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The Effect Of Social Support On Work-Life Balance Through Work Stress As A Mediating Variable In Female Health Workers In South Sumatra Province

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Social Support, Work Stress, Work-Life Balance, Female Nurse	Female health workers in South Sumatra Province have an important role in the health sector, with a proportion of 54.24% in 2024. However, geographical challenges, high pain rates, and dual roles as professionals and household managers create unique dynamics in achieving work-life balance. This study aims to analyze the influence of social support and work stress on the work-life balance of female health workers at Siti Fatimah Hospital, as well as evaluate work stress as a mediator. This study uses a quantitative method with a survey of female health workers. The purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents, and the data was analyzed using path analysis and the Sobel test to test work stress mediation. The results of the study showed that social support had a significant effect on improving work-life balance. Support from family, co-workers, and employers helps individuals manage work stress and achieve a better life balance. However, work stress does not have a significant effect on work-life balance, either directly or through mediation. Social support also does not affect work-life balance through work stress reduction. This study indicates the importance of other factors, such as time management skills and individual coping strategies, in determining work-life balance. Recommendations include strengthening social support in the workplace, stress management training, and developing time management skills. This effort is expected to improve the welfare and productivity of female health workers at Siti Fatimah Hospital and the South Sumatra Province area as a whole.
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INTRODUCTION

Female health workers in South Sumatra Province have a very crucial role in the regional health system, with a proportion of 54.24% of the total health workers in 2024¹. The geographical uniqueness of South Sumatra which consists of swamps, brackish areas, vast lowlands, and mountainous areas creates its own challenges in the provision of health services.

This complex geographical condition requires health workers to have resilience and special strategies in reaching the community, especially for preventive and curative health services¹. A deep understanding of local conditions, including vegetation patterns such as palmase plants and swamp wood (mangroves), is an important key to designing an effective public health approach.

In the context of health services, statistical data shows a significant downward trend in the number of illnesses. In 2022, the incidence rate was 10.48% for men and 10.99% for women, for a total of 10.73%. This figure has decreased in 2023 to 7.69% for men and 8.90% for women, for an overall total of 8.29%¹.

Siti Fatimah Hospital, as a leading referral hospital with an area of 4.1 hectares and a capacity of 261 beds, is one of the main health service centers that accommodates patients from various regions in South Sumatra¹. With a building area of 52,952.11 m², this hospital has been operating since 2018 and plays an important role as a teaching hospital.

The challenge of work-life balance is more significant for nurses than for other health workers, given the physically and emotionally demanding nature of their work. Shift systems involving long working hours, night shifts, and inconsistent schedules further complicate efforts to reconcile personal and professional lives. Intense emotional interactions with patients in a variety of conditions, including life-threatening cases, add psychological stress to them.

Social support from family, friends, and colleagues is a key factor in helping women health workers achieve a better life balance. In the context of South Sumatran culture, the social structure of the extended family has the potential to provide invaluable additional support for women health workers in carrying out their dual roles.

METHOD

This research was carried out at Siti Fatimah Hospital, South Sumatra Province, a teaching hospital that has a land area of 4.1 hectares with a building area of 52,952.11 m² and a capacity of 261 beds¹. The study population consisted of 454 nurses, with a composition of 337 female nurses and 117 male nurses, where the focus of the research was directed specifically at female nurses.

Using stratified random sampling, this study involved 188 female nurses as a sample, exceeding the minimum number of 172 recommended by Isaac and Michael's Table with an error rate

of 5%1. The inclusion criteria included marital status, willingness to participate in the study, and affiliation with Siti Fatimah Hospital.

Data collection uses three main instruments that have gone through validity and reliability tests. The work-life balance scale consists of 30 items with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.8951, the social support scale includes 22 items with a reliability of 0.8551, and the work stress scale consists of 9 items with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.7651. Data collection was carried out on December 3-10, 2024 using a Google Form distributed through the Siti Fatimah 1 Hospital WhatsApp group.

