

Bridging the gap: How job satisfaction transforms career development into work-life balance—evidence from Indonesia’s emerging workforce

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Abstract

This study examines the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between career development and work-life balance (WLB) among employees in the growing Indonesian workforce. Based on Greenhaus and Allen's Work-Family Balance model, this study proposes that career development indirectly enhances WLB through increased job satisfaction. Data were collected from 103 working professionals and analyzed using mediation analysis with bootstrapping technique. The results confirmed that career development significantly enhances job satisfaction, which in turn positively influences WLB. The indirect effect of career development on WLB through job satisfaction was also significant, highlighting the importance of psychological fulfillment in bridging professional growth and personal well-being. These findings offer practical insights for organizations aiming to design career development programs that foster employee satisfaction and work-life harmony. This study contributes to the literature by validating the Work-Family Balance model in a non-Western context and emphasizes the need for holistic Human Resource policies that address both professional and personal domains.

Keywords: Career development, Job satisfaction, Work-life balance, Mediation analysis, Indonesia.

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Abstrak

Studi ini meneliti peran mediasi kepuasan kerja dalam hubungan antara pengembangan karier dan keseimbangan kehidupan kerja (work-life balance/WLB) di kalangan karyawan di angkatan kerja Indonesia yang sedang berkembang. Berdasarkan model Work-Family Balance milik Greenhaus dan Allen, penelitian ini mengusulkan bahwa pengembangan karier meningkatkan WLB secara tidak langsung melalui peningkatan kepuasan kerja. Data dikumpulkan dari 103 profesional yang bekerja dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis mediasi dengan teknik bootstrapping. Hasilnya menegaskan bahwa pengembangan karier secara signifikan meningkatkan kepuasan kerja, yang pada gilirannya memengaruhi WLB secara positif. Efek tidak langsung pengembangan karier terhadap WLB melalui kepuasan kerja juga signifikan, menyoroti pentingnya pemenuhan psikologis dalam menjembatani pertumbuhan profesional dan kesejahteraan pribadi. Temuan ini menawarkan wawasan praktis bagi organisasi yang bertujuan untuk merancang program pengembangan karier yang menumbuhkan kepuasan karyawan dan keharmonisan kehidupan kerja. Studi ini berkontribusi pada literatur dengan memvalidasi model Keseimbangan Pekerjaan-Keluarga dalam konteks non-Barat dan menekankan perlunya kebijakan Sumber Daya Manusia holistik yang membahas domain profesional dan pribadi.

Kata Kunci: Pengembangan karier, Kepuasan kerja, Keseimbangan kerja-kehidupan, Analisis mediasi, Indonesia.

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization with high competition demands, career development is one of the main priorities of organizations in retaining human resources (Bella, 2023). However, this dynamic often clashes with the needs of employees to achieve a balance between work and personal life (work-life balance/WLB). Academically, previous studies still show inconsistent results regarding the impact of career development on WLB. Several studies found that career development opportunities increase WLB through increased job satisfaction (Sirgy & Lee, 2018), while others showed that career development demands can worsen WLB due to increased workload (Vaziri et al., 2022). The phenomenon of overwork in developed countries such as Japan and the United States strengthens the urgency of this research, where intensive work cultures often sacrifice personal time (OECD, 2022). Therefore, this research is important to provide empirical clarity on how career development should be managed so as not to interfere with WLB.

In Indonesia, the issue of WLB is increasingly relevant along with the digital transformation and increasing productivity demands. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS, 2023) shows that 42% of urban workers have difficulty dividing their time between work and family, especially in the formal sector which requires high commitment. Meanwhile, career development programs such as training and promotion are increasingly being promoted by companies to improve HR competency (Ministry of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022). However, there has been no comprehensive study that tests whether this career development policy actually worsens or improves WLB through job satisfaction. In Indonesia, there is research that supports the spillover theory which shows that career development results affect job satisfaction, and this career development is a mediator of the influence of WLB on job satisfaction (Alfansi et al., 2020). However, there has been no research that tests in the opposite direction that supports the work-family balance model of Greenhaus and Allen (2011).

