Self-Esteem as a Mediator of the Relationship between Work-Family Balance and Happiness Among Working Mothers

Tina Afiatin and Hanif Akhtar
Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Abstract: Family and research are very important for most people. They have a huge impact on individual happiness. The relationship between research family balance and happiness has received considerable importance in positive psychological research. The aim of this present study was to examine whether self-esteem mediates the relationship between research family balance and happiness among working mothers. The subjects of the study were 526 working mothers with children and working husband. The data were collected using work-family balance, self-esteem and happiness scales. The correlation coefficients indicated that work-family balance relates to self-esteem and happiness while self-esteem relates to happiness. An analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) showed that self-esteem partially mediates the relationship between work-family balance and happiness. This study has implications for working mothers who seek new way to promote happiness. The limitations of the research are discussed.

Key words: Happiness, self-esteem, work-family balance, working mothers, relationship, mediates

INTRODUCTION

From early of 21st century until today the number of working mothers has been substantially increasing. A study by the office for national statistics in London, Marks and Houston (2002) suggests that the economic participation of women with pre-school children increases dramatically. More than a half of women who have pre-school children are workers. Olson *et al.* (2010) also, state that in the united states half of women who have small children research outside their home. Today, working mom is becoming a common phenomenon. Women enter the research force not only for career satisfaction but also because they and their family need money. This condition is also evident in Indonesia.

According to Anonymous (2015), there has been an increase in the number of labor force in Indonesia by 5.2 million from August 2013 to February 2014. This increase in labor force participation is driven by an increase in the number of women entering the research force.

The increasing number of female workers has been influenced by the improved level of women's education (Hakim, 2011). Their high level of education improves their bargaining position and increases the demand for their participation in the research force. Their education also improves their status, capabilities and skills. However, their entrance to the realm of research will inevitably increase their roles and duties as women. If these women are married and have children these roles and duties as

mother and worker expose them to a challenge regarding their welfare. According to Rashid *et al.* (2011) family and research are components with huge impacts on life satisfaction.

According to Frone (2003), the dual roles of women in the family and research affect each other. The experience individuals got in performing their roles in their family may facilitate them in performing their roles in their research or improve their quality of research and vice versa. Individual's involvement in various roles can be energizing and provides an enriching experience (Kinnunen *et al.*, 2006). The roles individuals perform provide benefits which include income, higher self-esteem and wider social networks. And the roles they carry enhance their status, security and self-esteem (Dyson-Washington, 2006). Furthermore, according to Kinnunen *et al.* (2006) the benefits gained by men and women from various roles include physical and mental health. Jackson by Ahrens and Ryff (2006) found a link between increased role and lower depression and increased happiness among Mexican Americans. According to Kesebir and Diener (2009) satisfaction in research relates to happiness. In addition, a harmonious balance in family life also affects happiness. The results of Allis and O'Driscoll's (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011) study suggest that positive interaction between research and family relates to overall well-being.

Working mothers with multiple responsibilities need to balance some of the roles they carry which may affect well-being (Nyaphisi, 2013). Individuals who feel able to

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Corresponding Author: Tina Afiatin, Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

balance their roles at research and their roles in their family are more likely to feel happy (Milkie *et al.*, 2010). On the contrary, a tension between the two roles may lead to depression in working mothers (Milkie *et al.*, 2010). Based on the above description it can be inferred that a working mother's ability to keep balance of her roles at research and in her family relates to her satisfaction in performing her multiple roles which in turn affects her happiness. However, the results of Lu and Gilmour (2006)'s study with Taiwanese individuals suggest that women's happiness is dependent at a greater degree on their satisfaction in their family. According by Noor (1999), working mother's happiness in collectivistic societies is much influenced by their satisfaction in performing their roles as mother and by their relationship with their husband and children.

In addition to family-work balance factor, self-esteem has also been found to affect happiness. A person with higher degree of self-esteem will generally be satisfied with his/her life as a whole (Diener, 2000). Previous studies have found that people with higher self-esteem feel less depressed and less anxious (Cast and Burke, 2002) and experience greater life satisfaction (Breton, 2007).

