

# Career Wellbeing, The Challenging Role of Working Mothers

Hilwa Anwar  
PhD Program of Psychology  
Airlangga University  
Indonesia

Fendy Suhariadi  
Faculty of Psychology  
Airlangga University  
Indonesia

Fajrianthi  
Faculty of Psychology  
Airlangga University  
Indonesia

**Abstract**— The role of working mothers can be understood as dualism role, namely family role and working role that has to be done simultaneously. Internalization of patriarchal culture makes domestic role on women cannot be ignored even by a mother who works and achieves their career outside of their home. On the other side, there are more women occupying a higher structural position in the organization. Therefore, career development of working mothers can be very complex and cannot be understood separately with the family relationship. The purpose of this research is to obtain a deeper understanding of the concept of career well-being for working mothers. A qualitative study is conducted on three working mothers as the respondents. In expressing the career well-being, this research explores the career experience of the working mothers since the beginning. This research also explores an emotional and behavioral aspect of the respondent against their career experience over the past five years. The result obtained indicate that career wellbeing on the research subject include emotional, psychological, social wellbeing and the relationship wellbeing between family roles.

**Keywords**—*Career Well-being, Working Mothers*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The improvement of women's participation in the productive field occurs in almost all countries in the world. The level of education that is gender equivalent and the modernization of the economy and technology affect the emergence of a significant shifting in the predominantly male labor trend. In Indonesia, productive role of women is an important issue because the number of female population in the productive age is almost equal to male. Around 85 billion or 65% from the total of the population is female. This large number indicates the potential of human resources, and if women are not able to work productively, it will become an economic burden for Indonesia [1].

The values developed in most families in Indonesia are still characterize by a traditional family pattern. So that the distribution of role tends to be dichotomous by placing men as the chief wage earner and women are responsible for the domestic role such as the household. On the other hand, there

are more women occupying a managerial position. They also want to have happy personal life and do the best to be successful in both realm of their life: professional and personal, career and family [2]. However, the improvement of women's role in public is not accompanied by the reduction of the domestic role of the women. Therefore, mothers who work and achieves career outside of their home still have a big role in the domestic area in their household. Facing by the higher pressure from both working domain and family domain [3], [4], [5].

In this research, the focus of the study in working mothers is based on the difference between working and family issues faced by working mothers and men. The reason is that the difference between working and family role of each gender. In addition, the concept of the career of men and women is also different. In the study about stress and workload between men and women manager, Lundberg and Frankenhaeuser [6] suggest that both women and men report positive behavior against their working condition. However, women significantly report more stress because the lack of communication, support and they have to appear better to get the same chance for promotion. In addition, women spend twice as much time on household work than men, and women manager show physiological stress response after work than men [6].

The career development of women is a lot more complex and it gives greater pressure on non-career aspects in their life. A career in working mothers cannot be understood separately with family relations [7]. The fact that family clearly shown from the research conducted by O'Neil, Hopkins and Bilimionial [8], affects mother's career, in the course of mother's career indicates an interruption tendency in career comparing to men, especially with regard to having children. Mother with younger children will tend to have career interruption comparing to women with family but no child, women with older children and men. Most of them choose to quit their work because they cannot work full time. Some of the women choose to leave their career or experience interruptions or stagnation in their career. However, other

women keep their career. This issue raises the curiosity of researchers about how career experience in working mothers, not on their success in achieving the career, but more on how working mothers can feel prosperous with their career/position or in this research termed Career Well Being.

Studies that address the specific career wellbeing are limited. Kidd [9] describes career wellbeing as the experience related to the positive affect on someone's career. Furthermore, the literature on the success of career relevant with the career wellbeing concept, especially subjective career success. However, the concept of success implies an emphasis on working aspects, achievement, and the result related to another career. The career wellbeing is showing more on the ongoing situation and not discrete outcome and emphasizing more on the feeling [9].

