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The effect of family support on work-life balance mediated by job stress among Universitas Terbuka students

Pengaruh family support terhadap work life balance dengan stres kerja sebagai variabel mediasi pada mahasiswa Universitas Terbuka

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of working students is increasingly common. Students often struggle to balance their time between completing work assignments and academic tasks, as they must simultaneously manage their studies, careers, and family responsibilities. Consequently, achieving a healthy work-life balance is essential for students to actively fulfill their roles in both professional and personal spheres. This balance often relies on family support as a primary external factor, while job stress also significantly affects an individual's work-life balance. This study aims to examine the effect of family support on work-life balance, mediated by job stress. Using an explanatory quantitative design, the study sampled 260 students at Universitas Terbuka Medan. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) executed through the SmartPLS software. The results indicate that job stress mediates the effect of family support on students' work-life balance. These findings contribute to addressing low work-life balance among students, highlighting how it is influenced by family support through the mediating role of job stress.

ABSTRAK

Fenomena mahasiswa kerja sambilan kiranya bukan hal baru. Mahasiswa merasa sulit membagi waktu antara mengerjakan tugas pekerjaan maupun tugas kuliah. Dikarenakan mahasiswa yang bekerja selain fokus pada perkuliahannya juga memerlukan fokus pada karir dan keluarga. Dalam hal ini perlu adanya pencapaian work life balance pada mahasiswa agar dapat secara aktif mengambil peran sosial di kehidupan kerja maupun pribadi. pencapaian keseimbangan kerja-kehidupan sering kali bergantung pada dukungan keluarga sebagai faktor eksternal utama. Faktor lain yang juga dapat mempengaruhi work life balance yaitu stres kerja. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji pengaruh family support terhadap work life balance melalui mediasi stress kerja. Penelitian kuantitatif eksplanatif ini melibatkan 260 mahasiswa di Universitas Terbuka Medan. Analisis data menggunakan Structural Equation Model (SEM) yang dioperasikan melalui program SmartPLS. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa stress kerja memediasi pengaruh family support terhadap work life balance mahasiswa. Hasil penelitian ini berkontribusi terhadap masalah rendahnya work life balance mahasiswa yang dipengaruhi oleh family support dan dimediasi oleh stres kerja.

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1. INTRODUCTION

According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in 2007, 40 percent of students worked more than 20 hours per week, compared to only 20 percent of non-working students who focused exclusively on completing their four-year degree (Planty et al., 2009). Over time, an increasing number of individuals alternate between education and employment, while others pursue both simultaneously (Subandy & Jatmika, 2020). The phenomenon of students working part-time is far from new. Students engage in employment for various reasons, including meeting daily living expenses, paying tuition fees, managing off-campus entrepreneurial ventures, gaining professional experience, or pursuing personal hobbies alongside their work commitments (Hakim & Hasmira, 2022).

In 2019, Central Bureau of Statistics (*Badan Pusat Statistik*/BPS) reported that approximately 2.2 million, or 24.4 percent, of the total 9.32 million college students were studying while working, while Universitas Terbuka reported that 75 percent of its student body engaged in dual study and employment obligations. Many of these students seek additional income to cover rising academic costs. According to Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 13 of 2003 (*Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 13 tahun 2003*) concerning Manpower, a worker is defined as anyone capable of performing work to produce goods and/or services to meet their own needs or those of society (Peraturan Perundang-undangan, 2003). A quantitative study conducted by Tetteh & Attiogbe (2019) in Ghana revealed that approximately 90 percent of working students faced difficulties balancing their dual academic and work responsibilities. Similarly, another study found that 19 out of 20 surveyed student respondents struggled to allocate time between employment obligations and academic course (Cahyadi & Prastyani, 2020). This difficulty arises because working students must simultaneously focus on their studies, careers, and family responsibilities, whereas non-working students generally dedicate their primary focus to their academic pursuits (Firmansyah, 2016).

