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# The Moderator Effect of Role Salience in the Relationship Between Working Time Outside Office Hours and Work-Life Balance of Women Professionals

## Nitelikli Kadın Çalışanların Mesai Saatleri Dışındaki Çalışma Süreleri ile İş-Yaşam Dengeleri Arasındaki İlişkide Rol Öneminin Düzenleyici Etkisi

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**Abstract**

Preserving the balance between work and non-work life domains for employees has become more challenging in today's competitive work life. Especially for female employees who take more life role responsibilities compared to men, it is argued that the time allocated to work outside work hours may cause difficulties in establishing work-life balance. However, we assumed that besides the working time outside work hours, individual preferences may have an indirect effect on the work-life balance. In this regard, this study examined the moderator effect of the role salience, as an individual preference, in the relationship between working time outside work hours and the perception of work-life balance (WLB) with a sample of 145 female professionals. Perception of WLB, role salience (work salience and non-work salience) and the time allocated to work and non-work activities were evaluated using self-report scales. Findings showed that increased working time outside work hours affected negatively only the WLB of women whose work salience was low. Results also demonstrated that increased working time outside work hours only negatively affected the WLB of women whose non-work salience was high. Additionally, there was a significant positive relationship between the time allocated to non-work activities and WLB. Overall, this research showed that working time outside work hours did not have negative effects on the WLB of women whose work roles were more salient, or non-work roles were less salient. We recommend that organizations should consider the role salience of their professional women employees, which is an individual preference, among the factors affecting their WLB and adapt their work conditions according to their needs.

**Öz**

Günümüzün rekabetçi iş dünyasında, çalışanlar için iş ve iş dışı yaşam alanları arasındaki dengeyi korumak daha da zorlayıcı hale gelmiştir. Özellikle, erkeklere oranla daha fazla yaşam rolü sorumluluğu alan kadın çalışanlar için çalışma saati dışında işe ayrılan zamanın iş ve yaşam dengesini kurmalarında zorluklara neden olabileceği düşünülmektedir. Ancak, çalışma saati dışında iş faaliyetlerine ayrılan zamanın yanı sıra bireysel tercihlerin de iş ve yaşam dengesi üzerinde dolaylı etkilerinin olabileceği öngörülmektedir. Bu bağlamda mevcut çalışmada, resmi çalışma saatleri dışında çalışma süresi ile iş-yaşam dengesi algısı arasındaki ilişkide bireysel bir tercih olarak rol belirginliğinin düzenleyici etkisi 145 nitelikli kadın çalışanlardan oluşan bir örneklem üzerinde incelenmiştir. İş-yaşam dengesi algısı, rol belirginliği (iş rolü belirginliği ve iş dışı rol belirginliği), çalışma saatleri dışında iş aktivitelerine ayrılan sürelere ilişkin veriler öz bildirim ölçekleri aracılığıyla değerlendirilmiştir. Bulgular mesai saatleri dışındaki çalışma süresinin artmasının yalnızca iş rolü belirginliği düşük olan kadınların iş-yaşam dengesi algılarını olumsuz etkilediğini göstermiştir. Sonuçlar ayrıca, mesai saatleri dışındaki çalışma süresinin artmasının

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yalnızca iş dışı rol belirginliği yüksek olan kadınların iş-yaşam dengesini olumsuz etkilediğini de ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca, iş dışı aktivitelere ayrılan zaman ile iş yaşam dengesi arasında anlamlı ve pozitif bir ilişki bulunmuştur. Genel olarak, bu araştırma mesai saatleri dışındaki çalışma süresinin, iş rolü belirginliği yüksek olan ya da iş dışı rol belirginliği düşük olan kadınların iş-yaşam dengesi üzerinde olumsuz bir etkisi olmadığını ortaya koymuştur. Kurumların nitelikli kadın çalışanlarının iş-yaşam dengesi algılarını belirleyen faktörler arasında bireysel tercihlerinden biri olarak görülebilecek iş veya iş dışı rol belirginliğini dikkate almaları ve çalışma koşullarını onların ihtiyaçlarına göre uyarlamaları önerilmektedir.

# The Moderator Effect of Role Salience in the Relationship Between Working Time Outside Office Hours and Work-Life Balance of Women Professionals

Protecting the border between work and non-work life domains for employees has become more challenging in today's competitive work life. One of the most important reasons for this is the emergence of the internet and smartphones along with the development of technological tools, which allow employers to reach their employees at any time (Adisa & Gbadamosi, 2021; Doble & Supriya, 2010). In other words, with these advancements, working hours have extended beyond the formal working hours of organizations. As a result, difficulties have arisen for professionals in balancing their work and non-work life domains.

