Job Stress and Marital Satisfaction among Husbands in Dual-Earner Marriages

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Abstract

Dual-earner couples are susceptible to job stress and marital dissatisfaction. Husbands tend to have higher job stress level and lower marital satisfaction level than wives in dual-earner couples. It is then important to consider the negative impacts of job stress and marital dissatisfaction on dual-earner couples. Previous studies have found that job stress is related to marital satisfaction among single-earner couples, but no such relationship has been found in the context of dual-earner couples. The purpose of this study is to examine the correlation between job stress and perceived marital satisfaction among husbands in dual-earner marriages. The study employed a quantitative approach with an associative design. 100 husbands from dual-earner marriages participated by completing the Job Stress Scale (Osipow & Spokane, 1998) and the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (1993). Descriptive statistics and Pearson's Product Moment correlation were used to analyze the data. The result showed a significant negative relationship between job stress and marital satisfaction (r = -.673; p < .05), suggesting that higher job stress level is associated with decreased marital satisfaction. The study indicated the importance of job-related stress management to maintain marital satisfaction.

Keywords—dual-earner marriage; job stress; marital satisfaction

1. Introduction

The number of working women has increased in contemporary societies. According to the International Labour Organization (2015), 46,013,732 Indonesian women were employed as of May, 2014. The large number of working women is due to higher and more urgent financial needs, as well as the need for social-relational and self-actualization needs (Supriadi, 2011).

A large number of working women are members of dual-earner couples (Dalimunte, 2013) that consist of working spouses with aspirations and career responsibilities (Christine, Oktorina, & Indah, 2010). Dual-earner couples experience both the positive and negative impacts of being a working couple. According to Desmayanti (2009), some of the positive impacts of being a dual-earner couple include preparedness for the potential absence of one's spouse's income in the case of spousal death, divorce, or layoff, as well as an increase in a wife's sense of understanding towards her husband. Meanwhile, one of the negative impacts experienced by dual-earner couples is the lack of time available for their families due to the couples' demanding schedules (Kusumowardhani, 2011).

Brummelhuis, Haar, and Tanja (2010) argued that dual-earner couples are susceptible to conflicts in marriage, and a rise in the number of conflicts in marriage further leads to marital dissatisfaction (Burpee & Langer, 2005). Thus, it is assumed that a couple's dual-earner status may affect their marital satisfaction. Such an assumption is supported by the results of previous studies that have found that husbands and wives in dual-earner marriages were less satisfied with their marriages (Paputungan, Akhrani, & Pratiwi, 2012; Putri, 2005).

Marital satisfaction is a measure that indicates how individuals feel and how their needs are met (Javidnia, Golzari, & Ahmad, 2014). Fields (1983) also defined marital satisfaction as the degree to which spouses perceive that their partners meet their needs and desires. It can be concluded, then, that couples' physical and mental needs are important for improving their marital satisfaction. Physical needs include material needs (Sedaghat & Kiamanesh, 2012), such as clothing, food and shelter. On the other hand, mental needs include emotional needs, such as sexual needs, the need to be understood by their partner, the need to spend time with family, as well as the need for security and comfort (Dinani et al., 2014).

Perceived level of marital satisfaction depends on many factors, including love, communication with partner, religiosity, spousal support, and stress (Ghomrani, 2005; Khan & Aftab, 2013; Nihayah, Adriani, & Zulfa, 2012; Rostami, 2013). Since dual-earner couples are susceptible
to job related stress (Frone, 1997; Obradovic, 2013), the current study aims to examine job stress among dual-earner couples.

Job stress is a harmful physical and emotional response that can happen as a result of conflict between job demands on the employee and the amount of control an employee has over meeting these demands (Osipow & Spokane, 1998, in Mavis 2011). According to Swanson and Power (1999), work can serve as a source of conflict with one’s partner, because work causes stress that leads to conflict (Matthews et al., 2006). Particularly for dual-earner couples wherein both couples work, they are more inclined to experience conflicts in marriage. In general, the combination of a job's high demands and a low amount of control over the situation can lead to stress.