In this regard, achieving work-life balance is essential for working students to actively fulfill social roles in both their professional and personal lives (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). The term work-life balance originated in the late 1970s to describe the harmonious division between professional career ambitions, personal interests, family commitments, and other life demands (Harb & Keyrouz, 2022). According to Greenhaus et al. (2003), work-life balance is a state in which an individual equally allocates time and psychological energy across work and personal domains while attaining optimal satisfaction in both. The concept involves appropriately prioritizing work activities and career aspirations on one side with health, spiritual pursuits, family life, and leisure on the other to establish harmony. If working students manage to achieve work-life balance, it could effectively alleviate the challenges associated with managing dual academic and employment responsibilities. Nevertheless, a study by Wijayanti (2024) revealed that 37 students experienced low levels of work-life balance.

Ramdhania & Yuniasantib (2023) emphasized that attaining work-life balance frequently depends on family support as a key external factor. According to Lambert et al. (2016), this support functions as a resource that provides feedback and psychological reinforcement for working individuals. Sarafino & Smith (2011) categorized social support into four distinct dimensions: emotional (care and concern), instrumental (tangible assistance or resources), informational (advice and guidance), and esteem support (appreciation and respect). Another critical factor influencing work-life balance is job stress (Poulose & Sudarsan, 2017). Job stress refers to a psychological state where an individual experiences tension, pressure, or discomfort arising from work environment conditions, which can impede future performance (Rivai, 2019). Furthermore, Rizky & Afrianty (2018) noted that work-life balance serves as a key element capable of minimizing or mitigating job stress. To establish this equilibrium, individuals must recognize their stress levels to implement the most appropriate coping mechanisms (Bahar & Prasetio, 2021).

Megayani et al. (2023) demonstrated a significant negative correlation between job stress and work-life balance. Work-life balance is defined as an employee's ability to harmoniously manage time between professional demands and personal domains, including academic obligations, family affairs, and leisure activities. Conversely, Safitri & Gilang (2020) defined job stress as a disturbance in equilibrium resulting from interactions among various elements in the workplace environment. This phenomenon manifests as psychological conflict triggered by internal and external factors, with social support from family acting as a key element in reducing such pressure (Song & Kim, 2019). A study conducted by Fatimah et al. (2022) on female nursing paramedics at a hospital in Medan proved that family support and job stress significantly affect work-life balance. With a calculated F-value of 90.602 exceeding the critical F-table value of 19.493 and a significance level of 0.000, these findings further confirm that family support exerts a significant positive impact on enhancing the quality of work-life balance among the subjects.

Achieving balance between work and personal life not only prevents stress but also enhances employees' psychological well-being and happiness. This sense of happiness directly contributes to increased productivity and creativity, allowing tasks and responsibilities to be completed more effectively. Previous research indicates a significant negative relationship between job stress and work-life balance (Boas & EstelleMorin, 2018). However, Mantri & Kale (2018) found a significant positive relationship between job stress and work-life balance in their study. Consistent with the findings Megayani et al. (2023), job stress exerts a negative and significant effect on work-life balance. Poulose & Sudarsan (2017) stated that work-life balance is strongly influenced by family support. In line with this view, Sarafino & Smith (2011) defined family support as a form of social support encompassing care, esteem, and assistance perceived by an individual from their immediate family environment.

Although literature regarding the impact of family support on work-life balance and job stress has been widely explored, most prior studies have focused primarily on regular students who engage in direct campus interactions. A significant difference exists when applied to Universitas Terbuka (UT) students, as UT employs a distance and independent learning system where boundaries between study, work, and domestic spaces blur, requiring students to hold multiple roles as employees, heads of households or homemakers, and active students. Consequently, the dynamics of job stress and the forms of family support interventions they require differ substantially, yet these mechanisms remain under-examined within a comprehensive mediation framework. The novelty of this study lies in the interaction model among non-conventional (distance-learning) students. Unlike previous studies that positioned academic stress as a mediating variable, this study specifically examines job stress as the mediator. This research offers a new perspective, suggesting that family support not only mitigates stress directly but also acts as an intervention that influences job stress, ultimately determining success in achieving work-life balance.

Based on the dynamic described, this study examines the effect of family support on work-life balance, mediated by job stress among Universitas Terbuka Medan students. The formulated hypotheses are as follows

H_1 = Family support has a positive effect on work-life balance among Universitas Terbuka students

H_2 = Family support has a negative effect on job stress among Universitas Terbuka students

H_3 = Job stress has a negative effect on work-life balance among Universitas Terbuka students

H_4 = Job stress mediates the effect of family support on work-life balance among Universitas Terbuka students.

2. METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative method based on the positivist paradigm. Quantitative research is utilized to examine specific populations or samples, with data collected via research instruments and analyzed using quantitative or statistical procedures to test predefined hypotheses. Specifically, this study adopts an explanatory quantitative approach to elucidate relationships among several independent and dependent variables, as well as to explain relationships and effects through hypothesis testing (Sugiyono, 2017).

Participants

The population for this study comprises all active students enrolled at Universitas Terbuka Medan during the 2024/2025 academic year, totaling 18,196 active students. The sample size was determined using the model proposed by Hair Jr et al. (2021), which recommends a minimum sample size of 5 to 10 times the number of structural arrows pointing to a latent variable in a path model, or 5 to 10 times the total number of indicators. Based on this calculation, the required minimum sample size for this study was 260 respondents. Demographically, the sample was dominated by early adults (75 percent), followed by middle adults (12.3 percent), late adolescents (9.2 percent), and late adults (3.5 percent). In terms of academic standing, the majority were mid-to-late-stage students (35 percent), followed by early-mid stage students (28.1 percent), final-semester students (27.7 percent), and first-year students (9.2 percent). Regarding employment status, most respondents held staff or operational positions (53.5 percent), followed by professional or expert roles (26.5 percent), and managerial or leadership positions (20 percent).

Research Instruments

Work-life balance was measured using a scale developed by Gunawan et al. (2019) based on demands and resources dimensions. The scale consists of 17 items using a fivepoint Likert response format. It demonstrated a reliability value of 0.976, with validity testing yielding Standardized Loading Factors (SLF) greater than 0.5, indicating that all items were valid. Family support was measured using a scale developed by Fatimah et al. (2022), grounded in the social support dimensions established by Sarafino & Smith (2011). The family support scale proved valid and reliable with no items discarded, showing significance values of less than 0.05, positive Pearson correlation coefficients ranging from 0.235 to 0.727, and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.943. Job stress was measured using a scale adapted and validated by Agustina (2018), which assesses four dimensions, psychological, behavioral, cognitive, and physiological symptoms. This scale comprises 58 items.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, research clearance was obtained from Universitas Terbuka. Questionnaires were subsequently distributed alongside explanations of the study's purpose, assurances of confidentiality, and statements of voluntary participation. Completed respondent data were compiled into a statistical dataset for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was conducted using inferential statistical methods, specifically Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Based on the research objectives, the framework evaluated family support as the exogenous construct (variable X), job stress as the mediating variable, and work-life balance as the endogenous construct (variable Y). The analysis aimed to determine the magnitude of the effects exerted by family support and job stress on work-life balance. Given the characteristics of the variables, hypothesis testing was carried out using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) executed via SmartPLS software (Haryono, 2016).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1. Mean comparison

Variable	Empirical Mean	Hypotetical Mean	SD	Category
Work Life Balance	53	51	10	Medium
Family Support	143	102	28	High
Job Stress	62	174	19	Medium

Based on the analysis, the empirical mean for work-life balance was 53, which closely aligns with the hypothetical mean of 51, displaying a difference of 2 that is smaller than the standard deviation of 10. This indicates that working students experience a moderate level of work-life balance. For job stress, the empirical mean was 62 compared to a hypothetical mean of 174. The substantial discrepancy between these values exceeds the standard deviation of 19, indicating that job stress levels among respondents were generally low. This suggests that respondents typically did not experience elevated levels of workplace stress, despite individual variations. Meanwhile, the family support variable yielded an empirical mean of 143, surpassing the hypothetical mean of 102 by 41, which also exceeds the standard deviation of 27. This signifies that the level of family support received by respondents fell into the high category. Overall, the categorization results reveal that students balancing dual roles as employees and scholars maintain moderate work-life balance, high family support, and relatively low job stress. These findings suggest that family support serves as a protective factor enabling students to maintain equilibrium between professional demands and academic responsibilities.

