

The Effect Of Work-Life Balance And Career Development On Employee Performance With Job Satisfaction As A Mediating Variable At Kpp Pratama Semarang Tengah

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Abstract

This study investigates the direct and indirect impacts of work-life balance and career development on employee performance at the Semarang Tengah Primary Tax Service Office (KPP Pratama Semarang Tengah), utilizing job satisfaction as a mediating variable. An explanatory quantitative design was applied. Data were gathered via a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire administered to all 78 employees using a census technique. The analysis was executed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 3.2.9. Findings reveal that while work-life balance does not significantly impact performance directly, both career development and job satisfaction positively and significantly enhance employee performance. Additionally, work-life balance and career development significantly boost job satisfaction, with career development being the most influential factor. Job satisfaction serves as a full mediator for the relationship between work-life balance and performance, and as a partial mediator for the link between career development and performance. These results align with Social Exchange Theory, suggesting that organizational support translates into improved performance only when it fosters employee job satisfaction first.

Keywords

work life balance; career development; job satisfaction; employee performance; PLS-SEM



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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has experienced impressive development progress over the last several decades, but it continues to face challenges in maintaining sustainable economic growth, one of which is a lower tax revenue ratio compared with other developing countries. Tax reform often focuses on tax rates and tax codes, even though how a country manages tax collection, including human resource factors on the side of tax authority personnel, is equally important. Performance is the most important component determining organizational success. Robbins & Judge (2017) define performance as the results achieved by employees in their work according to certain

criteria. The organizational performance of the Directorate General of Taxes (DJP) is formed from the performance scores of its subordinate vertical units, one of which is the Semarang Tengah Primary Tax Service Office (KPP Pratama Semarang Tengah).

In 2024, the Organizational Performance Value of KPP Pratama Semarang Tengah did increase, but it was still unable to exceed the highest achievement of the last four years, namely 110.33 (2022), and there remains room for improvement toward 120. This value is formed by employee performance through the achievement of Key Performance Indicators. Public-sector organizations provide a unique context for performance management: stricter administrative requirements, broader public expectations, impacts that are more difficult to measure, and a tendency to be bureaucratic and hierarchical (Piatak et al., 2020), so employee performance needs to be evaluated through an analysis of the factors that influence it (Kustinah et al., 2021).

Employee performance does not emerge by itself. Robbins & Judge (2017) state that ability and motivation are its determining factors, while Chen (2024) divides the factors affecting it into internal and external factors. Employees who are capable, enthusiastic, and motivated tend to perform better and contribute to productivity (Zhenjing et al., 2022). Organizations strengthen this motivation, among other means, through work-life balance and career development (Le et al., 2024).

Work-life balance is the balance of satisfaction between family life and work life (Meenakshi et al., 2013). Employees who have a balance between work and personal life are less likely to experience fatigue and stress, so their job satisfaction, focus, and energy increase and have a positive impact on performance (Khamisa et al., 2015). The second variable, career development, is a series of jobs undertaken by a person throughout life (Ali et al., 2019) and is an investment for both organizations and employees (Setyawati et al., 2022). Social Exchange Theory underlies its relationship with performance because career development minimizes the gap between organizational needs and employees' career needs (Rahayu et al., 2019) and improves the skills required to enhance performance (Kaur & Kaur, 2022).

Nevertheless, findings from previous studies highlight inconsistent results regarding the effects of work-life balance and career development on employee performance, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Gap in Previous Studies

Relationship Issue	Gap in Findings	Researchers and Year
Effect of work-life balance on employee performance	Significant effect	Aisyah et al. (2021); Abdirahman et al. (2020);

Relationship Issue	Gap in Findings	Researchers and Year
		Preena & Preena (2021); Ingsih et al. (2022)
	No significant effect	Rahmawati et al. (2021)
Effect of career development on employee performance	Significant effect	Hosen et al. (2024); Arsawan et al. (2023); Caniago & Rustanto (2022); Ratnasari et al. (2019); Wau & Purwanto (2021); Setyawati et al. (2022)
	No significant effect	Putri et al. (2022); Yusuf & Hasnidar (2020); Napitupulu et al. (2017)

