women juggling organizational roles with domestic duties. Stress as a consequence of WFC is also aligned with Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), which states that external role pressures, if not properly managed, can overwhelm individual self-efficacy and trigger maladaptive emotional responses such as anxiety, fatigue, or burnout.

4.4 The Influence of Job Stress on Employee Performance

The relationship between job stress and employee performance was found to be positive and significant ($t = 3.844$, $p < 0.001$), a result that appears counterintuitive compared to the broader body of literature that typically links high stress to deteriorating performance (Dar et al., 2011; Hendra & Made, 2019). In this specific context, the positive effect of job stress on performance may be interpreted as a manifestation of "eustress" rather than "distress." Eustress, or beneficial stress, can act as a motivational force that drives individuals to focus, meet deadlines, and accomplish tasks with higher urgency (Quick et al., 2013). Among female civil servants, moderate levels of stress may instigate greater productivity due to heightened awareness of social and professional expectations. However, this should not be generalized to all forms of stress. Prolonged or chronic stress, especially without proper coping mechanisms, is still widely recognized to impair cognitive functioning and reduce job satisfaction (Choi et al., 2022). Thus, while a certain threshold of stress may enhance performance, beyond this level, its effects are likely to reverse.

4.5 Mediating Role of Job Stress in the Relationship between WFC and Performance

One of the core objectives of this study was to investigate whether job stress mediates the relationship between work-family conflict and employee performance. Interestingly, the mediation analysis revealed that job stress does not significantly mediate the indirect effect of WFC on performance (indirect effect $p > 0.05$). This implies that even though WFC increases stress, and stress improves performance to a degree, the path from WFC to performance via stress is not statistically valid. This result contradicts prior research by Syafrizal et al. (2020) and Arifudin & Filatrovi (2020), who demonstrated that stress mediates the WFC-performance relationship. The discrepancy may stem from differences in measurement, the nature of stress (e.g., acute vs. chronic), or institutional factors such as performance appraisal systems in government agencies that enforce consistent output despite personal challenges. It is also possible that the lack of mediation is influenced by adaptive behavior or resilience among the respondents. Some female employees may compartmentalize stress effectively or receive emotional support from colleagues and supervisors, enabling them to separate personal burdens from professional tasks.

4.6 Implications and Comparison with Prior Studies

While much of the extant literature emphasizes the detrimental impacts of WFC and stress, this study presents a nuanced picture. It confirms that WFC leads to heightened stress but challenges the assumption that stress necessarily impairs performance. This finding supports the contention of Beehr and Franz (1987), who posited that the effect of stress on performance is context-dependent and can be either facilitative or debilitating depending on individual and organizational coping resources. Moreover, the study aligns partially with Aazami et al. (2015), who found that the presence of mediators such as family satisfaction or organizational support can buffer the negative outcomes of WFC. However, in this study, stress did not function as a mediator, which points to the need for exploring other potential mediating variables such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, or emotional intelligence. From a practical perspective, the study underscores the importance of managing WFC proactively by instituting family-friendly policies, encouraging flexible scheduling, and providing mental health support services. Public organizations must also be aware that while some employees may thrive under pressure, others may quietly suffer from accumulated stress, which could eventually affect their well-being and organizational outcomes.

5. Conclusion

This study sought to investigate the influence of work-family conflict on employee performance, with particular attention to the mediating role of job stress among female civil servants in Indragiri Hilir Regency. The findings revealed that work-family conflict does not significantly affect employee performance directly, but it does significantly increase job stress. Interestingly, job stress was found to have a significant positive influence on employee performance, suggesting a potential presence of “eustress” rather than “distress” among the respondents. However, the indirect relationship from work-family conflict to performance through job stress was not statistically significant, indicating that job stress does not mediate the relationship between the two variables. These results highlight the complexity of psychological and behavioral responses in the public sector workforce, especially among women balancing professional and domestic responsibilities.

From a practical standpoint, the findings underscore the need for public sector organizations and policymakers to address work-family dynamics through structural and cultural interventions. Managers are encouraged to implement flexible work arrangements, family-friendly policies, and mental health support systems to minimize the negative effects of work-family conflict. Additionally, leadership training and wellness programs could help employees transform job stress into a constructive force that enhances performance, provided it is managed within a healthy threshold. Human resource departments should also consider regular stress audits and offer coping mechanism workshops, particularly tailored to female employees who often face higher levels of dual-role burden.

Despite its empirical contributions, this study is not without limitations. First, the research focused exclusively on female civil servants within a single regency, which limits the generalizability of the findings to broader populations or to male employees. Second, the cross-sectional design precludes the ability to capture changes in WFC or stress over time. Third, while SEM-PLS enabled robust path analysis, the study did not control for moderating variables such as organizational support, emotional intelligence, or personality traits, which may influence the relationship between stress and performance. Lastly, self-reported questionnaires are subject to response bias, especially in sensitive topics related to family and personal well-being.

To build upon these findings, future research should consider expanding the demographic scope to include male employees, different regions, and varying levels of government or industry sectors. Longitudinal studies are recommended to capture the evolving nature of work-family conflict and its cumulative effects on stress and performance. Further investigations could also explore alternative mediators such as emotional

exhaustion, job satisfaction, or work engagement, and examine potential moderators like resilience, social support, or managerial empathy. By integrating these variables, future research may offer a more holistic understanding of how employees cope with the demands of both professional and domestic spheres.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing literature on occupational well-being by demonstrating that while work-family conflict intensifies job stress, such stress when interpreted and managed positively can serve as a driver of performance among female civil servants. However, the absence of a mediating effect underscores the need to explore more nuanced psychological mechanisms. Through informed policies and proactive management, organizations can foster an inclusive and supportive environment where employees can thrive despite the complexities of modern work-life integration.

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