Job stress can negatively impact an individual by triggering both overt psychological and physiological distress, yet it may also produce subtle manifestations of morbidity that can affect personal well-being and productivity (Carson et al., 1997). Subsequently, job stress can make individuals more irritable, excessively anxious, unhappy, and even depressed (Sarafino, 2008). In addition to its effects on the individuals experiencing it, job stress may also affect other people around the individual, including their partner (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). This is because job stress is more likely to elicit couple interactions that are marked with increased expression of negative emotions, which further leads to sexual dysfunction and decreased frequency of sexual activity (Crouter et al., 1989; Haines, Marchand, & Steve, 2006; Hyde, Delamater, & Erri, 1998).

Furthermore, happiness in life, for most adults, is largely influenced by marital satisfaction (Newman & Newman, 1984). This is because marital satisfaction affects physical and mental health, eventually playing a role in determining the overall quality of an individual’s life, decreasing marital infidelity, helping an individual face work demands, and increasing their job satisfaction (Rostami, 2013; Fan & Lui 2004; Tazekand, Nafar, & Raziye, 2013). In contrast, marital dissatisfaction may lead to depression (Hammer et al., 2005). Thus, marital satisfaction can be considered an important factor in one’s life.

Several prior studies have found a relationship between job stress and marital satisfaction (Tazekand, Nafar, & Raziye, 2013; Christine, Oktorina, & Indah, 2010; Meliani, Sunarti, & Diaih, 2014). However, such studies used individuals in single-earner marriages as participants, while the relationship between job stress and marital satisfaction has not been investigated in the context of dual-earner marriages.

Taking into account the results of a previous study (Karima, 2014) that demonstrated higher levels of job stress among husbands in dual-earner marriages compared to their wives, authors of the current study decided to focus only on husbands in dual-earner marriages. Moreover, Paputungan, Akhriani, and Pratiwi (2012) and Rahmaningrum (2014) claimed that husbands in dual-earner marriages are less satisfied with their marriage than their wives. The tendency of husbands in dual-earner marriages to experience both higher job stress level and lower marital satisfaction led the researchers of the current study to specifically hypothesize that a relationship exists between job stress level and marital satisfaction among husbands in dual-earner marriages.

2. Methods

Participants and procedures. Quantitative data were collected from 100 husbands in dual-earner marriages. The study employed an associative design meant to assess stressful job experiences and their relationship with satisfaction regarding marital relationship. An accidental sampling method was used to select participants. To be included in the study, participants had to be a husband, have a working wife, and live with their wife (not involved in a long-distance marriage). After signing the informed consent, all participants completed the job stress and marital satisfaction questionnaires.

The average age of participants was 41 years (range = 25-56 years). The majority of participants worked as private employees (59%), had been working for more than 10 years (66%), had an average monthly spending of more than Rp. 10,000,000 (48%), had been married for more than 10 years (59%), and had 2 children (43%).