SEM-PLS First Orders

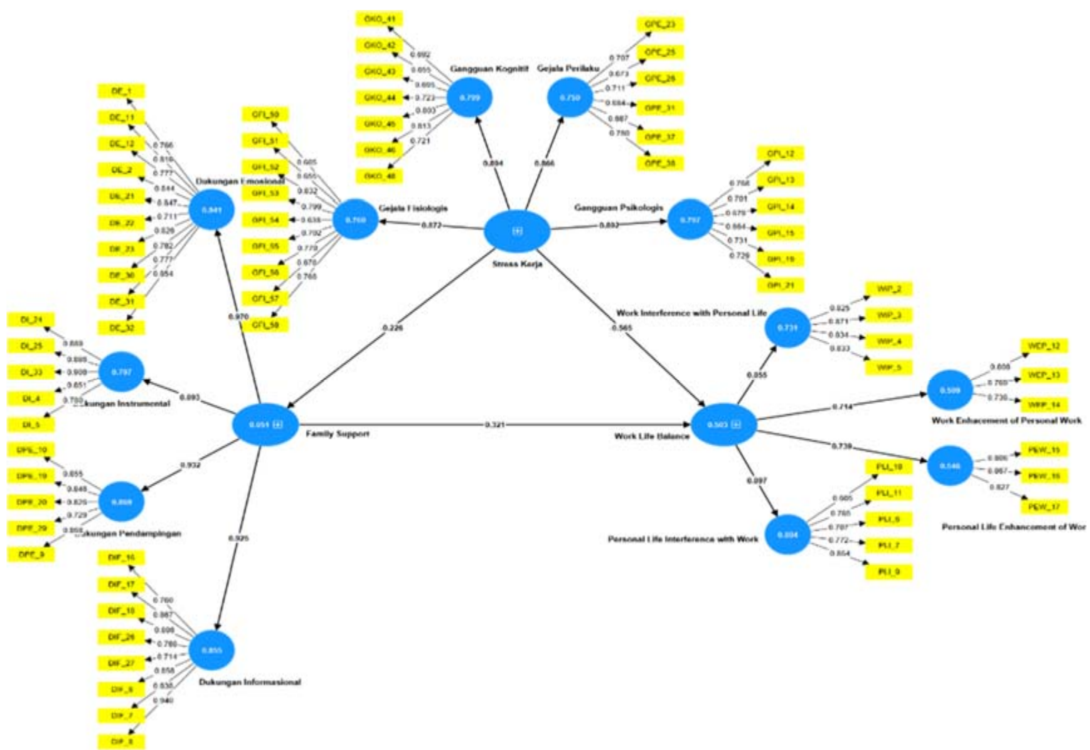

Figure 1. First-order structural model of job stress and family support on work-life balance

Based on the first-order structural model diagram, the indicators for each construct demonstrate adequate outer loadings, thereby effectively representing their respective latent variables. Inter-construct relationships are illustrated by path coefficients reflecting the direction and magnitude of effects between variables, while R-squared values indicate the model's capacity to explain the variance in endogenous constructs.

Construct Reliability

Table 2. Construct reliability

Laten Variables Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	(AVE)
Emotional Support	0.938	0.940	0.947	0.642
Informational Support	0.936	0.940	0.948	0.696
Instrumental Support	0.914	0.916	0.936	0.746
Mentoring Support	0.883	0.891	0.915	0.683
Family Support	0.975	0.978	0.977	0.556
Cognitive Impairment	0.855	0.864	0.889	0.534
Psychologal Disturbance	0.807	0.810	0.861	0.508
Physiological Symptomps	0.882	0.890	0.906	0.519
Behavioral Symptomps	0.800	0.802	0.857	0.501
Personal Life Enhancement of Work	0.781	0.790	0.872	0.695
Personal Life Interference with Work	0.799	0.814	0.862	0.559
Job Stress	0.948	0.960	0.952	0.575
Work Enhacement of Personal Work	0.870	0.787	0.816	0.597
Work Interference with Personal Life	0.862	0.865	0.906	0.707
Work Life Balance	0.893	0.910	0.910	0.588

Based on the evaluation criteria recommended by Hair Jr et al. (2021), the construct reliability test results presented in the table demonstrate that all latent constructs meet the required thresholds for Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (rho_a and rho_c), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). This indicates that every construct within the research model exhibits high internal consistency and convergent validity. For the family support construct, reliability values are exceptionally high, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.975 and Composite Reliability exceeding 0.97, reflecting strong measurement consistency. Additionally, all underlying dimensions of family support yield AVE values above 0.50, satisfying convergent validity criteria. Similarly, the multi-dimensional job stress construct demonstrates robust reliability, with all indicators yielding Composite Reliability values above 0.80 and AVE values above 0.50. These results confirm that job stress is measured stably and consistently by its underlying indicators.