The discussion on the career wellbeing is also inseparable from the basic of philosophical well-being that has existed since ancient Greece [6]. In its development, there are two main flows in the well-being studies, namely hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives. The hedonic perspective focuses on maximizing pleasure as the purpose of life and the source of happiness. In modern conceptual, this perspective is known as subjective well-being, which is a phenomenon that includes the individual's cognitive and emotional evaluation of his or her life [10]. Eudaimonic perspective focuses on life based on growth and personal fulfillment. This perspective often involves self-realization, personal growth, and development, and is most closely related to the term of psychological well-being [11], [12].

In this regard, Creed and Blume [13] define career wellbeing as the degree in which someone is satisfied with his or her career choice, and the extent to which he experiences pressure that is more subjective associated with the career choice. A career wellbeing proposed by Creed and Blume [13] refers to the concept of subjective wellbeing. Meanwhile, Chen and Haller [14] define career wellbeing that refers to well-being model stated by Ryff, including self-acceptance, positive relationship with others, autonomy, mastery of the environment, having goals in life and personal growth.

The limitation of understanding and research about career wellbeing, especially in working mothers, become the basis of this research. Additionally, some researchers regard the dichotomy in the wellbeing perspective as unfavorable to the understanding of widespread and complex phenomena such as well-being ([15], [16]). Keyes [15] argues that well-being is a complete mental health that must be understood as an inseparable unity. Therefore, wellbeing includes a complete dimension and combination of emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. Subjective wellbeing expresses emotional experience, while others refer to long-term growth and actualization processes, therefore both experiences should be evaluated together ([16], [17]).

As noted earlier, research on the career wellbeing is still limited, so the understanding of career well-being concepts specifically for working mothers is also still less profound.

Therefore, the focus of this study is the perception of working mothers on their career wellbeing. The purpose of this study is to gain a deep understanding of the concept of career wellbeing in working mothers.

## II. METHOD

### A. Participants

The participants in this study were working mothers. Criteria of respondents in this study are as follows: (1) work in the formal field and occupy structural positions, (2) diploma as the minimum education, (3) have children from elementary school age to early adolescence and (4) have a partner/husband who also work and stay at the same house with the husband and child/children.

This research conducted in Makassar in August 2016 with three respondents. The three respondents were mothers who work in banking and hold structural positions; they have an undergraduate degree as their last education and have children in the elementary school age category.

### B. Data Collection and Analysis

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This research uses a qualitative approach with multiple case study method. A multiple case study enables the researcher to explore differences within and between cases. The goal is to replicate findings across cases. Because comparisons will be drawn, it is imperative that the cases are chosen carefully so that the researcher can predict similar results across cases, or predict contrasting results based on a theory [18].

Data collections in qualitative research include four major types, namely observation, interview, documentation, and audio-visual [19]. Data collections in this study are:

1) *In depth focused interview*: is an open and flexible interview method but focuses on a particular theme, namely career wellbeing. According to Banister et al. [20], the interview method allows the researcher to gain an understanding of the subjective meanings understood by the individual about the studied issue and intends to explore the issue. The interview guidelines in this study largely refer to the method used by Kidd [9], which reveals career wellbeing through the emotional exploration of the respondents. In addition to exploring career experiences from the start, respondents in the study are also asked to recall events related to their work and careers over the past five years. The

interview guidelines are: (a) Can you tell about your career path from the beginning to the present, the support and obstacles during your career; (b) Can you tell about your career experience, especially over the past five years, that makes you have positive feelings, attitudes, and impacts about your career/work; (c) Can you tell about a career experience, especially over the past five years, that makes you have negative feelings, attitudes and impacts about your career/work.

2) *Observation*: is an activity to pay attention accurately, noting the phenomenon that arises and considering the relationship between aspects of the phenomenon [20]. In this study, the results of the observations are used as additional data to understand the studied issue.