Career development is defined as an opportunity provided by an organization to improve employees' skills, knowledge, and career levels (Greenhaus et al., 2018). While WLB refers to an individual's ability to balance work and personal life demands without conflict (Clark, 2000). Most previous studies adopt the Spillover Theory perspective (Wilensky, 1960) which emphasizes that work-life balance (WLB) affects job satisfaction and career development (Aruldoss et al., 2022; Wayne et al., 2022). These studies argue that positive experiences outside of work (e.g., family support) "spill over" into the work domain, increasing career satisfaction and motivation. However, this approach tends to ignore the possibility of the opposite direction, where career development is actually the main driver of WLB through increased job satisfaction. This limitation creates a theoretical gap, especially in the context of modern organizations that emphasize career growth as an employee retention strategy.

Job satisfaction is defined as the level of employee enjoyment of their work, which is influenced by intrinsic (such as self-development) and extrinsic (such as salary) factors (Spector, 2022). Likewise, the relationship between job satisfaction and WLB, based on the work-family model, job satisfaction acts as a mediator because adequate career development can create positive emotions that "spill over" into personal life, thereby improving WLB perceptions (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011; Wayne et al., 2022). In contrast to the spillover perspective, the Greenhaus & Allen (2011) model offers an alternative explanation: adequate career development increases job satisfaction, which in turn improves WLB perceptions. Empirical support for this model is found in Pattusamy & Jacob's (2017) study in India, which proved that employees with promotion opportunities reported higher levels of satisfaction and WLB. Similar findings were revealed by Landolfi et al. (2020) in a time-lagged study in Italy, where job satisfaction mediated 40% of the effect of career development on WLB. These studies suggest that career development can be a strategic entry point to improve work-life balance, not just a result of good WLB.

Although evidence supports both perspectives, recent research results show contradictions. For example, Aruldoss et al. (2021) in their study showed results that led to support for the Greenhaus & Allen model with job satisfaction mediating the effect of quality of work life on perceptions of work-life balance. However, Aruldoss et al. (2022) also conducted a study with the results of WLB influencing employee job satisfaction which strengthens the Spillover Theory. This difference suggests the possibility of interrelated directions (Wayne et al., 2022).

Therefore, this study aims to fill these gaps with three main contributions. First, the study will test the mediation model of job satisfaction in the relationship between career development and WLB in the Indonesian context, thus providing more contextual and relevant empirical evidence to support the Greenhaus and Allen (2011) model. Second, in addition to filling the gap in empirical evidence, it also fills the gap in samples that have never been studied in Indonesia. Thus, its practical contribution is to provide recommendations to organizations on how to design career development programs that not only improve employee competence but also maintain their work-life balance—a crucial aspect in the demanding modern work era.

2. Theoretical background and hypothesis

Work-family balance model

Greenhaus and Allen (2011) developed a work-family balance model that emphasizes the importance of individual involvement and satisfaction in both domains, namely work and family, without causing significant conflict. This model focuses on achieving balance through three main components: time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). In the context of this study, the model is relevant to understanding how career development can affect work-life balance (WLB) through the mediation of job satisfaction.

Unlike the spillover approach that often tests the impact of WLB on job satisfaction or career performance, this study instead sees career development as a predictor that can increase WLB if individuals are satisfied with their jobs. Thus, job satisfaction becomes a crucial mediator that explains why career development can promote life balance.

Traditional spillover theory tends to see a one-way relationship from family life to work or vice versa (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). However, the Greenhaus and Allen (2011) model provides a different perspective by emphasizing that psychological resources, such as job satisfaction, can be a mechanism that strengthens the positive relationship between career development and WLB. That is, when employees feel that their careers are progressing, job satisfaction increases, allowing them to better manage the demands of work and family. This approach supports the hypothesis that career development does not necessarily create conflict, but can be a resource that improves overall quality of life when mediated by job satisfaction.

Career Development Affects Employee Job Satisfaction

Unlike the spillover approach that generally examines how conflict or support from the family domain affects job performance and satisfaction (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012), Greenhaus and Allen's (2011) Work-Family Balance (WFB) model offers the perspective that resources from the work domain—such as career development—can positively affect work-life balance by increasing job satisfaction. Career development positively affects job satisfaction, a proposition supported by recent studies. For example, a study by Rudolph et al. (2017) found that career development opportunities increase job satisfaction because employees feel valued and have clear future prospects. Similarly, a study by Shockley et al. (2021) showed that training and mentoring programs—as a form of career development—are significant in increasing job satisfaction by meeting psychological needs for competence and growth.