Measures. Job stress. Job stress was assessed using an adaptation of the 35-item Job Stress Scale originally developed by Osipow and Spokane (1998, in Mavis, 2011). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never true) to 5 (always true) for favorable items and from 1 (always true) to 5 (never true) for unfavorable items. The 35 items assessed the degree to which an individual has difficulty producing work quality or output (e.g., “I find myself getting behind in my work, lately”), the individual’s ability to adjust psychologically and emotionally as indicators of manifestation of stress (e.g., “I have aches and pains I cannot explain”), and the experienced interference in interpersonal relationships as a negative impact of job stress (e.g., “I quarrel with members of the family”). The total scale was constructed from the sum of all items, and a higher score on the scale indicates a higher job stress level. The Job Stress Scale has demonstrated a good concurrent validity with the Employee Assistance Programme Inventory and Career Attitudes and Strategies Inventory (Mavis, 2011), and the 35 items also showed good reliability with the current sample (.924). Prior to data collection, all measurement tools used in this study were first tested on 50 husbands in dual-earner marriages, in order to determine the appropriateness of using those tools. In the testing phase, one item from the physical stress dimension of the Job Stress Scale was removed as it failed to meet the criteria of a good item. According to Nisfianoor (2009), the standard item total correlation coefficient is .2, implying that items with a coefficient lower than .2 cannot be considered acceptable. Consequently, only 34 of the 35 items in the Job Stress Scale were used, consisting of 10 items in each vocational
Marital Satisfaction. Marital satisfaction was measured using an adaptation of Fowers and Olson (1993)'s ENRICH Marital Satisfaction (EMS) Scale, which is a short version of the ENRICH Inventory also developed by Fowers and Olson (1989). The EMS Scale is a 15-item scale comprising Marital Satisfaction (10 items) and Idealistic Distortion (5 items) subscales. Each of the 10 Marital Satisfaction items represent an individual's satisfaction of their partner’s behavioral issues, communication in their relationship, the resolution of conflict in their relationship, the way economic issues are managed within the relationship, preferences for spending free time, their affectional and sexual relationship, their feelings about having and raising children, their relationships with relatives, in-laws, and friends, responsibility and division of roles in their marriage, as well as the meaning of religious beliefs and practices within the marriage (Fowers & Olson, 1989). Examples of EMS items are “I have never regretted my relationship with my partner, not even for a moment”, “I am very happy with how we manage our leisure activities and the time we spend together”, and “I am dissatisfied about our relationship with my parents, in-laws, and/or friends”.

Meanwhile, score from the 5-item Idealistic Distortion subscale is used to correct the Marital Satisfaction scale score on the basis of the degree to which the respondent portrays the marriage in an impossibly positive way (e.g., “My partner completely understands and sympathizes with my every mood”) (Fowers & Olson, 1993). Items in EMS were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for favorable items and from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) for unfavorable items. The total score on the EMS is derived by first scoring the Marital Satisfaction and Idealistic Distortion scales, then correcting the Marital Satisfaction score downward on the basis of the person’s Idealistic Distortion score with the following formula:

\[ \text{EMS score} = \text{PCT} - [(0.40 \times \text{PCT}) \times (1 \times 0.01)] \]

(PCT = Percentile score for individual Marital Satisfaction scale; ID = Percentile score for individual Idealistic Distortion scale).

A higher EMS score indicates a higher marital satisfaction level. EMS has demonstrated a good concurrent validity when tested against the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (MAT) by Locke and Wallace (in Fowers & Olson, 1993), and showed good reliability with the current sample (.916). In the initial testing phase during which the EMS was administered to 50 husbands in dual-earner marriages, all items from the EMS scale had coefficients greater than .2, and thus all items in this scale were used in the data collection phase.

Analysis. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to explain the distribution of participants based on demographic data, as well as distribution of participants’ scores on each variable and dimension. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to test the hypothesis of the study, since the results of normality tests using Kolmogorov-Smirnov technique showed that the data was normally distributed for each variable with p = .245 for job stress and p = .309 for marital satisfaction. Results and Discussion

The means and standard deviations for the main study variables are reported in Table 1 and Table 2. Psychological stress and interpersonal stress dimensions had the highest mean scores in the job stress variable. This indicates that the characteristics of job stress experienced by participants were more likely to show up psychologically and that job stress can disrupt an individual’s relationship with their social environment, including their family, spouse, friends, and coworkers. In addition, physical stress dimension had the lowest mean score, suggesting that job stress experienced by participants was less likely to appear as physical symptoms (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Stress Variable Description</th>
<th>Statistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
<td>N 100 Min 44 Max 121 Mean 74.13 SD 19.251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimensions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocational Stress</td>
<td>N 100 Min 10 Max 32 Mean 18.96 SD 5.255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Stress</td>
<td>N 100 Min 46 Max 100 Mean 22.77 SD 8.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Stress</td>
<td>N 100 Min 4 Max 17 Mean 9.1 SD 3.323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Stress</td>
<td>N 100 Min 14 Max 37 Mean 23.3 SD 5.629</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sexual relationship dimension had the highest mean score in comparison to other dimensions of the marital satisfaction variable. This suggests that compared to other areas in marital satisfaction, husbands in dual-earner marriages were more satisfied with the way they express affection and relate sexually with their wives. This result is in contrast with Hyde, Delamater, and Erri’s (1998) finding that dual-earner couples tend to feel less satisfied with their sexual relationship with their spouses. In addition, participant data revealed that financial management dimension had the lowest mean score. Although it had the lowest mean score, the score (i.e., a 3 on a scale 1 to 5) still belonged in the neutral category (see Table 2). Such a finding serves to indicate that financial management was not considered by subjects to contribute to marital satisfaction. According to Rodhiyah (2012), this may be due to a lack of transparency between husband and wife regarding their financial situation, which in turn can cause spouses to blame each other and results in distrust and lack of discipline in managing finances, further affecting overall marital satisfaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Satisfaction Variable Description</th>
<th>Statistic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
<td>N 100 Min 19.82 Max 46 Mean 35.94 SD 6.442</td>
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</table>