Jaafar *et al.* study with Malaysian and Indonesian respondents found a relationship between self-esteem and happiness. This study results indicate that 97% of respondents feel happy and 99% have high degree of self-esteem. Nevertheless, such feeling is not much based on individual characteristics such as intelligence or attractiveness, but rather on relationships within family and collective well-being (Markus and Kiyatama, 1991).

Based on the above description it can be seen that the relationship between family-work balance and self-esteem and happiness are influenced by cultural factors. Based on Kikuzawa's research (Ahrens and Ryff, 2006) it is known that American individuals are more benefited than Japanese individuals from some of the roles they perform in their lives. According by Diener and Diener (1995) in collectivistic societies, happiness is more influenced by the quality of relationships with others than the ability to satisfy personal needs while according by Weiten *et al.* (2012) in individualistic societies individuals have separate views about themselves and others in which they view themselves as unique, independent and different from others. Furthermore, Rego and Cunha (2009) also demonstrated that in collectivistic societies, collectively-oriented individuals who prefer harmonious relationships with other to personal needs are happier than individually-oriented individuals.

The influence of family-work balance on the happiness of working mothers in Western societies has been widely studied (Halpern, 2005; Keene and

Quadagno's, 2004). Likewise, the influence of self-esteem on happiness (Garcia, 2011; Lyubomirsky *et al.*, 2006). Given the differences between the two (Western and Eastern) societies, especially in the dynamics of source of happiness, it is necessary to examine the implications of family-work balance and self-esteem influences on the happiness of working mothers in Indonesia. Thus, this present study aimed to test whether the influence of family-work balance on the happiness of working mothers with self-esteem as a mediator fits to the empirical data.

Working mother's happiness is an important modality in achieving family welfare. Happy working moms are better able both at managing their family and achieving higher performance at research. Research results have demonstrated that happy individuals tend to live longer and healthier lives (Anchor, 2010; Diener and Suh, 2000). Happy individuals are also more confident and have higher degree of altruism than those who are unhappy, focus on themselves, like more people and like to share fortune even with strangers (Seligman, 2002). They are also more loving, forgiving, trusting, energetic, able to make decisions, easy to get along and have a greater desire to help others (Myers and Veenhoven in Myers, 2000). Happiness helps individuals to function effectively in every aspect of life (Diener and Biswas-Diener, 2008). Happy working mothers will contribute more both in their family and research spheres. This will affect their success in managing their family and achieving higher performance at research.

Happiness is a term commonly used by ordinary people in everyday language to explain subjective well-being (Diener, 2000). Happiness refers to an individual's evaluation of life and includes a cognitive assessment of satisfaction and affective judgment, mood and emotions. Happiness includes three components, life satisfaction, positive affects and negative affects.

Theories explaining the factors that influence happiness are formulated as "bottom-up" and "top-down" theories (Diener, 2000). The "bottom-up" theory postulates that when an indivual is able to meet his needs, he/she will be happy. This means that happiness is influenced by situational factors, external events and demographic variables such as occupation, family condition, leisure time and societal condition. An individual will be happy if they he/she has a good job, enough money, good family and good social relationships.

The other one, the "top-down" theory, emphasizes the structure within a person that determines how various events and environments are perceived. Inner structures such as value of life, genetic factors, personality and self-esteem affect the way people react to an event and it will affect their satisfaction of life and affection.

The results of previous research have indicated that both internal and external factors affect happiness. Internal factors such as genetics, gender and personality affect happiness (Argyle, 2013; Garcia, 2011). On the other hand, happiness is also influenced by external factors such as social relations and the environment. Based on the findings of previous research it can be concluded that both the "bottom-up" and "top-down" theories are supported by empirical research so that in this study the integration of the "bottom-up" and "top-down" theories is used to explain working mothers' happiness.