Furthermore, related research by Mandriasih and Iqbal (2019) confirmed that career development not only affects organizational commitment but also job satisfaction. Meanwhile, Naway and Haris (2017) found that employees who have access to skills development and promotion tend to report higher job satisfaction due to their perception of organizational justice. Finally, a meta-analysis by Zhu et al. (2021) concluded that organizational investment in forming career commitment, which is an input to career development, is strongly correlated with job satisfaction, especially when employees view it as a form of organizational support. Thus, based on Greenhaus and Allen's (2011) WFB model and current empirical support, it can be said that career development acts as a work resource that strengthens job satisfaction, which can ultimately contribute to work-family balance. Based on these theoretical and empirical arguments, the research hypothesis can be formulated as follows,

H1: Career development has a positive effect on job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction in influencing work-life balance

In today's fast-paced modern life, many workers find it difficult to divide their time and energy between career demands and family responsibilities. This is where Greenhaus and Allen's (2011) Work-Family Balance (WFB) model provides insight, offering an optimistic perspective that positive experiences at work can actually be the foundation for creating harmony in life. Unlike the spillover approach that often highlights how work pressures interfere with personal life, the WFB model invites us to see how job satisfaction can be a source of strength to better manage all aspects of life.

Recent studies have further strengthened this view. Sirgy and Lee (2018) found that when someone is satisfied with their job, they tend to have more positive energy to take home to their family. A similar story was revealed in Haar et al.'s (2019) study, where employees who

enjoyed their jobs reported that work experiences actually enriched their personal lives. A meta-analysis by Vaziri et al. (2022) further confirms that personal characteristics such as job satisfaction and also job resources such as career development are key to experiencing a better work-life balance. Recent observations from Kelliher et al. (2019) also revealed that workers who are happy with their jobs are more skilled at creating healthy boundaries between work and home. All of these findings point to one important conclusion: when we are satisfied with our jobs, we are better able to create a balanced and meaningful life. Based on this theoretical basis and empirical evidence, we hypothesize that:

H2: Job satisfaction has a positive effect on perceptions of work-life balance

Evidence of job satisfaction mediation in the career development-WLB relationship is increasingly strong in recent literature that emphasizes enrichment. Such as studies by Chan et al. (2016) and Haar et al. (2012) confirmed that career development is part of enrichment that will increase WLB mediated by job satisfaction. Likewise, research by Sarwar et al. (2021) revealed a mediation mechanism that psychological capital increases WLB satisfaction. Furthermore, studies have proven the influence of psychological capital on job satisfaction (Ngo, 2021; Paliga et al., 2022) and career development (Gu et al., 2019; Lai et al., 2020). Increased job satisfaction will lead employees to a sense of fulfillment of their work-life balance (Hanifah, 2025). This mediation process actually describes the emotional journey experienced by many workers in creating harmony between career and personal life. When companies provide career development opportunities, it is not just about improving technical skills, but rather fulfilling the basic human need to feel competent and continue to grow (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This sense of accomplishment is what then fosters job satisfaction - the feeling that what we do really matters.

Interestingly, this job satisfaction does not stop at the office. As Michel et al. (2011) stated, when the heart feels satisfied with work, that positive energy naturally flows into home life. We become more enthusiastic about being fully present for our families, more patient in dealing with household dynamics, and more creative in creating precious moments with our loved ones. In addition, job satisfaction also functions like an "emotional battery" (Chen & Fulmer, 2018) that gives us the strength to face various demands more wisely. This does not mean that the conflict between work and family will disappear completely, but we become more skilled in managing it. This is the true essence of work-life balance according to the WFB model - not about eliminating all life's pressures, but about having enough mental and emotional resources to navigate our various roles meaningfully.

H3: The mediating role of job satisfaction on the influence of career development on WLB.