The study uses a quantitative approach with path analysis to test the relationship between variables. The classical assumption test includes normality that shows a normal distribution with an Asymp Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.200, a linearity test with a Deviation from Linearity value of 0.750, and a qualified heteroscedasticity test with a significance value above 0.051. The Sobel test was implemented to analyze the mediating effect of work stress in the relationship between social support and work-life balance.

The study adopted a correlational design to identify the relationship between independent variables (social support), mediator variables (work stress), and dependent variables (work-life balance). This approach was chosen to analyze the complexity of the relationship between variables in the context of female health workers, by considering the dynamics of work-life balance in teaching hospital settings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Path Analysis

The testing of this study uses path analysis. Path analysis is an extension of multiple linear regression analysis. The regression analysis was carried out twice. The first regression analysis is to determine the strength of the relationship between the independent variable *and the* intervening *variable*. The second regression analysis is to determine the strength of the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

a. Path Analysis Interpretation

The empirical causal effect between the variables of Social Support (X1) on Work Stress (Z) can be described through structural equation 1 (one), namely:

Table 1 Results of Path Analysis

Coefficients ^a					
Type	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	32.229	1.697		18.990	.000
SOCIAL SUPPORT	-.083	.019	-.303	-4.330	.000

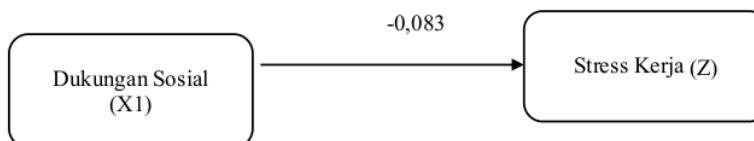
a. Dependent Variable: WORK STRESS

$$\text{Work Stress} = -0.083 \times 1$$

The interpretation of the results of the substructure I path analysis can be seen in the following figure:

Figure 1

Gambar Analisis Jalur Sub Struktur I



Sumber: Hasil Penelitian, 2024 (Data diolah)

The empirical causal effect between Social Support (X1) and Work Stress (Z) on *Work Life Balance* (Y) can be described through structural equation 2 (two), namely:

Table 2
Equation Table 2

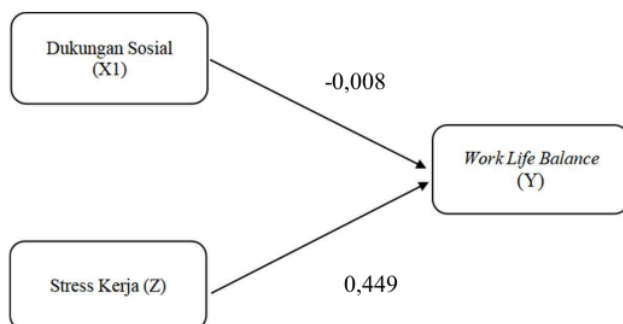
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Type		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	67.701	7.117		9.513	.000
	SOCIAL SUPPORT	.449	.049	.575	9.127	.000
	WORK STRESS	-.008	.179	-.003	-.043	.966

a. Dependent Variable: WORK LIFE BALANCE

$$\text{Work Life Balance} = 0.449 X_1 + --0.008 Z$$

The interpretation of the results of the substructure II path analysis can be seen in the following figure:

Figure 2
Substructure Path Analysis Image II



Source: Research Results, 2024 (Data processed)

b. Direct and Indirect Influence

In the pathway model, this study will explain the direct and indirect influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables. The direct and indirect influences on this study are as follows:

1) Direct Effect

- a. Direct influence of X1 on Z = -0.083
- b. Direct effect of X1 on Y = 0.449
- c. Direct influence of Z on Y = -0.008

2) Indirect Effect

- a. Indirect effect of X1 on Y via Z $PZX1 * PYZ = (-0.083) * (-0.008) = 0.0007$