### C. Data Analysis

The data verification in this research is done through triangulation technique. Namely checking and comparison of data by utilizing the use of data source, researcher, theory and methodology [20]. Data analysis technique used in this research refers to Miles and Huberman analysis model [21]. This analysis model is formulate based on the observation that qualitative research desperately needs clear and systematic methods of drawing conclusions and examining them thoroughly. The analysis model includes three simultaneous activity flows, which are:

1) *Data Reduction*: a selection, simplification, transformation processes of the data obtained in the research. In this step, the research conducts data tabulation, reading repetitive data to gain a thorough understanding of the data, searching for keywords and themes that can be used, abstracting, and making an interim analysis. Keywords can be taken from terms used by the respondents themselves, which the researcher deems correct and can represent the phenomenon described. Meanwhile, researchers take the concepts generally are concepts that have been known and used in the literature or related disciplines [20].

2) *Data Display*: the preparation of the information as the basis for the conclusion. The data presentation can be matrix, graph, or chart. In this research, the researcher displays the data in the form of a matrix.

3) *Drawing Conclusion*: identifying and classifying process of similar information.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data reduction is done by referring to the concept of wellbeing by Keyes [15], which suggests that the system of mental health or well-being classification is the less complete system because it focuses only on some of the overall mental health. According to Keyes [15], wellbeing is complete mental health that should be understood as an inseparable unity and is a combination of emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. The results can be seen in the matrix on appendix.

Based on the data presentation matrix, it appears that components of career wellbeing in working mothers include five categories. First, issue related to emotional wellbeing. Emotional wellbeing is described as happiness and satisfaction in a person [15], in this research, happiness and satisfaction are focused on the career of the respondents. Two out of three respondents described not only positive feeling but also negative feeling related to satisfaction.

Second, issue related to psychological wellbeing. This is aspects reflecting the ability to function positively as an individual [15]. Respondents in this research describe feeling are positively challenged, an increasingly competent self-condition both as a result of career advancement and vice versa, showing acceptable appreciation and personal development associated with career and having positive relationships with others. The results of data analysis in the second category are also in accordance with the concept of career wellbeing by Chen and Haller [14] that defines career wellbeing with reference to the welfare model proposed by Ryff, which includes self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, control of the environment, having goals in life and personal growth.

Third, issue related to social wellbeing. If psychological wellbeing depicts a more personal evaluation of the ability to function positively, then the social wellbeing refers to the evaluation of positive function by using societal/social criteria [15]. This condition is apparent when the respondents describing himself as part of the social community in their working environment, his ability to master new work environment or new position as well as showing his effort to give more contribution to the community.

The first three issues are components categorized based on the complete mental health concept proposed by Keyes [15]. However, from the data analysis process, there are also other categories. In qualitative research, the process of analysis involves not only proven concepts developed or chosen by the researcher, but also involving concepts arising from the answers or words of the respondents themselves (indigenous concepts). Therefore, there are two other categories of data reduction, issues involving family roles, and issues involving material and physical aspects, such as better facilities and financial conditions.

As previously noted, the family or domestic roles are inseparable from the career of working mothers. Unlike other categories, in the family related category, three respondents state that they have the guilty feeling to ignore their role as a mother for their children. However, the respondents also express some positive experiences of their career on their family roles.

In working mothers, either to achieve life satisfaction and to fully function, cannot be separated from the achievement of the roles in the domain of work and family. Furthermore, Van Aarde and Mostert [22] argue that work and family are not separate domains, but are two interconnected domains. In the study conducted by Aryee et al. [23], one of the factors that

can support the working mothers to achieve the satisfaction of life is to run the role of work and family in balance. The balance of work-family is an equilibrium in each role and is characterized by the emergence of feelings of achieving a satisfactory resolution to the demands of roles in both the family and work domains

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In this research, five basic components can describe and limit the concept of career wellbeing in working mothers. They are emotional wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, social wellbeing, family related wellbeing, and material/physical wellbeing. This shows that career wellbeing in working mothers cannot be seen only from one perspective of wellbeing, it has to be done through integrated evaluation between effective happiness that is emotion including the happiness and satisfaction of cognitive happiness (psychological wellbeing) or emotions of hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives (subjective and psychological wellbeing) elements such as the development of personal attributes, potential exploration, fulfillment and self-expression ([15], [24]).