With such greater opportunities, the challenges the working mothers in Indonesia face are increasing as well. Most people in Eastern societies including Indonesia, still adhere to traditional gender concept. According to this traditional gender concept, the most important position of a woman in her family is as a wife and a mother who manages the household and nurtures the children while the most important position of a man in a family is as a husband in charge of earning a living for the family (Noor, 2001). There is an assumption that because of his duty as the breadwinner, it is common if a husband becomes unconcerned and ignorant to household affairs. On the contrary when a mother research outside the home she is expected to remain carrying out her responsibilities in the domestic sector as a wife and a mother who should take care of the household while carrying out her responsibilities in the public sector as a worker. With this condition, a working mother is required to be able to manage her roles both in the family and at research. If working mothers are able to manage their duties and roles in the family and at research well they will gain many benefits from their multiple roles.

According to Handayani *et al.* (2016) the involvement of mothers in the research force may lead to positive and negative results. On the positive side, working moms may gain various skills, positive emotions, higher self-esteem and life satisfaction. On the other hand, it may lead to negative results such as conflict between family and research, lack of family time and in some cases it can even sacrifice their (working mom's) own time or life. Rashid study results suggest that if individuals have difficulty maintaining family-work balance they will tend to experience negative consequences. On the other hand, those individuals who are able to maintain the balance of roles in the family and research, they will live an enriched life. According by Handayani *et al.* (2016) work-family balance contributes significantly to family welfare, individual health and social function of individuals in the society. The family-work balance benefits both the organization, the family and the individual.

The results of Afiatin *et al.* (2016) study with working mothers (aged between 20-60 years) who have children and whose husbands are also working indicates that family-work balance accounts for 22.8% of working

mother's happiness while stage of family development accounts for 1.9% of their happiness. Work-family balance is a condition in which an individual can effectively allocate his/her time, attention and energy in such a way that he/she feels satisfied with his/her responsibilities both at home and at research. The results also suggest that 76.3% of working mother's happiness is influenced by other variables.

Based on the results of previous research, the variable that has been found greatly affecting happiness is self-esteem (Abdel-Khalek, 2006; Afiatin, 2009, 2013; Diener and Suh, 2000; Furnham and Cheng, 1999; Lyubomirsky *et al.*, 2006). The results of Furnham and Cheng (2000)'s study suggest that the happiness of young people in their late adolescence is influenced by parental behavior with self-esteem as a mediator. Self-esteem affects happiness both directly and indirectly. The results also show that, maternal care is the most powerful predictor of self-esteem and happiness.

In addition, to work-family balance, another factor that affects the happiness of working mothers is self-esteem. According to Hewitt (Compton and Hoffman, 2013) high self-esteem includes four components, feeling accepted by others, receiving positive evaluations from others, believing that one is better than others and believing in one's capacity to start positive action on the world. High self-esteem is the best indicator of mental health, well-being and social ability.

The way working mothers give meaning to their roles in the familiy and research affects their happiness (Crossley and Langdridge, 2005; Jaafar *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, it was stated by Myers and Diener (1995) that happiness is also influenced by one's satisfaction in certain domains, including family and research. The happiness of individuals who participate both in the research force and the family and feel satisfied with their roles is higher than that of individuals who only contribute to one of these two domains or feel dissatisfied with their roles (Greenhaus and Powel, 2006). Working mother's satisfaction with their responsibilities both in the family and research or have sound work-family balance will affect their feeling of being accepted by others and trust in themselves which allow them to contribute positively or to have high self-esteem. Furthermore, individuals with high self-esteem who believe that they are capable, meaningful and valuable feel good about themselves (positive affect) and experience better quality of life. Positive affect and perceived good quality of life are building blocks of happiness.