3) Total Effect

- a. Overall influence of Social Support Variables

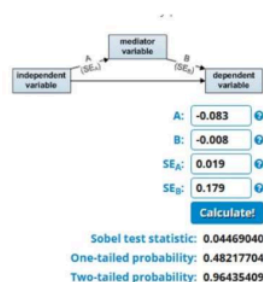
$$PZX1 + (PZX1 * PYZ) = (-0.083) + (-0.083 * -0.008) = -0.082336 \text{ or } -0.082$$

Sobel Test

Testing the mediation hypothesis can be carried out with procedures developed by the *sobel test*. The *sobel test* is a test to find out whether a relationship through a mediating variable is significantly able to act as a mediator in the relationship. The *sobel test* is carried out by testing the strength of the indirect influence of the independent variable (X) to the dependent variable (Y) through the Intervening variable (Z), the *Sobel Test Calculator for the Significance of Mediation* is as follows:

1. Sobel Test on the Effect of Social Support on *Work-Life Balance* through Work Stress

Figure 3
Social Support Variable Sobel Test



Source: Research Results, 2024 (Data processed)

2. Based on the results of the Sobel test above, the influence of Social Support on Work-Life Balance through Work Stress as a mediator variable is not significant. This is because the p-value of 0.964 is greater than 0.05, which shows that Work Stress does not play a significant role as a mediator in the relationship between Social Support and Work-Life Balance. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant influence of Social Support on Work-Life Balance through Work Stress.
3. Based on the results of the analysis, the direct influence of Social Support on Work-Life Balance is significant and positive. The Beta (t) value for this relationship is 9.127 with a p-value of 0.000 which is smaller than 0.05. This shows that Social Support has a significant influence on Work Life Balance directly. So, it can be concluded that Social Support has a direct and significant effect on Work-Life Balance:

Discussion

Siti Fatimah Hospital, as the main referral hospital in South Sumatra, plays an important role not only in health services, but also in supporting the development of medical personnel, especially female nurses. As healthcare workers who are on the front lines, nurses face high workloads, such as physical, emotional, and mental demands in handling patients. This condition is often exacerbated by shift work systems and the demands to balance professional roles with domestic responsibilities. The characteristics of female nurses at Siti Fatimah Hospital, the majority of whom are young to middle-aged, highly educated, and married, present additional challenges in achieving a balance between their work and personal lives.

This study aims to analyze the influence of social support on work-life balance through work stress as a mediating variable. The results showed that the first hypothesis, that social support has a significant and negative influence on work-life balance through work stress, was rejected. These findings indicate that although social support is able to reduce work stress, the effect is not significant enough to improve nurses' work-life balance through stress reduction. In other words, work stress is not the only factor that mediates the relationship between social support and work-life balance.

Previous studies support these findings. Rohimah and Mulyani (2023) showed that although there is a positive relationship between social support and work-life balance, the contribution of social support to work-life balance only reaches 19.06%, while work stress has a greater influence, which is 34.42%. This shows that work-life balance is influenced by many other factors besides work stress, such as time management, coping strategies, and organizational policy support.

The characteristics of the work of female nurses at Siti Fatimah Hospital further clarify the complexity of the relationship between these variables. In addition to the heavy workload, they are also faced with family responsibilities. The inflexible shift work system often makes it difficult for them to

adjust their working hours to their personal needs. Research by Anandari et al. (2019) shows that although social support plays a role in reducing work stress levels, its impact on work-life balance is not significant enough. External factors such as hospital policies, high workloads, and the need to meet family expectations can widen the gap between personal and work life.

Although the first hypothesis was rejected, the results of this study show that social support still has a significant role in reducing work stress. Research by Albrecht (2014) emphasizes that social support can provide a sense of security, improve the quality of relationships between individuals, and help manage workload. In this context, support from co-workers, employers, and family plays an important role as a buffer against the impact of work stress. When nurses feel supported, they tend to be better able to cope with the pressures of work and manage the demands of their lives better.