Source: Previous studies, processed

These inconsistencies open the possibility of a mediating variable, and in this study job satisfaction is proposed as the mediator. Based on Social Exchange Theory, job satisfaction acts as a psychological bridge that transforms organizational support into tangible contributions: the facilitation of work-life balance and clear career paths are perceived by employees as rewards, fostering job satisfaction, which then creates a moral obligation based on reciprocity to respond through improved performance. Job satisfaction itself is a collection of positive employee feelings that has cascading effects on various organizational aspects (Arshad et al., 2023); satisfied employees have been shown to be more productive (Gomathy, 2022) and to perform better (Kustinah et al., 2021; Memon et al., 2023). The importance of tax revenue for the state and the still-low public perception of civil servants' performance constitute major challenges for DJP. Based on these challenges and the inconsistencies in previous research findings, this study needs to be conducted in a different context, namely KPP Pratama Semarang Tengah as an authority that directly interacts with the public in tax administration.

Based on this background, this study aims to: (1) analyze the effect of work-life balance on employee job satisfaction; (2) analyze the effect of career development on employee job satisfaction; (3) analyze the effect of job satisfaction on employee performance; (4) analyze the effect of work-life balance on employee performance; (5) analyze the effect of career development on employee performance; (6) analyze job satisfaction as a mediator of the effect of work-life balance on employee performance;

and (7) analyze job satisfaction as a mediator of the effect of career development on employee performance.

METHODS

This study is an explanatory research design that functions to describe the position of the variables under study, with the main objective of testing relationships among variables through hypothesis testing (Sugiyono, 2020). The approach used is quantitative, emphasizing systematic collection of numerical data concerning phenomena and their relationships. This study uses primary data obtained directly from respondents, namely employees of KPP Pratama Semarang Tengah, through direct questionnaire distribution.

The research population consisted of all employees at KPP Pratama Semarang Tengah, totaling 78 people. Sampling used a census (saturated sampling) method because the population was not sufficiently large for inferential analysis, so the sample size was equal to the population, namely 78 employees. The research instrument was a self-administered closed-ended questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree).

This study uses four variables: work-life balance (X1) and career development (X2) as independent variables, employee performance (Y) as the dependent variable, and job satisfaction (Z) as the mediating variable. The operational definitions and indicators of each variable are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Operational Definitions of Variables

Variable	Definition	Indicators
Work-life balance (X1)	Something that reflects different individual life-role orientations; an inter-role phenomenon (Greenhaus et al., 2003)	1) Work and non-work time balance; 2) work and non-work activity balance; 3) balance of work demands and activities outside work; 4) confidence in a balanced work and non-work life (Brough et al., 2014)
Career development (X2)	Employment activities that help employees plan	1) Career goal progress; 2) professional ability

Variable	Definition	Indicators
	their future careers so that organizations and employees can develop optimally (Mangkunegara, 2017)	development; 3) promotion speed; 4) remuneration growth (Spagnoli, 2020)
Job satisfaction (Z)	A combination of positive or negative feelings employees have toward their work (Armstrong, 2018)	1) Supervision; 2) working conditions; 3) coworkers; 4) salary; 5) policies and procedures; 6) job security; 7) status; 8) personal life (Joseph, 2023)
Employee performance (Y)	Individual employee behavior capable of generating value and excellence for the organization (Platania et al., 2024)	1) Decision-making; 2) working without making mistakes; 3) goal achievement; 4) effort; 5) taking initiative; 6) taking responsibility (Peiró et al., 2020)

Source: Developed for analysis, 2026

Data analysis used Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3.2.9, which was selected because it requires only limited distributional assumptions, uses bootstrapping, can handle models with many constructs, and is suitable for relatively small samples (Hair et al., 2022). The analysis was conducted in two stages: evaluation of the measurement model (outer model), including convergent validity (outer loading ≥ 0.70 ; AVE > 0.50), discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker and HTMT < 0.90), and reliability (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability > 0.70); and evaluation of the structural model (inner model) through R^2 , f^2 , Q^2 (blindfolding), and significance testing of path coefficients at $\alpha = 0.05$.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondent Profile