Likewise, all dimensions of the work-life balance construct, including personal life enhancement, work interference, and work enhancement, meet established reliability standards, with AVE values consistently exceeding the 0.50 threshold. This confirms that the work-life balance construct possesses sound convergent validity and is suitable for structural model analysis. Overall, the evaluation verifies that all constructs in this study fulfill the required standards for measurement reliability and validity.

SEM-PLS Second Orders

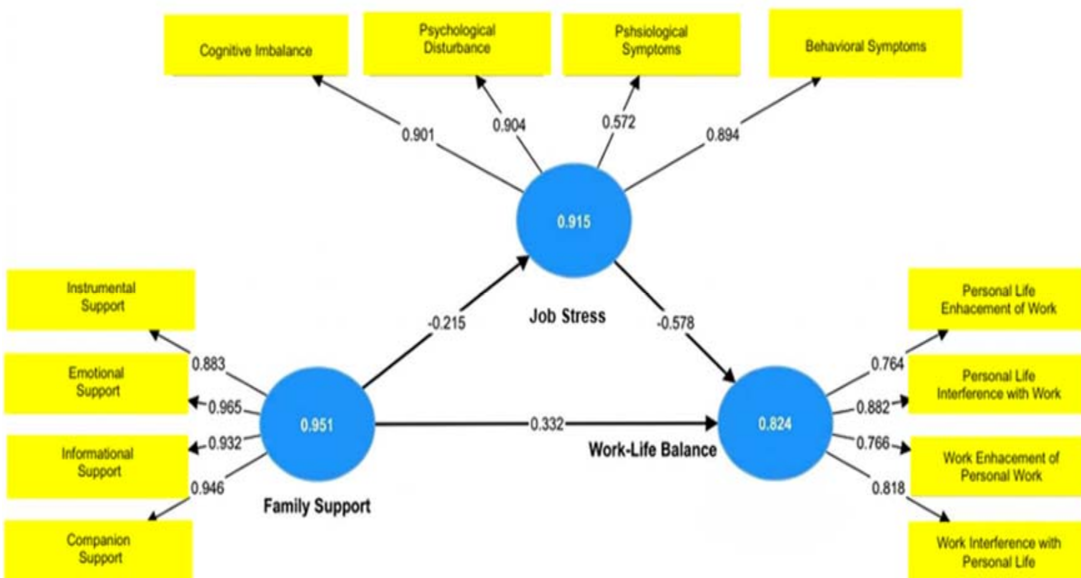

Figure 2. Structural model of second order job stress, family support for work life balance

The second-order model depicts hierarchical relationships among latent constructs, wherein each primary variable is formed by its constituent dimensions prior to structural evaluation. For social support, the higher-order latent variable is reflected by four dimensions: instrumental support (0.883), emotional support (0.965), informational support (0.932), and companionship support (0.946). These outer loadings indicate that all four dimensions contribute strongly to the overall construct at the measurement level.

For job stress, the latent variable comprises four primary indicators: cognitive impairment (0.901), psychological distress (0.904), physiological symptoms (0.872), and behavioral symptoms (0.894). All indicators show consistent alignment in reflecting job stress as a latent construct. Meanwhile, the work-life balance construct is formed by four dimensions: personal life enhancement of work (0.764), personal life interference with work (0.882), work enhancement of personal life (0.766), and work interference with personal life (0.818), capturing both balance and conflict between work and personal domains.

At the inner structural model level, relationships among constructs display several effect patterns estimated via path coefficients. Job stress exhibits a negative path coefficient toward social support (-0.215) and work-life balance (-0.578). Conversely, social support demonstrates a positive path coefficient toward work-life balance (0.332). These values reflect the direction and strength of inter-construct relationships within the structural model. Regarding explained variance, an R^2 value of 0.046 for social support indicates the proportion of variance explained by its predictor, whereas an R^2 value of 0.527 for work-life balance demonstrates substantial variance explained by the antecedent constructs in the model.