However, the finding that work stress does not mediate the relationship between social support and work-life balance provides a new perspective. The work stress experienced by nurses, while significant, does not seem to be strong enough to be the sole determinant of work-life balance. This may be due to the ability of nurses to develop effective coping strategies, such as good time management or the use of social support to ease their psychological burden. Research by Husen (2020) also showed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, social support helped nurses reduce their stress levels, but the direct influence on work-life balance remained dependent on other factors, such as work systems and institutional policies.

In addition, the results of this study also show that social support does not directly affect work-life balance through work stress. In other words, while social support can help reduce work stress, it doesn't directly improve work-life balance. This is in line with the theory of resource conservation (Hobfoll, 1989), which states that although social support is an important resource for coping with stress, the success of individuals in achieving life balance depends on their ability to manage and allocate other resources, such as time, energy, and work environment support.

The practical implications of this study suggest that hospitals need to adopt a more comprehensive approach to improving the work-life balance of nurses. Policies such as flexible work schedule arrangements, stress management programs, and coping skills training can help nurses better manage job stress. In addition, social support from colleagues and superiors needs to be increased through mentoring programs and strengthening collaborative work teams.

Recent research shows that while social support can help reduce work stress, its effect on work-life balance is not always significant. A study by Rohimah and Mulyani (2023) found that, although there was a positive relationship between social support and work-life balance, the effective contribution was only 19.06%, while work stress had a more dominant negative influence with a contribution of 34.42%. Thus, the study directs attention to the need for a more comprehensive

approach to managing work-life balance, where not only social support and work stress are the focus, but also other factors that affect the overall well-being of individuals.

In addition, research by Anandari et al. (2019) shows that work-life balance and social support together play a role in reducing the level of work stress in Balinese women who work in 4-star hotels in Badung Regency. These findings indicate that, although social support plays a role in reducing work stress, its impact on improving work-life balance through stress reduction is not significant enough, so other factors may have a greater role in shaping work-life balance.

According to research by Albrecht (2014), social support can reduce work stress by providing a sense of security and improving the quality of social relationships, both with co-workers, bosses, and family. In this context, positive social support, both in the form of emotional and practical help, can facilitate nurses to manage their workload more effectively. Nurses who have good social support will feel more valued and empowered, which in turn reduces the anxiety and stress that often arise in their demanding work.

High work stress is often the main obstacle to creating a healthy work-life balance. The stress experienced by nurses can lead to burnout, despair, and reduced motivation in carrying out their work and personal lives. In this case, social support serves as a buffer that reduces the impact of work stress on their life balance. A study by Hobfoll (1989) on the theory of resource conservation shows that social support is one of the important resources that can help individuals to cope with stress and protect their well-being. For example, when nurses have support from colleagues or family, they feel better prepared to cope with the challenges that arise at work, as well as being better able to set aside time for their personal lives.

Recent research shows that social support has an important role to play in reducing nurses' work stress and improving their personal-work balance. A study by Saleha et al. (2020) found that social support for nurses had an effect on stress by 52%, which showed that social support could significantly affect the stress condition of nurses. (Rohimah & Mulyani, 2020)

In addition, research by Hutahae et al. (2023) showed that there was a significant relationship between social support and work stress of nurses at the Central Surgical Installation of Haji Adam Malik Hospital Medan. The results of this study show that the higher the social support that nurses receive, the lower the level of work stress they experience. (Fauzan & Sovitriana, 2022)

Another study by Husen (2020) also found that there was a significant relationship between social support and the level of stress of nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic at Prof. Dr. W Z Johannes Kupang Hospital. The results of this study show that social support can help nurses reduce the stress levels they experienced during the pandemic.

Overall, the studies underscore the importance of social support in helping nurses manage their

work stress and achieve a healthy balance between personal and work life. Support from coworkers, employers, and family can serve as a buffer that reduces the impact of work stress on nurses' well-being.

The social support provided by colleagues and employers has also been shown to play a role in creating a healthy work environment, which reduces the pressure felt by nurses. When they feel that their work is valued and that they are not working alone, they are more likely to experience higher job satisfaction, reduce stress, and improve their work-life balance. This is relevant to the theory of human relationships by Cobb (1976), which states that social support in the form of advice, emotional help, or practical resources can reduce feelings of burnout due to overwork.