The survey successfully involved 78 participants. In general, the respondent profile consisted of male employees of productive age (31–40 years), with bachelor's-

level education (S1/D4), medium tenure (11–20 years), and married status. This profile reflects a workforce composition that is mature in terms of experience but still in the middle phase of career development. Details of respondent characteristics are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Respondent Characteristics (n = 78)

Characteristic	Category (Number, Percentage)
Gender	Male 47 (60.26%); Female 31 (39.74%)
Age	≤ 30 years 21 (26.92%); 31–40 years 30 (38.46%); 41–50 years 16 (20.51%); > 50 years 11 (14.10%)
Education	D1 7 (8.97%); D3 21 (26.92%); S1/D4 39 (50.00%); S2 11 (14.10%)
Tenure	≤ 10 years 26 (33.33%); 11–20 years 29 (37.18%); 21–30 years 14 (17.95%); > 30 years 9 (11.54%)
Marital status	Unmarried 15 (19.23%); Married 63 (80.77%)

Source: Primary data, processed, 2026

The composition of respondents dominated by married employees (80.77%) is relevant to the work-life balance variable because of their greater domestic responsibilities. The majority of respondents were under 40 years old (65.38%) and had bachelor's-level education or higher (64.10%), but most were still in the middle of their career journeys, making career development highly relevant to examine.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Descriptive analysis used mean-score categorization on a 1–5 scale with an interval range of 0.8 (1.00–1.80 very low; 1.81–2.60 low; 2.61–3.40 moderate; 3.41–4.20 high; 4.21–5.00 very high). The results show that work-life balance had the highest mean score with the most homogeneous response variation, whereas career development had the lowest score with the greatest variation. Compensation/salary issues consistently emerged as a weak point in both the career development and job satisfaction variables. A summary of the descriptive statistics is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	Category	Highest Indicator	Lowest Indicator
Work-life	4.40	Very high	wlb1: dividing	wlb2: work

Variable	Mean	Category	Highest Indicator	Lowest Indicator
balance			work and rest time (4.53)	does not interfere with social/hobby activities (4.32)
Career development	3.88	High	pk2: opportunities to develop soft skills and expertise (4.04)	pk3: promotion speed and fairness (3.79)
Job satisfaction	4.23	Very high	kk1: supervisor direction and feedback; kk3: harmonious relationships among employees (4.65)	kk7: pride in DJP employee status (3.94); kk4: salary and allowances (4.08; SD 0.86)
Employee performance	4.24	Very high	kp6: responsibility for work results (4.58)	kp4: enthusiasm and maximum effort (4.06)

Source: Primary data, processed, 2026

All work-life balance indicators were categorized as very high with low standard deviations (0.57–0.65), indicating homogeneous perceptions that employees had achieved good balance. Career development was the variable with the lowest mean and highest standard deviation (0.78–0.84), indicating more heterogeneous perceptions. Job satisfaction was supported more strongly by relational and work-system factors, while financial factors were a consistent weak point across the two variables. Employee performance was stronger in the quality and responsibility dimensions than in motivation and proactive initiative.

4.3 Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

All latent variables were conceptualized as reflective constructs. The evaluation results show that all indicators had outer loadings above 0.70 (ranging from 0.762–

0.963), and the AVE values of all constructs were well above 0.50, so convergent validity was fulfilled at both the indicator and construct levels. A summary of the measurement model evaluation is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Convergent Validity and Construct Reliability

Construct	Outer Loading Range	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Work-life balance	0.906–0.959	0.891	0.959	0.970
Career development	0.910–0.963	0.883	0.955	0.968
Job satisfaction	0.762–0.916	0.745	0.950	0.959
Employee performance	0.866–0.938	0.810	0.953	0.962

Source: SmartPLS data processing results, 2026

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the HTMT ratio (Table 6). All $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ values on the diagonal were greater than the correlations among constructs, and all HTMT values were below 0.90 (the highest was 0.866 for the Job Satisfaction–Employee Performance relationship). Thus, all constructs were empirically distinct and the measurement model was suitable for structural model evaluation.

Table 6. Discriminant Validity: Fornell-Larcker ($\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ on diagonal) and HTMT

Construct	Job Satisfaction	Employee Performance	Career Development	Work-Life Balance
Job satisfaction	0.863			
Employee performance	0.832 / 0.866	0.900		
Career development	0.830 / 0.864	0.784 / 0.819	0.939	
Work-life balance	0.803 / 0.840	0.739 / 0.773	0.671 / 0.700	0.944

Source: SmartPLS data processing results, 2026. Note: values are Fornell-Larcker correlations / HTMT values; diagonal (bold) = $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$.

4.4 Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

The R^2 value for job satisfaction of 0.799 indicates that nearly 80% of its variance is explained by work-life balance and career development (substantial category), while the R^2 for employee performance of 0.734 is in the moderate category, approaching substantial. The f^2 values indicate that the effects of career development (0.767) and work-life balance (0.552) on job satisfaction are large, while the effects of job satisfaction on performance (0.139), career development on performance (0.103), and work-life balance on performance (0.051) range from moderate to small.

The blindfolding procedure produced Q^2 values of 0.779 for job satisfaction and 0.676 for employee performance, with small RMSE and MAE values, indicating that the model has very good predictive capability. The summary is presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Structural Model Evaluation

Evaluation Indicator	Job Satisfaction	Employee Performance
R^2	0.799	0.734
Adjusted R^2	0.794	0.723
Q^2 (blindfolding)	0.779	0.676
RMSE	0.484	0.583
MAE	0.355	0.397

Source: SmartPLS data processing results, 2026

4.5 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted by analyzing path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values from the bootstrapping procedure. A hypothesis was considered supported when the p-value was < 0.05 (equivalent to a t-statistic > 1.96). The results of direct and indirect effect testing are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Hypothesis Testing Results

Relationship Path	Coefficient	t-statistic	p-value	Conclusion
H1: Work-life balance $\rightarrow$ Employee performance	0.195	1.471	0.141	Rejected
H2: Career development $\rightarrow$ Employee performance	0.297	2.684	0.007	Accepted
H3: Job	0.429	2.766	0.006	Accepted

Relationship Path	Coefficient	t-statistic	p-value	Conclusion
satisfaction → Employee performance				
H4: Work-life balance → Job satisfaction	0.449	4.348	0.000	Accepted
H5: Career development → Job satisfaction	0.529	5.365	0.000	Accepted
H6: Work-life balance → Job satisfaction → Employee performance	0.193	2.152	0.031	Accepted (full mediation)
H7: Career development → Job satisfaction → Employee performance	0.227	2.594	0.010	Accepted (partial mediation)

Source: SmartPLS data processing results, 2026

Of the five direct-effect paths tested, four were statistically significant and one path was not significant, namely the direct effect of work-life balance on employee performance. Both mediation paths tested were significant, indicating that job satisfaction functions as a full mediator in the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance and as a partial mediator in the relationship between career development and employee performance.

4.6 Discussion

The Effect of Work-Life Balance on Employee Performance (H1). Work-life balance did not have a significant direct effect on employee performance, although the direction of the effect was positive. This finding is interesting because the mean WLB score was actually the highest among all variables, yet its direct effect was the weakest. Based on Social Exchange Theory, the relationship is not mechanistic:

flexibility and work-life balance are first interpreted as forms of care that touch the affective aspect, so employees respond with changes in emotional attitudes (satisfaction and reduced stress), rather than directly with increased technical output. DJP policies supporting WLB include flexible working hours, the opportunity to work from home on Fridays, and easier leave application procedures. This finding is consistent with literature showing that the effect of WLB on performance is often indirect through job satisfaction.