The provided research model proposes (Figure 1) a mediation relationship wherein Job Satisfaction mediates the effect of Career Development on Work-Life Balance. This model suggests that career development initiatives do not directly lead to an improved work-life balance, but rather exert their influence through the level of job satisfaction experienced by individuals. Specifically, the model hypothesizes that enhanced opportunities for career development would positively impact an individual's job satisfaction. In turn, this increased job satisfaction is posited to lead to a better work-life balance. This indirect pathway implies that for career development to effectively contribute to work-life balance, it must first successfully enhance an employee's contentment and fulfillment in their role.

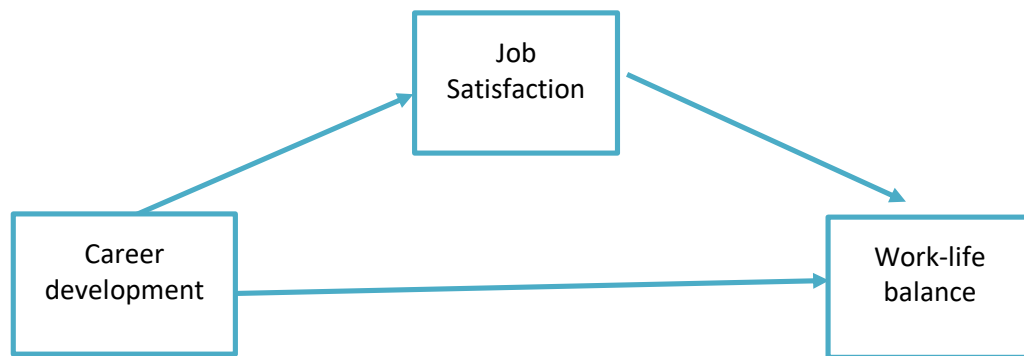


Figure 1. Research model

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and procedures

The population of this study were students who had worked and also alumni who had worked at three institutions in Jakarta. The sample obtained consisted of 103 respondents. From data collection to 150 respondents, 136 respondents were willing to participate. Then after being filtered, the data that could be processed came from 103 respondents.

3.2. Measurement

Career development was measured with 5 items from Coachline's version. While for job satisfaction, it was an adaptation of Short Index of Job Satisfaction (SIJS) with 5 items. For the measure of work-life balance in this study, the development version of Brough et al. (2009) with four items was used. All measures in this study used a 5-point Likert scale.

3.3. Data analysis technique

The technique for testing mediation was using the bootstrapping technique with the help of the statistical application PROCESS for SPSS 26.

4. Results and discussion

Table 1 shows the results of factor analysis and reliability for three measurement scales, namely Work-Life Balance (WLB), Job Satisfaction (JS), and Career Development (CD). For the Work-Life Balance scale, all items (WLB1 to WLB4) have high loading factors, ranging from 0.705 to 0.846, indicating that each item contributes strongly to measuring the WLB construct. The KMO value of 0.750 indicates sample adequacy for factor analysis, while the Cronbach Alpha value of 0.787 indicates good reliability. On the Job Satisfaction scale, the five items (JS1 to JS5) also have high loading factors (0.729 to 0.845), with a KMO value of 0.808 indicating the feasibility of the data for factor analysis. The Cronbach Alpha value of 0.871 confirms very good internal consistency, meaning that the items consistently measure the level of job satisfaction.

Meanwhile, the career development scale shows varying loading factors, ranging from 0.664 (CD2) to 0.903 (CD5), with a KMO value of 0.666 which is still acceptable although relatively lower than the previous two scales. The Cronbach Alpha value of 0.716 shows sufficient reliability, although not as strong as the other scales. Overall, these three

measurement scales meet the validity and reliability criteria, with Job Satisfaction as the most consistent scale, followed by work-life balance and career development.

Table 1 Results of testing the validity of the structure and reliability of the scale

Worklife balance scale	Loading Factor	KMO	Cronbach Alpha
WLB1	0,755	0,750	0,787
WLB2	0,822		
WLB3	0,846		
WLB4	0,705		
Job satisfaction scale	Loading Factor	KMO	Cronbach Alpha
JS1	0,786	0,808	0,871
JS2	0,815		
JS3	0,845		
JS4	0,817		
JS5	0,729		
Career development	Loading Factor	KMO	Cronbach Alpha
CD1	0,809	0,666	0,716
CD2	0,664		
CD3	0,865		
CD4	0,861		
CD5	0,903		

Source: Data processed by researchers

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for the variables work-life balance (WLB), career development (CD), and job satisfaction (JS) based on a sample size of 103. The mean scores indicate moderately high levels of all three constructs, with WLB averaging 4.126 (SD = 0.575), CD averaging 4.117 (SD = 0.449), and JS averaging 4.055 (SD = 0.582). The correlation matrix reveals two statistically significant relationships. First, WLB shows a positive correlation with JS ($r = .245$, $p < .01$), suggesting that employees with better work-life balance tend to report higher job satisfaction.