Working mother's happiness is influenced by both external and internal factors. Among external factors that affect working mother's happiness is the degree of work-family balance. The results of Afiatin *et al.* (2016) study showed that work-family balance plays a role in working mother's happiness according to which the
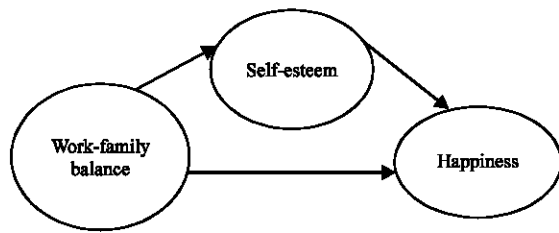
Fig. 1: The relationship between work-family balance, self-esteem and happiness

higher the work-family balance level, the higher the happiness felt by working mothers. Working mothers with higher work-family balance level experience greater positive emotions, life satisfaction and self-appreciation (Ruderman *et al.*, 2002). The results of Tsang *et al.* (2003) study suggest that mother's status as worker enhances their self-esteem, self-confidence and interdependence. The results of Rashid *et al.* (2011) study with nurses in Malaysia indicate a positive relationship between work-family enrichment and self-esteem. Work-family balance also affects working mother's psychological well-being of working mothers, family welfare and benefits to the organization (Handayani and Munawar, 2014).

Based on the results of researchs mentioned before, it can be explained that work-family balance affects working mother's self-esteem and happiness. Self-esteem as an internal factor greatly influences working mother's happiness, so that, it can be said that the magnitude of work-family balance's influence on working mother's happiness is determined by their self-esteem level. The relationship between work-family balance, self-esteem and working mother's happiness can be depicted as follows in Fig. 1.

Based on the above descriptions, this present study hypothesized that the theoretical model of the role of work-family balance in working mother's happiness with self-esteem as a mediator fits to the empirical data.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants: The participants in the study were 526 working mothers with children and working husband from Yogyakarta City, Sleman Regency and Bantul Regency in Indonesia. The age of the respondents ranged from 20-60 years old and the average was 37.92 (standard deviation = 9.31). The participants worked as civil servants (47.1%), corporate employees (39.5) or entrepreneurs (13.3%).

Measures
Happiness: Happiness was assessed with two scales. The first scale was used to assess the component aspect of happiness. This scale was the modified version of the Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale (PANAS)

(Watson *et al.*, 1988) which consists of 30 items. The items include positive and negative adjectives that represent various states of emotion of the respondents (e.g., enthusiastic, anxious). The respondents were asked to indicate how they generally feel on 5-point likert-type scale ranging from 1-5.

The second scale was used to assess cognitive component of happiness. This was the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) scale (Diener *et al.*, 1985) which consists of 5 brief statements that indicate the respondent's general satisfaction with life (e.g., "The conditions of my life are excellent"). PANAS and SWLS were translated and modified to fit the cultural context of Indonesia. Previous studies demonstrated that the Indonesian versions of both PANAS and SWLS had good internal consistency (reliability) with an alpha coefficient of 0.93 for PANAS and 0.83 for SWLS.

Self-esteem: Self-esteem was assessed with the short version of the Self Esteem Inventory (SEI) scale (Coopersmith, 1967). SEI was translated and modified to Indonesia context. The SEI originally has 25 items but in the tryout of the scale four items were found having low item-total correlation coefficients (<0.3). These four items were dropped and the remaining 21 items were used to assess self-esteem in this present study. SEI measures general self-esteem. The respondents were asked to indicate their agreement on a 4-point likert type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). A higher total score indicates higher level of self-esteem. The SEI has sound reliability with an alpha coefficient of 0.88.

Work-family balance: Work-family balance was assessed with a scale constructed by the researcher based on three aspects of work-family balance proposed by Greenhaus *et al.* (2003). The work-family balance scale consists of 29 items which indicate three aspects of work-family balance, time balance, involvement balance and satisfaction balance. The respondents were asked to indicate their agreement on a 4-point likert type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A higher total score indicates higher level of work-family balance. The work-family balance scale has sound reliability with an alpha coefficient of 0.94.

Procedures: The researcher instructed the participants to complete the surveys in the different settings according to their respective conditions. The surveys consisted of PANAS, SWLS, SEI and work-family balance scales. The researcher was helped by a trained research assistant in gathering the data. The trained research assistant assured the participants of the confidentiality of their responses

and indicated readiness to respond to any queries raised by the participants. It took approximately 15 min for the participants to complete the surveys.