A. Relationship between Job Stress and Marital Satisfaction.

Based on the statistical analysis, the result revealed a significant relationship between job stress and marital satisfaction \( (r = -0.673; p < 0.05) \), providing support for the hypothesis. The negative correlation coefficient indicates that higher job stress level is more likely to be accompanied by lower marital satisfaction level. Conversely, lower job stress level tends to be associated with higher marital satisfaction level.

The result is in accordance with the findings of studies of single-earner couples in Iran (Tazeekand, Nafar, & Raziey, 2013) as well as in Indonesia (Christine, Oktorina, & Indah, 2010; Meliani, Sunarti, & Diah, 2014), all of which showed that job stress can affect degree of marital satisfaction. Taken together, the results corroborate the assumption that job stress is associated with marital satisfaction both in the contexts of single-earner couples and dual-earner couples. In addition, the result is also in line with the opinion of Rostami (2013), who stated that job stress may negatively impact and threaten a marriage. A similar claim was made by Greenberger, O’Neil, and Nagel (1994), who suggested that individuals are presumed to bring job stress into their interactions at home. Considering the consistency in results despite the use of samples from various cultures, it can be said that job stress is negatively related to marital satisfaction in both eastern and western cultures.

According to Haines, Marchand, and Steve (2006), job stress may negatively affect marital relationship because job stress can increase the expression of negative emotions, which can subsequently cause negative spousal interactions (Crouter et al., 1989). Meanwhile, Banse (2004) proposed that daily interaction with one’s partner may affect marital satisfaction. Thus, negative interaction with one’s partner, which results from increased expressions of negative emotions brought about by job stress, may decrease marital satisfaction.

In addition, researchers of the present study conducted additional analyses by correlating the different dimensions of job stress and various dimensions of marital satisfaction. Based on the results, the psychological stress dimension in job stress variable and the equalitarian roles dimension in marital satisfaction variable showed the highest correlation \( (r = -0.617; p < 0.05) \) compared to others (see Table 4). This correlation indicates a significant negative relationship between psychological stress and equalitarian roles, implying that the rising level of job stress that manifests itself psychologically is more likely to be associated with a decrease in satisfaction of the responsibility and division of roles in a marriage.

The correlation between psychological job stress and equalitarian marital roles is in line with the findings of Wierda-Boer, Gerris, and Ad (2009) and Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), which revealed that the negative impacts of job stress make individuals feel as if they do not have enough time and energy to properly embody their roles, such that it interferes with their roles and responsibilities in a marriage. Thus, taking into account both the above findings and the findings of the current study, it can be inferred that psychological manifestation of job stress can make participants feel lacking in time and energy to take on their proper roles in their marriages, further intensifying their dissatisfaction with the responsibility and division of roles in their marriages.

In the context of urban society, these results provide evidence that even though job stress has become a reasonable condition experienced by workers, job stress plays an essential enough role in reducing marital satisfaction that it needs be understood and considered, especially for dual-earner couples. According to Bodenmann and Shantianth (2004), understanding how work-related stress interferes with personal relationships at home (e.g., relationship with a partner) is imperative to effectively combat relationship distress that can lead to marital dissatisfaction. It can therefore be assumed that if individuals better understand the negative impacts of job stress on marriage, then they will be more likely to seek appropriate coping strategies in an effort to maintain the stability of their marriage, which ultimately helps individuals attain marital satisfaction.