Second, CD is positively correlated with JS ($r = .276$, $p < .01$), indicating that greater perceived career development opportunities are associated with increased job satisfaction. Notably, WLB and CD demonstrate no significant relationship ($r = -.001$, $p > .05$), implying these constructs operate independently within this sample. The reported effect sizes, while statistically significant, represent small-to-moderate strengths of association according to conventional benchmarks. These findings provide preliminary evidence that both work-life balance and career development may represent distinct but meaningful factors contributing to job satisfaction in this context. The absence of multicollinearity between WLB and CD ($r = -.001$) suggests they could be examined simultaneously in subsequent predictive models without concern for redundancy.

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics indicating high mean scores for Work-Life Balance ($M=4.126$), Career Development ($M=4.117$), and Job Satisfaction ($M=4.055$) among respondents. The correlation analysis reveals significant positive relationships between Job Satisfaction and Work-Life Balance ($r=0.245$, $p<.01$), and between Career Development and Job Satisfaction ($r=0.276$, $p<.01$). Notably, the direct correlation between Work-Life Balance and Career Development is negligible ($r=-0.001$), suggesting that Job Satisfaction may play a crucial

mediating role in the relationship between career development opportunities and an individual's perceived work-life balance.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlation between variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2
1 WLB	4.126	0.575	1	
2 CD	4.117	0.449	-.001	1
3 JS	4.055	0.582	.245**	.276**

Note. N = 103. WLB = worklife balance; CD = career development; JS =Job Satisation; ** p < .01

Source: Data processed by researchers

Table 3. Hypothesis results

hypothesis	β	LLCI	ULCI	
CD→JS	.277	.1123	.6034	H1: accept
JS→WLB	.266	.0653	.4599	H2: accept
Indirect effect(s)	effect	bootLLCI	bootULCI	
CD→JS→WLB	.094	.0123	.2115	H3:accept
R ²	.076			
F-Statistics / p-value	8.359 *			

Source: Data processed by researchers

The results presented in the table demonstrate the findings of a mediation analysis examining the relationships between Career Development (CD), Job Satisfaction (JS), and Work-Life Balance (WLB). The direct effect of CD on JS was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.277$, LLCI = 0.1123, ULCI = 0.6034), supporting Hypothesis 1 (H1) and indicating that employees with greater career development opportunities report higher job satisfaction. Similarly, the direct effect of JS on WLB was also significant ($\beta = 0.266$, LLCI = 0.0653, ULCI = 0.4599), confirming Hypothesis 2 (H2) and suggesting that increased job satisfaction is associated with improved work-life balance.

Furthermore, the indirect effect of CD on WLB through JS was significant (effect = 0.094, bootLLCI = 0.0123, bootULCI = 0.2115), supporting Hypothesis 3 (H3) and demonstrating that job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between career development and work-life balance. The model explained a moderate proportion of variance in the outcome variable ($R^2 = 0.076$), and the overall regression was statistically significant ($F = 8.359$, $p < 0.05$), confirming the robustness of the proposed relationships.

These findings suggest that career development not only directly enhances job satisfaction but also indirectly contributes to better work-life balance by fostering greater fulfillment in one's professional role. The results align with existing literature emphasizing the interconnectedness of career growth, job satisfaction, and personal well-being in organizational settings. Future research could explore additional mediators or moderators to further elucidate these dynamics.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that career development significantly affects job satisfaction, a finding that has strong theoretical and empirical support. Within the framework of Greenhaus and Allen's (2011) Work-Family Balance (WFB) model, this result can be understood as a

manifestation of the resource gain process, where career development serves as a work resource that not only enhances professional capacity but also fulfills basic psychological needs for competence and growth (Rudolph et al., 2017). Recent research by Mandriasih & Iqbal (2019) strengthens this finding by showing that employees who have access to career development programs report higher levels of job satisfaction because they perceive the organization as caring about their personal growth. This perception creates a positive spillover from the work domain to the family domain, where psychological resources obtained from career development can be channeled to improve the quality of personal life (Zhang et al., 2018).