Data analysis: A Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used to investigate the impact of self-esteem on the relationship between work-family balance and happiness. The structural model was tested using the maximum likelihood estimation in the AMOS 22.0 program. SEM requires latent variables to be directly measured using manifest predictors and one way to accomplish this is by parcelling the items to increase the ability to assess measurement error. Three item parcels for work-family balance, four item parcels for self-esteem and three item parcels for happiness were formed to control inflated measurement errors caused by multiple items for the latent factor. These parcels were created using an item that is placed in the same aspect of the variable (e.g., significant, power, virtue and competence for self-esteem). Different goodness-of-fit indiceswere used to assess the adequacy of model fit to the observed data, Chi square statistics, Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of 0.08 or less, Standardized Root-Mean-square Residual (SRMR) of 0.08 or less, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), best if above 0.95 and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) best if above 0.95 (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Preliminary analysis: Prior to determining whether the data fit the hypothesized model, the correlations between all variables were examined using Pearson's means, standard deviations, reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha coefficients) and correlations for all measures are displayed in Table 1. All measures significantly correlated.

Structural model analysis: In order to find the best model, two alternative models were assessed. The fit indices of alternative models are presented in Table 2. First, a partially mediated model (Model 1) with self-esteem as a mediator and a direct path from work-family balance to happiness revealed a good fit to the data: χ^2 = 114.583, df = 32, p = 0.001, RMSEA = 0.070, SRMR = 0.037, GFI = 0.959 and CFI = 0.971. All paths were statistically significant and each parcel had statistically significant relationship with its corresponding latent variable. Second, a fully mediated model (Model 2) with self-esteem as a mediator and no direct path from work-family balance to happiness also revealed a good fit to the data, χ^2 = 125.041, df = 33, p = 0,001, RMSEA = 0.073, SRMR = 0.043, GFI = 0.955 and
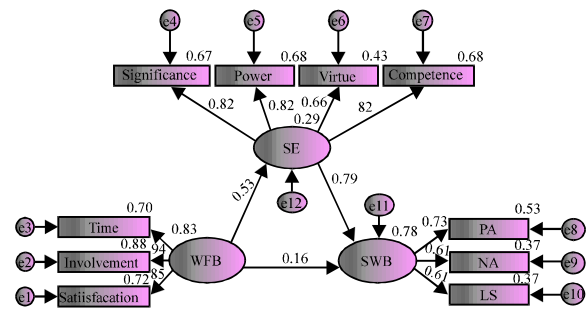

Fig. 2: The structural equation model regarding the mediating effect of self-esteem on the relation between work-family balance and happiness; Factor loadings were standardized

Table 1: Mean, SD, reliabilities and intercorrelations among study measures

Measures	Mean	SD	A	1	2	3
Work-family balance	11.11	1.47	0.92	-	0.461**	0.449**
Self esteem	15.35	1.76	0.88			0.686**
Happiness	10.93	1.10	0.92			

α = Cronbach's alpha; **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 2: Fit indices among competing models

Variables	χ^2	df	RMSEA	SRMR	GFI	CFI
Model 1	114.583	32	0.070	0.037	0.959	0.971
Model 2	125.041	33	0.073	0.043	0.955	0.968

N = 526; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR = Standardized Root-Mean-Square Residual; GFI = Goodness of Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; Model 1 was the best one

CFI = 0.968. All paths were statistically significant and each parcel has statistically significant relationship with its corresponding latent variable but model 2 was inferior to model 1.

From the data above, it could be concluded that model 1 was better than model 2. Thus, self-esteem partially mediated the relationship between work-family balance and happiness. The standardized total effects of work-family balance to happiness was 0.581 (p<0.05) which consists of direct effect of 0.159 (p<0.05) and indirect effect of 0.422 (p<0.05). Meanwhile, self-esteem also affects happiness with standardized direct effect of 0.791 (p<0.05) (Fig. 2).