Discriminant Validity

Table 3. Discriminant validity based on Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values

Laten Variable Construct	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)
Job Stress ↔ Family Support	0.216
Work Life Balance ↔ Family Support	0.497
Work Life Balance ↔ Job Stress	0.733

The discriminant validity test results using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) show that all inter-construct values range from 0.216 to 0.733. These values remain below the recommended threshold of < 0.85 (Hair Jr et al., 2021), confirming that all constructs in the research model meet the criteria for discriminant validity.

Effect Size (F-Square) Analysis

Table 4. Effect size analysis (f-Square) contribution

Relationship Between Variables	f-square	Effect Size Category
Family Support → Work Life Balance	0.222	Medium
Family Support → Job Stress	0.048	Low
Job Stress → Work Life Balance	0.673	High

The effect of family support on work-life balance yielded an f-square value of 0.222, reflecting a moderate effect size. This demonstrates that family support contributes meaningfully to explaining variations in work-life balance among Universitas Terbuka Medan students. Meanwhile, the impact of family support on job stress generated an f-square value of 0.048, placing it in the small effect category. This finding indicates that family support plays a relatively minor role in explaining changes in job stress within this framework. In contrast, the effect of job stress on work-life balance produced an f-square value of 0.673, indicating a large effect size. This underscores job stress as the most dominant determinant of variations in work-life balance among the evaluated variables.

Goodness-of-Fit Model Test

Table 5. Goodness-of-fit model test

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.074	0.074
NFI	0.853	0.853

The SRMR value of 0.074 falls below the 0.08 threshold, indicating low residual error and confirming good model fit. Meanwhile, the NFI value of 0.853 demonstrates an acceptable fit relative to the baseline model, as it approaches the ideal value of 1. Overall, these results verify that the structural model is well-specified and possesses adequate goodness-of-fit for subsequent hypothesis testing and structural evaluation.

PLS Predict Analysis Test

Table 6. Prediction test based on predict LV summary values

	Q^2predict	PLS-SEM_ RMSE	PLS-SEM_ MAE	LM_ RMSE	LM_ MAE
Emotional Support	0.049	0.979	0.752	0.974	0.760
Informational Support	0.059	0.973	0.766	0.938	0.706
Mentoring Support	0.032	0.988	0.783	0.973	0.761
Instrumental Support	-0.030	1.019	0.810	0.998	0.798
Personal Life Enhancement of Work	0.165	0.917	0.727	0.910	0.733
Personal Life Interference with Work	0.406	0.774	0.620	0.775	0.605
Work Enhacement of Personal Work	0.259	0.864	0.695	0.842	0.673
Work Interference with Personal Life	0.227	0.883	0.725	0.875	0.713

The Q^2predict values show that most indicators yield positive results, demonstrating acceptable predictive power, although one indicator, instrumental support (-0.030), exhibits lower predictive relevance. Generally, higher Q^2predict values reflect superior predictive performance. Furthermore, comparing the RMSE and MAE values between the PLS-SEM model and the linear model (LM) benchmark reveals that error metrics for several PLS-SEM indicators remain comparable to or slightly higher than those of the LM model. Overall, these findings indicate that the model exhibits low-to-moderate predictive power, with specific indicators outperforming the benchmark model.

PLS Predict MV Summary

Table 7. Predictive evaluation based on Manifest Variable (MV) summary

	Q^2predict	RMSE	MAE
Family Support	0.038	0.994	0.787
Work Life Balance	0.413	0.771	0.640

The family support variable yields a Q^2predict value of 0.038, indicating very weak yet positive predictive power. In contrast, the work-life balance variable yields a Q^2predict value of 0.413, demonstrating stronger predictive power within the moderate-to-high range. Furthermore, the RMSE and MAE values for both variables reflect acceptable prediction error levels, with work-life balance showing lower error metrics than family support. Overall, the model demonstrates superior predictive capability in explaining work-life balance compared to family support.