### Table 3. Relationship between dimensions of Job Stress and dimensions of Marital Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Satisfaction</th>
<th>Job Stress</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>J1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M5</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are several limitations to the current study. Considering that a quantitative approach was used, the researchers felt less able to explore personal factors that may be relevant to job stress and marital satisfaction. In addition, the study only used male participants, giving room for another limitation in the data collection process. Such limitation arises from the common observation that male participants tend to be less responsive in responding to marriage-related issues. The next limitation concerns the fact that the current study’s researchers did not limit participant characteristics strictly enough and did not collect data on the participants’ wives, particularly with regard to the wives’ occupations. In other words, the researchers failed to obtain specific details about participants that may have held some value in the analysis of data.

Based on the aforementioned limitations, the researchers suggest that further research attempt to: a) increase control of the makeup of participants by imposing more specific restrictions on participant characteristics, and b) obtain a more comprehensive picture of dual-earner couples by acquiring wives’ personal data that include wives’ occupational information. Further studies can also employ additional interview and observational techniques to better explore personal factors that may affect the relationship between job stress and marital satisfaction. Lastly, in the future, it may be interesting to try to identify the extent to which job stress contributes to marital satisfaction.

3. Conclusions

Husbands tend to have higher job stress level and lower marital satisfaction level than wives in dual-earner marriages, and both job stress and marital dissatisfaction can negatively influence an individual. Previous studies have found that job stress has a negative correlation with marital satisfaction in single-earner marriages, although the same relationship had not previously been studied in the context of dual-earner marriages. The lack of evidence of the relationship between job stress and marital satisfaction in dual-earner marriages therefore became the basis of the current study, which more specifically aimed to focus on the relationship between job stress and marital satisfaction among husbands in dual-earner marriages.

The present study found that the higher the level of job stress experienced by husbands in dual-earner marriages, the lower their perceived marital satisfaction level, and vice versa. This result highlights the importance of job-related stress management among husbands in dual-earner marriages. Based on the results of the current study, husbands in dual-earner marriages should therefore attempt to enhance their understanding of how job stress can negatively impact marital relationship, so that they can choose the best coping strategies to relieve stress in an effort to maintain and possibly even increase marital satisfaction.

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Note.

J1 : Vocational Stress M5 : Financial Management
J2 : Psychological Stress M6 : Leisure Activities
J3 : Physical Stress M7 : Sexual Relationship
J4 : Interpersonal Stress M8 : Children and Parenting
M1 : Personality Issues M9 : Family and Friends
M2 : Equalitarian Roles M10 : Religious Orientation
M3 : Communication M11 : Idealistic Distortion
M4 : Conflict Resolution

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{Sig. (2-tailed)} & 0.047 & 0.022 & 0.001 & 0.033 \\
M6 \text{ Pearson Correlation} & -0.438 & -0.534 & -0.474 & -0.428 \\
& 0.000 & 0.000 & 0.000 & 0.000 \\
M7 \text{ Pearson Correlation} & -0.345 & -0.363 & -0.341 & -0.318 \\
& 0.000 & 0.000 & 0.001 & 0.001 \\
M8 \text{ Pearson Correlation} & -0.501 & -0.463 & -0.320 & -0.413 \\
& 0.000 & 0.000 & 0.001 & 0.000 \\
M9 \text{ Pearson Correlation} & -0.542 & -0.576 & -0.468 & -0.529 \\
& 0.000 & 0.000 & 0.001 & 0.000 \\
M10 \text{ Pearson Correlation} & -0.380 & -0.467 & -0.390 & -0.545 \\
& 0.000 & 0.000 & 0.000 & 0.000 \\
M11 \text{ Pearson Correlation} & -0.534 & -0.552 & -0.520 & -0.493 \\
& 0.000 & 0.000 & 0.000 & 0.000 \\
\end{array}
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Sedaghat, M. & Kiamanesh, A. (2012). Studying the effect of complex dimensions of personality traits on marital satisfaction in Medical Science University students, Tehran, Iran. Tesis. Medical Science University: Published.