This study demonstrated that the happiness of working mothers is influenced by work-family balance with the mediation of self-esteem. The results of data analyses showed that the theoretical model which states that the role of work-family balance in working mother's happiness with the mediation of self-esteem is supported by the empirical data (RMSEA = 0.070 (<0.08), SRMR = 0.037 (<0.08), GFI = 0.959 (>0. 95), CFI = 0.971 (>0.95). The results also indicated that self-esteem partially mediates the relationship between work-family

balance and happiness. Significant relationships between work-family balance and happiness and between self-esteem and happiness were found.

The findings of this study suggest that work-family balance positively affects happiness which in in accordance with the role enhancement theory that the roles an individual carries can positively affect one's life (Sieber in Hinterlong *et al.*, 2007). This theory explains that an individual's involvement in various roles will boos this/her energy and provide enriching experiences to him/her (Kinnunen *et al.*, 2006). Some roles carried by an individual such as being a worker, wife/husband, parent and community member will benefit him/her (Marks in Tiedje *et al.*, 1990). Such roles may provide benefits such as income, increased self-esteem and wider social networks.

It is also known from the analysis that the direct effect of work-family balance on happiness was smaller than the indirect effect of work-family balance on happiness. This indicates how important the role of self-esteem as a mediator of the relationship between work-family balance and happiness. The standardized total effect of work-family balance on happiness was 0.581 while the total effect self-esteem on happiness was higher, i.e., 0.791. It can be concluded from this findings that the role of self-esteem is greater than that of work-family balance in affecting happiness.

The results of this present study indicate that the role of work-family balance (an external factor) is relatively smaller than that of self-esteem (an internal factor). This may happen because work-family balance is an external factor which is strongly influenced by various circumstances or events that are sometimes difficult to control by working mothers. According to Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2004) happiness is influenced by three major determinants, set point (which is genetic and constant in nature) life environment and intentional activities. The magnitudes of the effect of set point life environment and intentional activities are respectively, 50, 10 and 40%. The level of work-family balance is largely determined by research environment and family environment. Furthermore, it was stated by Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2004) that individuals can relatively quickly and appropriately adapt to environmental changes because of their relatively static character (an internal factor). Thus, it can be stated that the role of internal factors is relative greater than that of external factors in affecting working mother's happiness.

The findings of this study indicated that the happiness of working mothers is influenced more by self-esteem than family-work balance. The correlation of self-esteem and happiness was 0.686 while the correlation

of work-family balance and happiness was 0.461. These findings are consistent with the results of Afiatin (2009; 2013), Furham and Cheng (2000)'s and Diener and Diener (2009)'s studies that self-esteem is the strongest predictor of happiness. Diener and Diener's (2009) study conducted in 31 countries found a correlation coefficient of 0.47 between self-esteem and life satisfaction. According to Diener and Biswar-Diener (2008), life satisfaction is the constituent of happiness.

Based on the available data it can be stated that the role of self-esteem in the working mother's happiness is relatively the same in individualistic and collectivistic societies. Similarly, the working mothers in this present study mothers who are able to maintain work-family balance feel satisfied in their responsibilities at research and at home. In turn, this satisfaction enables them to feel accepted by others, capable and positively evaluated by others and encourages them to initiate positive activities so as to increase their self-esteem. According to Diener (2000) individuals with higher self-esteem are generally more satisfied with their life as a whole happier and more effective in dealing with environmental demands than those with lower self-esteem.

CONCLUSSION

The findings in this present study imply that an important thing that can be done by working moms to achieve happiness is appreciating the roles and responsibilities they have exercised both at research and at home (in the family). Such appreciation will make them feel accepted and valued so as to increase their self-esteem. In turn, the increased self-esteem will positively affect their achievement of happiness.

LIMITATIONS

This survey research was conducted with working mothers in formal sectors representative of the middle and upper class of society while the lower class of society were less represented. The sampling was not done by purposive sampling instead of random sampling, so that, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all working mothers in Indonesia.

SUGGESTIONS

Research in the future is thus suggested to use random sampling technique to improve generalizability of findings and include mothers who research in the informal sector.

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