Direct Effect Significance Test

Table 8. Path coefficients significance test for direct effects

Laten Variable Construct	(OS)	(M)	St. Dev	T-Stat	P-Value
Family Support → Work Life Balance	0.332	0.334	0.042	7.917	0.000
Family Support → Job Stress	-0.215	-0.215	0.054	3.999	0.000
Job Stress → Work Life Balance	-0.578	-0.579	0.039	14.906	0.000

The path coefficient analysis presented in Table 4.6.1 provides the direction, magnitude, and statistical significance of the relationships between variables in the structural model. The relationship between family support and work-life balance demonstrates a path coefficient of 0.332, with a T-statistic of 7.917 and P-value 0.000. This result indicates that family support exerts a positive and statistically significant effect on work-life balance.

Meanwhile, the relationship between family support and job stress yields a path coefficient of -0.215, with a T-statistic 3.999 and P-value 0.000. This demonstrates a negative and statistically significant impact, indicating that higher family support tends to reduce perceived stress levels, whereas lower family support is associated with higher perceived job stress among Universitas Terbuka Medan students. Finally, the relationship between job stress and work-life balance yields a path coefficient of -0.578, with a T-statistic 14.906 dand P-value 0.000, indicating that job stress has a strong, negative, and statistically significant impact on work-life balance.

Indirect Effect Significance Test

The indirect effect test evaluates indirect relationships among variables within the structural model, specifically examining the role of mediating variables in bridging the link between independent and dependent variables.

Table 9. Path coefficients significance test for indirect effects

Latent Variable Construct	(OS)	(M)	St. Dev	T-Stat	P-Value
Family Support → Job Stress → Work Life Balance	-0.071	-0.071	0.018	3.940	0.000

Based on the indirect effect test results in Table 4.6.2, the indirect influence among variables in the model can be evaluated through the mediating role. The results indicate that the path from family support to work-life balance through job stress yields a coefficient of -0.071, with a T-statistic of 3.940 and a p-value of 0.000. This finding demonstrates that the indirect effect is negative and statistically significant. Consequently, an increase in family support not only directly enhances work-life balance, but also indirectly improves work-life balance by reducing job stress as a mediating variable. Thus, job stress is proven to act as a significant partial mediator in the relationship between family support and work-life balance.

Summary of Inter-Variable Effects (Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects)

To provide a comprehensive overview of the relationships among variables in the structural model, an analysis of direct, indirect, and total effects was conducted. This analysis aims to evaluate not only the statistical significance of the relationships, but also the overall magnitude of effect between variables within the research model.

Table 10. Resume Pengaruh Antar Variabel (Direct, Indirect, dan Total Effect)

Variable Relationship	Direct Effect (β)	Indirect Effect (β)	Percent	Total Effect (β)	T-Stat	P-Value	Description
Job Stress → Work Life Balance	-0.578	-0.071	57.8	-0.649	17.558	0.000	Supported
Family Support → Job Stress	-0.215	-	21.5	-0.215	3.999	0.000	Supported
Family Support → Work Life Balance	0.332	-	33.2	0.332	7.917	0.000	Supported

The results of the analysis in the summary table of inter-variable effects show that all relationships within the model demonstrate significant effects, whether direct, indirect, or total. The effect of job stress on work-life balance yields a total effect value of -0.649, indicating that job stress exerts a strong negative influence on the work-life balance of Universitas Terbuka Medan students. This implies that higher levels of job stress experienced by students correspond to a lower ability to maintain a balance between work, academic, and personal life demands.

Additionally, the indirect effect of family support on work-life balance through job stress yields a value of -0.071 and is proven to be statistically significant. This finding demonstrates that job stress serves as a mediating variable that reinforces the impact of family support on work-life balance. Consequently, a decline in family support not only directly leads to lower work-life balance, but also indirectly reduces it by increasing perceived job stress among students. Furthermore, the effect of family support on job stress shows a path coefficient of -0.215, indicating that higher family support tends to reduce job stress levels. This pattern suggests that reduced interaction, communication, or relational quality between students and their families contributes to heightened work pressure.

Conversely, the effect of family support on work-life balance shows a path coefficient of 0.332, demonstrating a positive and statistically significant impact. This indicates that greater support provided by the family enhances students' ability to effectively manage the balance between their work and personal lives.