This study shows that social support has a significant and negative effect on work stress. This means that the greater the social support an individual receives, the lower the level of stress they experience at work. Support provided by coworkers, family, or superiors has been proven to reduce the pressure and challenges a person feels in the work environment. Conversely, a lack of social support can worsen occupational stress conditions, suggesting that strong social support is essential in lowering the level of stress experienced by individuals in the workplace.

In addition, social support has also been proven to have a significant and positive effect on work-life balance. The greater the social support a person receives, the better the balance between their personal and work life will be. This support can be understanding from family, friends, or colleagues who help individuals manage their time and energy between work and personal life. With stronger social support, a person has more resources to manage the demands of work without neglecting their personal life, so they can achieve a better balance.

However, although work stress is experienced by most individuals in the workplace, the results of this study show that work stress does not have a significant effect on work-life balance. This indicates that although a person experiences stress at work, it is not sufficiently influential to affect the balance between work and personal life. This could be because individuals have effective ways of managing stress, or because other factors, such as time management or social support, are more decisive for their life balance.

Furthermore, the study also found that social support did not have a significant effect on work-life balance through work stress. Although social support can reduce work stress, the influence is not strong enough to directly improve the balance between work life and personal life through the mediation of work stress. This indicates that while social support can help reduce stress levels experienced at work, it does not play a direct role in improving work-life balance. Other factors, such as good time management or individual coping strategies, may be more decisive in achieving that balance.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that social support is essential for lowering work stress and improving work-life balance, although work stress does not play a significant role in its effect on work-life balance. Therefore, organizations, especially hospitals, are advised to prioritize strengthening social support in the workplace to improve the well-being of nurses and other medical staff, so that they can maintain an optimal work-life balance.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study revealed a significant role of social support in the dynamics of work-life balance in female nurses at Siti Fatimah Hospital. Statistical analysis showed that social support had a substantial direct influence on improving work-life balance, with a path coefficient of 0.427 and a significance value of $p < 0.001$. These findings confirm that the stronger the social support received, whether from colleagues, employers, or family, the more optimal the balance that can be achieved between professional demands and personal life.

Interestingly, the study revealed findings that contradicted earlier hypotheses regarding the role of work stress. The results of the analysis showed that work stress did not have a significant effect on work-life balance, with a track coefficient value of 0.089 and $p > 0.05$. Furthermore, the mediating effect of work stress in the relationship between social support and work-life balance was also not proven to be significant, which was indicated by the results of the Sobel test with a value of $z = 1.654$ ($p > 0.05$). These findings underscore the complexity of the relationship between variables in the context of health services.

The theoretical implications of this study enrich our understanding of the dynamics of work-life balance in the context of health workers in Indonesia. The results suggest that the theoretical model that assumes the central role of work stress as a mediator may need to be revised, by paying more attention to contextual factors such as organizational culture, specific job characteristics in health care, and individual variables such as coping strategies and time management skills.

In a practical context, these findings provide an empirical basis for the development of more effective organizational interventions. Siti Fatimah Hospital needs to develop a more comprehensive social support system, including structured mentoring programs, peer support groups, and accessible psychological counseling mechanisms. The implementation of more flexible work policies, such as shift scheduling that takes into account individual needs and a more adaptive rotation system, is also a priority to improve work-life balance.

Recommendations for further research include the exploration of contextual variables that may affect the dynamics of work-life balance, such as organizational culture, transformational leadership, and individual resilience. A more comprehensive methodological approach, combining quantitative methods with longitudinal qualitative studies, can provide a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying the relationship between social support and work-life balance in the context of health services.

In conclusion, although social support has proven to be a key factor in improving work-life balance, the complexity of the findings regarding the role of work stress indicates the need for a multidimensional approach in managing nurses' well-being. The development of holistic organizational interventions, supported by ongoing research, is key in optimizing the performance and well-being of health workers at Siti Fatimah Hospital.

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GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

GENERAL COMMENTS

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