

Work-Life Balance as A Mechanism Linking Perceived Organizational Support to Employee Performance: The Contingent Role of Job Satisfaction in Culinary Smes

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Abstract

This study examines whether work-life balance transmits the effect of perceived organizational support on employee performance and whether job satisfaction conditions that relationship among women employed in culinary micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). A cross-sectional survey was administered to 155 female employees of 252 culinary SMEs in Muna Regency, Indonesia, selected through simple random sampling subject to employment and firm-age criteria. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and partial least squares structural equation modeling with SmartPLS 4. Perceived organizational support strongly improved work-life balance ($\beta = 0.698$, $p < 0.001$), but its direct effect on employee performance was not significant ($\beta = 0.081$, $p = 0.266$). Work-life balance positively affected performance ($\beta = 0.277$, $p = 0.002$) and fully mediated the support-performance relationship (indirect effect $\beta = 0.193$, $p = 0.003$). Job satisfaction did not moderate the direct relationship ($\beta = -0.025$, $p = 0.564$). The model explained 48.4% of the variance in work-life balance and 58.9% of the variance in employee performance, with $Q^2 = 0.788$. These findings show that support improves performance primarily when it enables employees to balance work and non-work roles. Culinary SME owners should therefore translate relational support into predictable schedules, manageable workloads, supervisory care, and flexibility that protects employees' family responsibilities.

Keywords: perceived organizational support; work-life balance; employee performance; job satisfaction; culinary SMEs

1. Introduction

Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are central to employment creation and local economic resilience, yet their survival depends heavily on the reliable performance of employees who often work in resource-constrained and informally managed settings. In culinary SMEs, fluctuating customer demand, long operating hours, multitasking, and limited staffing can intensify the interface between work and family responsibilities. These pressures are especially consequential for women, who frequently combine paid employment with substantial household and caregiving roles. Understanding how SMEs can sustain employee performance without undermining non-work life is therefore both a managerial and a human-resource concern.

Perceived organizational support (POS) captures employees' general belief that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Social exchange theory suggests that employees reciprocate favorable treatment through commitment and constructive work behavior (Blau, 1964). However, support may not automatically produce higher performance. In small firms, support is often relational rather than formal, and its effects may first appear through improved access to resources, psychological security, and greater control over the boundary between work and personal life.

Work-life balance (WLB) reflects the extent to which individuals achieve compatible participation and satisfaction across work and non-work roles. It involves balance in time, involvement, and satisfaction (Greenhaus et al., 2003). The job demands-resources perspective also implies that supportive supervisors, colleagues, and organizational practices provide resources that help employees manage competing demands and preserve energy for task and contextual performance (Demerouti et al., 2001). Thus, WLB is a plausible mechanism through which POS becomes consequential for employee performance.

Job satisfaction may further shape employees' responses to organizational support. Employees who are satisfied with their work, rewards, supervision, colleagues, and promotion opportunities may be expected to respond more strongly to support. Yet this contingent effect may be weak in familial and informal SMEs, where support and satisfaction arise from overlapping interpersonal relationships. A high and relatively homogeneous level of satisfaction can also provide too little variance to produce a detectable interaction.

Previous research has commonly examined direct associations among POS, WLB, satisfaction, and performance, while evidence on the simultaneous mediation of WLB and moderation by job satisfaction remains limited in culinary SMEs and in eastern Indonesian contexts. This study addresses that gap by testing an integrated model among female culinary-SME employees in

Muna Regency. It asks whether POS affects WLB and performance, whether WLB affects and mediates employee performance, and whether job satisfaction moderates the POS-performance relationship. The study contributes by demonstrating that the value of support lies less in an immediate performance response than in its capacity to create a workable balance between occupational and personal roles.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research design and setting

The study used a quantitative, explanatory, cross-sectional survey design. The research setting comprised culinary SMEs operating in Muna Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. Culinary enterprises were selected because their operating patterns commonly require flexible roles, direct owner-employee interaction, and responsiveness to variable customer demand. The unit of analysis was the individual female employee.

2.2 Population, sample, and data collection

The study population consisted of female employees working in 252 culinary SMEs. The minimum sample calculated with the Slovin formula at a 5% margin of error was rounded to 155 respondents. Eligible respondents worked in culinary SMEs that had operated for at least two years and had been employed for at least six months. Simple random sampling was applied among eligible employees. Data were obtained through a structured self-administered questionnaire using a five-point Likert response format ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Participation was voluntary, and responses were treated confidentially and analyzed in aggregate.

Table 1. Respondent characteristics (n = 155)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Age (years)	21–30	13	8.4
	31–40	89	57.4
	41–50	53	34.2
Education	Senior high school	126	81.3
	Diploma	2	1.3
	Bachelor’s degree	25	16.1
	Master’s degree	2	1.3
Tenure	1–3 years	142	91.6
	4–6 years	13	8.4
Marital status	Married	151	97.4
	Separated/divorced	4	2.6

2.3 Measures

POS was modeled using three dimensions: organizational support, immediate-supervisor support, and coworker support, consistent with the organizational-support tradition (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). WLB was measured through time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Employee performance comprised task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior, drawing on the multidimensional view of individual work performance (Koopmans et al., 2014; Campbell and Wiernik, 2015). Job satisfaction covered satisfaction with the work itself, rewards, supervision, coworkers, and promotion. Negatively oriented counterproductive-behavior items were interpreted so that higher construct scores represented better performance.