The role in the family gives a significant contribution in the limitation of career wellbeing in working mothers. According to [3], the cultural role of the women is actually very biased for working mothers. Working mothers who achieve their career outside of the home cannot focus on their own goals, they are trapped in two worlds at once, both in the productive and domestic field or what is usually called as a double burden. The internalization of traditional roles, which distinguishes dichotomies in the roles of men and women, in working mothers always gives rise to feelings of guilt when unable to balance or even give all of their time and thoughts to the family.

Kidd [9] also expresses this condition, where one of the career well-being features in his research revealing work-life issue component. This component explains about the balance between working and life aspect outside of work and physical health. However, in this research three respondents give specific answer related to non-work aspect namely family roles. It can be seen from the frequency of responses that appear in each category, respondents show a dominant response on the first four components, namely emotional wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, social wellbeing and family roles. Meanwhile, the issue related to material/physical only explained the facilities and financial conditions that support the family.

This research is inseparable from limitations. The case study type describing the career wellbeing and the challenge of the roles on a group or respondents in this research. Thus, for further research can be done with exploratory research/surveys involving many respondents, so that the frequency of each component can be used to determine the main components of career wellbeing in working mothers.

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## Appendix:

 TABEL I  
 MATRIX OF DATA RESULTS

| Respondents                                         | Career                                                                                                                                                                      | EWB                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | PWB                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | SWB                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | FAMILY - RELATED                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | MATERI - RELATED                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A, 40 years old, Area operation Manager, 2 children | Working in private bank since 2008. The first position is the Branch Manager's Secretary. The next position is the supervisor, regional manager, and area Operation manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I am happy and proud to feel superior to others</i></li> <li>• <i>I become reactive, irritable in the office or at home, but not for long</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I am confident of having good potential and working capacity, because otherwise I will not be successful at work</i></li> <li>• <i>I easily pass the promotional test, because all the work I can do well</i></li> <li>• <i>I have good communication skills</i></li> <li>• <i>Promotions that I get quickly are an appreciation of my ability</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Challenges that each office has a different habit and environment. And I deal with it differently</i></li> <li>• <i>With my career as a manager, I can see the outside world</i></li> <li>• <i>My networking becomes widespread and I am more therefore</i></li> <li>• <i>There is a sense that I am needed and beneficial to others</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I feel I'm not a good mother</i></li> <li>• <i>I can not accompany children on a full-time basis</i></li> <li>• <i>I am more likely to put my job ahead of family.</i></li> <li>• <i>Positively, my career has a positive effect on children and families, as many networks are easy to help with our difficulties</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Physical condition is decreasing</i></li> <li>• <i>For this position I can achieve higher grade with higher benefit, not only from salary but also facilities.</i></li> </ul> |
| F, 40 years old, Approval SME region, 2 children    | Working in one of the private banks since 2000. The first position is Marketing Staff. The next position is credit analysis and Approval SME region which oversees 8 staff. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The biggest thing I get is promotion being an Approval for SME. It is very happy for my family and me.</i></li> <li>• <i>... is very emotionally draining to coaching staff and neutralizing the working pressures of related business units</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Experience for me not only from the career side but also life challenge</i></li> <li>• <i>I can further explore my skills more broadly</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>When I move to another place, I just have to know them first. So I have a challenge</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I am very fond of my family, especially my children who I have been left with only the guard, but on the other hand the necessities of life require me to work</i></li> <li>• <i>(promotion) is very happy for me and my family</i></li> <li>• <i>If there is a better opportunity to make me able to work and benefit many people without having to part with my children, from my house .. surely I take the opportunity</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>(promotion) This makes the financial condition better</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                          |
| M, 36 years old, HRD Supervisor, 2 children         | Working on telecommunication services in 2007. The current position is the HRD Supervisor                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I am comfortable in my workplace</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Maybe because I am a worker .. whatever I do</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I feel stronger to face the environment</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sometimes I think if I have a career like this, it will affect my family, because I cannot give my full attention to family.</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |