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The Relationship between Time Pressure and Work-Related Spousal Support Seeking with Relationship Satisfaction and Occupational Depression: The Mediating Role of Job Stress in Dual-Earner Couples

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Abstract

Abstract

The fast-paced work culture has confronted dual-earner couples with numerous challenges, including time pressure and job stress. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between time pressure, work-related spousal support seeking, relationship satisfaction, and occupational depression, considering the mediating role of job stress among dual-earner couples. The research used an applied, descriptive-survey design. The statistical population consisted of dual-earner couples in Isfahan, where at least one spouse was employed at Isfahan Steel Company in autumn 2024 and the other spouse was also a full-time employee. From 1,200 eligible couples, 285 couples were selected as the sample using systematic sampling. The sample size was determined based on a ratio of 12 participants per each of the 24 questionnaire items, appropriate for structural equation modeling. Data were collected through standardized questionnaires: Time Pressure (Semmer et al., 1999), Work-Related Spousal Support Seeking (King et al., 1995), Relationship Satisfaction (Norton, 1983), Job Stress (Hellriegel & Slocum, 1996), and occupational Depression (Bianchi & Schonfeld, 2020). Data analysis was performed using structural equation modeling in AMOS software and the bootstrap test. Findings revealed that time pressure had a significant relationship with both relationship satisfaction and job stress. Work-related spousal support seeking was also significantly associated with relationship satisfaction and job stress. However, no significant relationship was found between job stress and relationship satisfaction. The mediating role of job stress in the relationships between time pressure and relationship satisfaction, as well as between support seeking and relationship satisfaction, was rejected. Regarding occupational depression, results indicated that time pressure and job stress had significant direct effects on increasing occupational depression, but the direct effect of spousal support seeking on job depression was not significant. Furthermore, the mediating role of job stress in the relationship between time pressure and occupational depression, as well as in the relationship between spousal support seeking and occupational depression, was confirmed. These results highlight the importance of alternative factors such as intra-marital supportive strategies, communication skills, and time management. It is recommended that dual-earner couples employ intra-marital supportive strategies and stress-reduction techniques to maintain work–family balance. The findings hold practical implications for family counselors and organizational policymakers.

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Introduction

A fast-paced work culture has presented dual-earner couples with numerous challenges, including time pressure and job stress. Time pressure, as a sense of pressure to do more work in less time, can deplete an individual's psychological resources and intrude into marital relationships (Guo & Wang, 2025). In contrast, work-related spousal support seeking, as an interpersonal coping strategy, can help reduce the negative effects of job pressures and increase marital satisfaction (Wang & Yu, 2024). According to the spillover-crossover theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018), job stress can act as a mechanism that transfers negative workplace experiences to family life. Moreover, occupational depression has been reported as one of the important consequences of time pressure and job stress, with a prevalence of 14.2% in the employed population (Sussell et al., 2025). The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between time pressure and work-related spousal support seeking with relationship satisfaction and occupational depression, considering the mediating role of job stress in dual-earner couples. The main hypotheses of the study included the existence of a significant relationship between the aforementioned variables and the mediating role of job stress.

Method

The present study was applied in terms of purpose and descriptive survey in terms of design. Statistical population consisted of dual-earner couples in Isfahan, where at least one spouse was employed at Isfahan Steel Company in autumn 2024 and the other spouse was also a full-time employee. From 1,200 eligible couples, 285 couples were selected as the sample using systematic sampling. The sample size was determined based on a ratio of 12 participants per each of the 24 questionnaire items, appropriate for structural equation modeling. Data collection tools included Time Pressure (Semmer et al., 1999), Work-Related Spousal Support Seeking (King et al., 1995), Relationship Satisfaction (Norton, 1983), Job Stress (Hellriegel & Slocum, 1996), and occupational Depression (Bianchi & Schonfeld, 2020). Data analysis was performed using structural equation modeling in AMOS (version 24) and bootstrap testing (with 5000 subsamples).

Findings

Descriptive findings showed that the means of time pressure (21.45±4.23) and job stress (34.58±6.14) were higher than the average level. Structural equation modeling results (Table 2) showed that time pressure had a direct and significant effect on increasing job stress (β=0.36, p>0.05) and decreasing couples' relationship satisfaction (β=-0.70, p>0.01). Spousal support-seeking behavior significantly reduced job stress (β=-0.38, p>0.01) and increased couples' relationship satisfaction (β=0.42, p>0.01). The direct effect of job stress on couple relationship satisfaction (β=-0.19) was not statistically significant (p<0.05). Regarding job depression, time pressure had a direct and significant effect on increasing job depression (β=0.87, p>0.01), which was the strongest relationship among all paths. Job stress also showed a direct and significant effect on job depression (β=0.33, p>0.01), while the direct effect of spousal support-seeking behaviour on job depression was not significant (β=-0.15, P <0.05).

Table 1. *Direct effects and path coefficients of research model variables*

Path	Path coefficient (β)	T-value	Results
Time pressure → occupational stress	.36	2.31	Sig. (p<0.05)
Time pressure→ spousal relationship satisfaction	-.70	8.80	Sig. (p<0.01)
Spousal support-seeking→ occupational stress	-.38	2.82	Sig. (p<0.01)
Spousal support-seeking→ spousal relationship satisfaction	.42	6.03	Sig. (p<0.01)
Occupational stress → spousal relationship satisfaction	-.19	1.18	Insig. (p>0.05)
Time pressure→ occupational depression	.87	8.12	Sig.(p<0.01)
Spousal support-seeking → occupational depression	-.15	1.04	Insig. (p>0.05)
Occupational stress → occupational depression	.33	3.06	Sig. (p<0.01)

The model fit indices indicated excellent fit (CMIN/DF= 2.15, RMSEA= 0.05, CFI=0.96). The bootstrap test results (Table 2) showed that the mediating role of job stress in the relationship between time pressure and couple satisfaction (β = -0.068, confidence interval including zero) and also between spousal support seeking and couple satisfaction (β = -0.041, confidence interval including zero) was rejected. However, the mediating role of job stress in the relationship between time pressure and occupational depression (β = 0.119, confidence interval [0.213, 0.042]) and also between spousal support seeking and occupational depression (β = -0.126, confidence interval [0.039, 0.242]) was confirmed.

Table 2. *Bootstrap test results for the mediating role of job stress*

Path	Indirect effect	Bootstrap value	Error	t value	Confidence interval	Result
Time pressure → job stress →spousal relationship satisfaction	-.068	-.068	.038	1.79	[.003, -144]	Rejected
Spousal support-seeking → job stress → spousal relationship satisfaction	-.041	-.041	.026	1.58	[.009, -.101]	Rejected
Time pressure → job stress →occupational depression	-119	-119	.042	2.83	[.042, .231]	Supported
Spousal support-seeking → job stress → occupational depression	-.126	-.126	.051	2.47	[-.039, -.242]	Supported

Conclusion

In line with the spillover-crossover theory and previous studies (Shockley et al., 2025; Tement et al., 2023), time pressure had a direct and negative effect on couples' satisfaction and a direct and positive effect on occupational depression. Spousal support-seeking, as an effective coping strategy (Golmohammadian & Salimi, 2023), reduced job stress and increased couple satisfaction. The lack of significant direct relationship between job stress and couples' satisfaction can be explained by theories, such as domain differentiation theory, the existence of strong moderators (e.g., spousal support-seeking and problem-focused coping strategies), and the difference between individual and relational outcomes. The supported mediating role of job stress in the pathways leading to occupational depression is consistent with the spillover-crossover model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018) and the learned helplessness theory (Seligman, 1975). The implications of the study include training couples on effective spousal support, holding time management and mindfulness workshops, implementing organizational policies to reduce time pressure (flexible shifts, limited teleworking), and developing work-family balance guidelines at the macro level.

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Conflict of interest

This article is derived from a master's thesis in Psychology, and there is no conflict of interest in conducting the study.

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