2.4 Data analysis

Descriptive analysis summarized respondents and construct scores. The measurement and structural models were estimated using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4. Indicator loadings, average variance extracted

(AVE), cross-loadings, and composite reliability were used to evaluate measurement quality. The structural model was assessed using path coefficients, p-values from bootstrapping, coefficients of determination (R^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). Hypotheses were evaluated at $\alpha = 0.05$. Mediation was classified as full when the indirect effect was significant while the corresponding direct effect was not significant. Moderation was tested using the POS $\times$ job satisfaction interaction term predicting employee performance.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Descriptive findings

Respondents were predominantly 31–40 years old (57.4%), educated to senior-high-school level (81.3%), employed for one to three years (91.6%), and married (97.4%). This profile underscores the relevance of work-family coordination: most participants were in a life stage commonly associated with substantial family responsibilities while still developing occupational experience in relatively informal businesses.

Table 2. Descriptive construct and dimension scores

Construct	Dimension	Mean	Interpretation
Perceived organizational support	Organizational support	3.88	Good
	Immediate-supervisor support	3.81	Good
	Coworker support	3.90	Good
	Overall	3.86	Good
Work-life balance	Time balance	3.74	Good
	Involvement balance	3.71	Good
	Satisfaction balance	3.86	Good
	Overall	3.77	Good
Job satisfaction	Work itself	3.88	Good
	Rewards	3.92	Good
	Supervision	3.94	Good
	Coworkers	4.03	Good
	Overall	3.96	Good
Employee performance	Task performance	3.90	Good
	Contextual performance	3.89	Good
	Counterproductive behavior*	3.95	Good
	Overall	3.91	Good

*Higher scores indicate stronger avoidance of counterproductive behavior.

All constructs were rated positively. Coworker support was the strongest POS dimension, whereas immediate-supervisor support was the weakest. For WLB, satisfaction balance was highest and involvement balance lowest. Job satisfaction was comparatively high and varied little across its dimensions, with coworker satisfaction highest. Contextual performance was the weakest performance dimension, suggesting that voluntary initiative and contributions beyond formal tasks offer the clearest area for managerial improvement.

3.2 Measurement model

All retained indicator loadings were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) and ranged from 0.624 to 0.878. AVE values exceeded 0.50, and composite reliability values exceeded 0.70 for every construct. Cross-loading inspection also showed that each indicator loaded more strongly on its intended construct than on alternative constructs. The measurement model therefore demonstrated adequate convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency for structural testing.

Table 3. Measurement model assessment

Construct	Loading range	AVE	Composite reliability
Perceived organizational support	0.624–0.878	0.634	0.836
Work-life balance	0.788–0.846	0.664	0.856
Job satisfaction	0.667–0.778	0.540	0.854
Employee performance	0.766–0.856	0.669	0.858

3.3 Structural model and hypothesis tests

POS explained 48.4% of the variance in WLB ($R^2 = 0.484$). POS and WLB together explained 58.9% of employee-performance variance ($R^2 = 0.589$). The model's calculated predictive-relevance statistic was $Q^2 = 0.788$, indicating substantial predictive relevance within the study sample.

Table 4. Structural model results

Hypothesis/path	β	p-value	Decision	
H1: POS $\rightarrow$ WLB	0.698	<0.001	Supported	
H2: POS $\rightarrow$ employee performance	0.081	0.266	Not supported	
H3: WLB $\rightarrow$ employee performance	0.277	0.002	Supported	
H4: POS $\rightarrow$ WLB $\rightarrow$ employee performance	0.193	0.003	Supported; mediation	full
H5: POS $\times$ job satisfaction $\rightarrow$ employee performance	-0.025	0.564	Not supported	

3.4 Perceived organizational support and work-life balance

POS had a strong positive association with WLB. This finding indicates that organizational, supervisory, and coworker support function as practical resources that allow employees to coordinate work and personal responsibilities. In small culinary businesses, assistance from coworkers, understanding from owners or supervisors, and task assignments suited to employees' capabilities can reduce role strain and increase control over time and involvement. The result is consistent with social exchange theory and the job demands-resources model: supportive treatment does not merely invite reciprocity but also expands the resources available for coping with multiple demands (Blau, 1964; Demerouti et al., 2001).

The descriptive pattern adds nuance. Coworker support was strongest, reflecting the interdependence and familial work climate of small culinary enterprises. Immediate-supervisor support was lowest, suggesting that informal proximity to the owner does not necessarily guarantee consistent guidance or concern. For practice, SME owners should strengthen direct communication, provide predictable assistance during workload peaks, and recognize employees' family obligations rather than relying solely on peer solidarity.