The Effect of Career Development on Employee Performance (H2). Career development had a positive and significant effect on employee performance, although its strength was relatively small. This can be explained by the respondent profile, in which most employees were of productive age with medium tenure and were still in the process of long-term career development. In addition, DJP is currently carrying out position functionalization, while many functional officials face difficulties in promotion because of quota limitations: based on Announcement of the Director General of Taxes Number PENG-251/PJ/PJ.01/2026, there were 2,447 participants in functional-position talent management, whereas the estimated promotion requirement was only 249 positions. This condition is consistent with the finding that career development had the lowest mean perception. The result is consistent with Hosen et al. (2024); Arsawan et al. (2023); Caniago & Rustanto (2022); Ratnasari et al. (2019); Wau & Purwanto (2021); and Setyawati et al. (2022).

The Effect of Job Satisfaction on Employee Performance (H3). Job satisfaction had a positive and significant effect on employee performance and was the path with the largest effect leading to performance. This finding is consistent with the very high job satisfaction score, particularly the indicators of supervisor direction (kk1) and harmonious relationships among employees (kk3), which corresponded with high performance in the responsibility aspect (kp6). The result supports Arshad et al. (2023), Kustinah et al. (2021), Gomathy (2022), and Memon et al. (2023).

The Effect of Work-Life Balance on Job Satisfaction (H4). Work-life balance had a positive and highly significant effect on job satisfaction, consistent with the descriptive data in which WLB had the highest mean and the lowest standard deviation. The result is in line with Social Exchange Theory: organizations that help employees balance work and personal life create a positive environment that reduces fatigue and stress and thereby increases satisfaction (Nurjana et al., 2022), and is also consistent with Akpa et al. (2019); Dousin et al. (2019); Preena & Preena (2021); and Susanto et al. (2022).

The Effect of Career Development on Job Satisfaction (H5). This path was the

strongest effect in the model, making career development the most dominant determinant of job satisfaction. Interestingly, although its mean was the lowest, its effect was the strongest, indicating high sensitivity: improvements in the weakest indicators, pk3 (promotion speed and fairness) or pk4 (income alignment), have the potential to substantially affect job satisfaction, including indicator kk4 (salary/allowances). This result is consistent with Social Exchange Theory (Balozzi et al., 2018; Gavino et al., 2021) and confirms Wau & Purwanto (2021), Robianto et al. (2020), and Malahayatie et al. (2023).

The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction in the Effect of Work-Life Balance on Employee Performance (H6). Job satisfaction was proven to significantly mediate the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance. Because the direct path (H1) was not significant while the indirect path was significant, job satisfaction functions as a full mediator. This finding explains the paradox in the descriptive analysis: WLB had the highest score but the weakest direct effect because high WLB was first translated into job satisfaction, which then encouraged performance. This result strengthens the logic of Social Exchange Theory, which positions job satisfaction as a necessary link. Differences from previous studies may be influenced by the bureaucratic characteristics of the public sector (clarity of SOP/kk5 = 4.47), so the effect of WLB depends more on employees' psychological interpretation.

The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction in the Effect of Career Development on Employee Performance (H7). Job satisfaction also significantly mediated the relationship between career development and employee performance. Because both the direct (H2) and indirect paths were significant, job satisfaction functions as a partial mediator. This finding addresses the research gap concerning the unclear direct effect of career development on performance (Wau & Purwanto, 2021; Ratnasari et al., 2019) and emphasizes that within the Social Exchange Theory framework, employee-organization reciprocity must pass through the psychological process of job satisfaction before being manifested as performance. The practical implication is that performance improvement strategies will not be effective if they focus only on WLB policies without first ensuring increased job satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Based on the PLS-SEM analysis involving 78 participants, it can be concluded that improved employee performance is driven by positive perceptions of career development programs and work-life balance, provided that job satisfaction plays a mediating role. The detailed findings show that: (1) work-life balance does not have a

significant direct effect on employee performance; (2) career development makes a positive and significant contribution to performance; (3) job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on employee performance; (4) work-life balance positively and significantly increases job satisfaction; (5) career development also has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction and represents the most dominant effect among the variables in the model; (6) job satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance; and (7) job satisfaction acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between career development and employee performance.

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