Discussion

This study examines the effect of family support on work-life balance while investigating the mediating role of job stress among Universitas Terbuka Medan students. Overall, the findings reveal that job stress is the most dominant variable influencing work-life balance indirectly. Meanwhile, family support plays a vital role in maintaining life balance, particularly for Universitas Terbuka Medan students who generally manage dual roles as both employees and students.

Family support significantly influences work-life balance among students because it provides instrumental resources (tangible assistance such as household chore sharing or financial help) and affective resources (emotional validation, motivation, and active listening). Receiving this support improves students' mood and elevates their cognitive capacity. This positive energy from home translates into both workplace and virtual classroom settings, mitigating inter-role conflict and establishing a sense of work-life balance (Greenhaus et al., 2014). Empirical support is further provided by Lapierre et al. (2018), who explained that family support, particularly in emotional and instrumental forms, plays a significant role in enhancing work-life balance quality. This aligns with French et al. (2018), who found that social support from family reduces work-family conflict and enhances overall individual well-being.

Theoretically, high job demands (job stress) trigger the Health Impairment Process, depleting an employee's conceptual energy reserves. Consequently, the remaining energy capacity needed to maintain work-life balance falls into a deficit (Bakker et al., 2007). This aligns with previous research demonstrating a significant negative relationship between job stress and work-life balance (Boas & EstelleMorin, 2018). Furthermore, empirical results from Megayani et al. (2023) confirm that job stress exerts a negative and significant influence on work-life balance. When employed students experience excessive job stress due to high workplace demands, their work-life balance decreases accordingly.

According to Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, the family serves as a primary source of psychological resources for employees. When employees receive strong family support, their resource pools remain replenished. These resources are utilized to cope with, reduce, and manage workplace stress. By successfully buffering or minimizing job stress through family support, employees avoid entering a loss spiral of energy exhaustion. Consequently, they return home with mental stability and autonomy, allowing them to engage in domestic roles in a balanced manner. Family support does not mechanically generate work-life balance directly; rather, it operates by improving the employee's mental state first (lowering job stress), which subsequently facilitates the attainment of work-life balance.

Based on the PLS-SEM analysis, family support exerts a direct negative effect on job stress at 21.5 percent, indicating that higher family support reduces job stress. Additionally, family support has a direct positive effect on work-life balance at 33.2 percent. Job stress exerts a negative effect on work-life balance at 57.8 percent, demonstrating that increased job stress reduces work-life balance. An indirect effect of family support on work-life balance through job stress was identified at 12.4 percent. Consequently, the total effect of family support on work-life balance reaches 45.6 percent, comprising a direct effect of 33.2 percent and an indirect effect of 12.4 percent. Given that both direct and indirect effects are statistically significant (p-value = 0.000), job stress serves as a partial mediator within this framework.

This study carries several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the sample was restricted to Universitas Terbuka Medan students, meaning these findings may not generalize to other universities or geographical contexts. Second, the use of self-reported questionnaires creates potential for subjective respondent bias, such as social desirability bias, which may affect data accuracy. Finally, this research examined only job stress, family support, and work-life balance. Additional variables such as role conflict, academic workload, time management, and individual psychological factors were omitted from the model. Future researchers are advised to expand the sample scope and integrate constructs such as role conflict, time management, or organizational support to obtain broader insights.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides insights into how family support influences work-life balance in managing job demands, academic tasks, and daily life among university students. The findings demonstrate that family support enhances work-life balance, whereas job stress diminishes work-life balance while attenuating the positive impact of family support. Theoretically, family support serves a vital and strategic function in shaping and enhancing work-life balance. The relationship between the two is not only direct, but also operates through psychological regulation mechanisms. Family support acts not merely as a domestic facilitator, but as an emotional anchor and psychological buffer that converts stress-inducing demands into positive energy. In the absence of family support, high job demands can easily erode work-life balance and trigger chronic emotional exhaustion. Based on these findings, students are encouraged to enhance their stress management capabilities and time management skills, while leveraging family support as a source of resilience when navigating workplace and academic demands. Families are expected to provide consistent emotional, instrumental, and motivational support, thereby assisting students in sustaining a healthy balance between their work, academic, and personal lives.

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