In the context of the Work-Family Balance (WFB) model, fulfilling an individual's psychological needs is an important element in achieving a balance between work and personal life. One way to fulfill these needs is through an effective career development program. Such programs can increase job satisfaction if well-designed. However, this discussion needs to be balanced with the findings of Shockley et al. (2021), which remind that a positive relationship between career development and job satisfaction does not always occur. This relationship only occurs when the career development program is in line with the personal values and aspirations of the individual concerned. When there is a mismatch, it can actually cause stress and reduce job satisfaction. From the perspective of the WFB model, this finding emphasizes the importance of the fit between organizational resources (career development) and individual needs as a prerequisite for creating work-family balance. The practical implication is that career development interventions should be designed in a participatory manner involving employee preferences, not as a uniform policy for all.

The results of this study indicate that job satisfaction acts as a full mediator in the relationship between career development and work-life balance (WLB), a finding that contributes significantly to our understanding of the psychological mechanisms in the Greenhaus and Allen (2011) Work-Family Balance (WFB) model. These results indicate that career development does not directly create work-life balance, but must go through the formation of job satisfaction first before finally contributing to increasing WLB. This finding is in line with the research of Haar et al. (2012) who found that organizational resources such as career development need to be internalized first into positive subjective experiences (in this case job satisfaction) before they can influence other life domains.

Within the framework of the WFB model, this process reflects the resource caravan principle (Halbesleben et al., 2014) where resources in one domain (work) must first be accumulated and transformed before they can be transferred to another domain (family). Psychological needs creates a satisfaction balance which is one of the main pillars of work-family balance (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). A longitudinal study by Wayne et al. (2022) provide additional evidence by showing that the effects of career development on job satisfaction are sustained and even strengthen over time, as employees internalize personal growth values into their professional identities. These findings make it clear that career development is not simply an organizational intervention, but rather a psychological investment that generates spiraling gains in the WFB model.

This full mediation mechanism can be explained through two key processes. First, career development fulfills employees' basic psychological needs for competence and growth (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which then increases their job satisfaction. This job satisfaction is the catalyst for creating positive spillover to personal life, as found in Michel et al.'s (2011) study which showed that employees who are satisfied with their jobs tend to have greater psychological energy to invest in family life. Second, job satisfaction functions as a psychological resource that allows individuals to develop more effective coping strategies in managing interdomain demands (Chen & Fulmer, 2018). This finding strengthens the postulate of the WFB model that balance is not

the result of the absence of conflict, but rather the result of the availability of adequate psychological resources to manage multiple demands.

The theoretical implications of this full mediation finding are quite profound. First, this result supports the extension of the WFB model by asserting that the transfer of resources between domains is indirect and must go through a certain psychological process (job satisfaction). Second, this finding questions the basic assumption of traditional spillover theory which often assumes that the relationship between domains is direct (Zhang et al., 2018). For example, Clark et al.'s (2014) research found that in the absence of job satisfaction, career development programs can actually create additional burdens that reduce WLB.

5. Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence supporting Greenhaus and Allen's (2011) Work-Family Balance model, demonstrating that career development positively influences work-life balance (WLB) through the mediating role of job satisfaction. The findings reveal that employees who perceive opportunities for career growth report higher job satisfaction, which subsequently enhances their ability to balance work and personal life. This underscores the importance of job satisfaction as a psychological mechanism that translates organizational investments in career development into improved WLB.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences; longitudinal research is needed to confirm the directionality of the relationships. Second, the sample was limited to professionals in Jakarta, which may not fully represent Indonesia's diverse workforce. Future studies could expand to rural areas or other sectors to enhance generalizability. Third, self-reported data may introduce bias, particularly for subjective constructs like WLB and job satisfaction. Objective measures or multi-source data could strengthen future findings. Lastly, the study did not explore potential moderators, such as organizational culture or individual differences, which could refine the model. Addressing these limitations in future research would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between career development, job satisfaction, and WLB.

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