3.5 Perceived organizational support and employee performance

The direct POS-performance path was positive but not statistically significant. Support alone therefore did not guarantee an immediate performance improvement. One explanation is that the support experienced in these SMEs was largely relational and informal; although it produced feelings of care and belonging, it did not always change work systems, resources, competencies, or performance standards. Moreover, many respondents had relatively short tenure and secondary education, so support may first stabilize their work experience rather than directly raise output or contextual contribution.

This result qualifies a simple reciprocity interpretation of social exchange theory. Employees may reciprocate support, but the form of reciprocity depends on whether support resolves the demands that constrain their performance. Where work and family

roles compete for time and energy, the most consequential outcome of support may be improved balance. Performance benefits then emerge only after that balance has been achieved.

3.6 Work-life balance and employee performance

WLB positively affected employee performance. Employees who could allocate time, involvement, and satisfaction across work and non-work domains were better able to sustain concentration, complete core duties, cooperate, and avoid counterproductive behavior. This aligns with work-family border theory, which emphasizes the management of boundaries between domains (Clark, 2000), and with evidence that balance and work-family resources contribute to well-being and functioning (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006; Haar et al., 2014).

Involvement balance was the weakest WLB dimension, indicating that employees could be present in both domains while still experiencing unequal psychological investment. Flexible scheduling should therefore be paired with realistic workload planning, adequate staffing during busy periods, and an explicit norm that time away from work is respected. Such practices protect the energy needed for reliable task and contextual performance.

3.7 Mediating role of work-life balance

The indirect POS-WLB-performance effect was significant, while the direct POS-performance effect was not, establishing full mediation. This is the study's central finding. Organizational support improved performance only insofar as it helped employees create a more workable relationship between employment and personal life. The mediation mechanism explains why supportive intentions may fail to translate directly into performance: employees need to experience support as usable resources, such as schedule predictability, flexibility, assistance, workload sharing, and supervisory understanding.

The finding extends organizational-support research by identifying a boundary-management pathway especially relevant to women in culinary SMEs. It also offers a practical sequence for intervention. Owners should first assess the demands that prevent balance, then design support around those demands, and finally monitor whether improved balance is reflected in attendance, task completion, service quality, initiative, and reduced counterproductive behavior.

3.8 Moderating role of job satisfaction

Job satisfaction did not moderate the POS-performance relationship. The interaction coefficient was small, negative, and nonsignificant. Descriptively, satisfaction was high and relatively homogeneous, limiting its capacity to distinguish employees who respond differently to support. In addition, satisfaction and support may share the same relational foundation in family-like SMEs: positive coworker relations, personal interaction with owners, and an informal climate may simultaneously shape both perceptions, leaving satisfaction with little independent moderating leverage.

The nonsignificant moderation also suggests that increasing satisfaction alone is unlikely to strengthen the effect of POS on performance when the direct path itself is weak. Managers should not interpret this as evidence that satisfaction is unimportant; rather, satisfaction appears to be a favorable background condition, whereas WLB is the more actionable mechanism connecting support with performance in this context.

3.9 Theoretical and practical implications

Theoretically, the results refine social exchange reasoning by showing that reciprocity can operate through a resource-conversion process. POS becomes performance-relevant when it alters employees' capacity to manage competing role demands. The study also integrates WLB as a full mediator and job satisfaction as a tested but unsupported boundary condition, thereby distinguishing a mechanism from a moderator in an underexamined SME setting.

Practically, culinary SME owners should institutionalize support without eliminating the relational strengths of small firms. Priorities include predictable shifts, transparent task allocation, advance notice of schedule changes, reasonable rest periods, backup staffing, supervisor check-ins, and coworker workload-sharing protocols. Special attention should be given to involvement balance and contextual performance, the weakest dimensions observed. Support systems should be evaluated by whether they genuinely increase employees' control over work-family boundaries rather than merely communicate goodwill.

3.10 Limitations and future research

The study has several limitations. It included only female employees in culinary SMEs within one registry, limiting generalization to men, other sectors, and different institutional or cultural settings. Its cross-sectional design does not establish temporal causality and may be affected by common-method bias because all constructs were self-reported in one survey. The sample was also concentrated among employees with short tenure and secondary education. Future research should employ longitudinal or time-lagged designs, obtain supervisor-rated or objective performance indicators, test measurement invariance across gender

and sector, and replicate the model in more formal SMEs. Organizational culture, organizational commitment, workload, family support, and schedule control may also be examined as additional mediators or moderators.

4. Conclusion

Among female employees of culinary SMEs in Muna Regency, perceived organizational support significantly improved work-life balance but did not directly improve employee performance. Work-life balance significantly enhanced performance and fully mediated the relationship between support and performance. Job satisfaction did not significantly condition the direct effect of support. These findings establish WLB as the principal mechanism by which supportive treatment is converted into performance in this setting. SME managers should consequently move beyond general expressions of care and provide concrete resources that protect time, involvement, and satisfaction across work and personal roles. Predictable work arrangements, responsive supervision, workload sharing, and respect for family responsibilities are likely to generate more reliable performance benefits than efforts aimed solely at increasing job satisfaction.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethics Statement

Participation was voluntary. Respondents were informed of the study purpose, and their responses were kept confidential and reported only in aggregate. No identifying personal data are reported in this article.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to participant confidentiality requirements.

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