The origin of "work and life balance" goes back to work-life conflict studies that examine the relationship between "work" and "family." First, Joplin et al. (2003) suggested that it was not appropriate to use the word "conflict" for the relationship between these two domains. Thus, the term "balance" which has a more positive connotation, has been preferred by the literature. The term "work-life balance," which was also preferred in the present research, has often been used interchangeably in the literature with the terms "work and family life balance" or "work and non-work-life balance" (e.g., Gunasundari & Muthumani, 2013; Hill et al., 2001; Issimova, 2019). Work-life balance has been defined in various ways. For some authors, it refers to the perception of individuals about how they fulfill the demands of the roles they undertake in work and non-work domains and their satisfaction with the effort and the length of time they spare for these demands (Aycan et al., 2007; Greenhaus et al., 2003; Kirchmeyer, 2000). Kalliath and Brough (2008, p.326) suggested another definition that was also adopted by the present research: "Work–life balance is the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities."

Although work-life balance is an important issue for both women and men, this study focused only on women professionals. This preference is based on the view that the extension of work activities beyond the workplace might have harder effects on women, especially in societies like Türkiye where gender roles are strictly separated (Aycan & Eskin, 2005), and women are expected to handle multiple family-centered roles (e.g., daughter, wife or mother) as well as work life roles. This situation is also defended by the gender role theory emphasizing that family and work roles are traditionally gender-specific, and it is asserted that women tend to value family-oriented roles, while men are more inclined to value work-related roles (Gutek et al., 1991). Empirical evidence supporting this view also indicates that work plays a more significant role in shaping men's gender identities, while family is more central to women's gender identities (Eleje & Wale-Oshinowo, 2017; Epie, 2011; Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Mauno & Kinnunen, 2000; Ogunbor, 2021; Parasuraman et al., 1992). However, despite these results, it is also well known that more and more women have taken part in modern work life, and compared to the past, the number of women taking up professional positions has been increasing both worldwide (Pew Research Center, 2024) and in Turkish society (Turkish Statistical

Institute-TUİK, 2024) where the present research was conducted. Based on these findings, it was decided to conduct the current research on professional female employees.

In the literature, it was stated that the prolongation of working hours would have a negative effect on the work-life balance of women who played major roles in the business world (Hsu et al., 2019). In the literature, it is generally shown that there is a positive relationship between extended working hours and work-family conflict (e.g., Barnett, 1998; Byron, 2005; Eby et al., 2005; Ganster & Bates, 2003). In one study, it was found that work-family conflict had a mediating effect on the relationship between time spent at work and psychological distress (Major et al., 2002). Another study reported that work and home demands had a negative impact on the perception of work-life balance through increasing work-family conflict (Sheikh et al., 2018). As a result of the disruption of work-life balance or conflict between the two areas, psychological outcomes include depression, anxiety (Grzywacz & Bass, 2003), decreased job and life satisfaction (Haar et al., 2014; Lee, 2021), stress (Bell et al., 2012), and high blood pressure (Frone et al., 1997). In addition, as organizational outcomes, it has been observed that organizational commitment, work engagement, and job satisfaction decrease as work-life balance decreases (Harini et al., 2019). Thus, it can be concluded that work-life balance contributes to organizations as well as individuals and has an impact on increasing organizational effectiveness (Kumar & Chakraborty, 2013).

On the other hand, this study predicts that the personal value given to the roles undertaken by the individual may have an important role in the perception of work-life balance. Some studies have stated that individuals who have a satisfactory balance between work and non-work roles have increased psychological health and well-being (Fisher, 2010; Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). The concept of "role salience" that we encounter in this context is defined as the level of importance/value that depends on the performance in a certain role area or the level of commitment of personal time and energy resources in fulfilling a certain role (Amatea et al., 1986). Hammer et al. (2005) suggested that high levels of importance given to one role may affect participation in another role. Major et al. (2002) found that the time spent on work had a mediating effect on the relationship between the importance of career identity salience and work-family conflict. Another study showed the moderating effect of work salience on the relationship between daily detachment from home or work and performance (Sanz-Vergel et al., 2011). Based on these findings, we anticipated that role salience may have indirect effects on the perception of work-life balance. In most of the studies in this field, roles assumed due to family and work expectations were discussed as two specific areas of role salience, and these areas were examined as two poles (Amatea et al., 1986). In this study, it was decided to use the expression "non-work salience" opposite the work salience sub-dimension, instead of the family salience. Mainly because the non-work salience sub-dimension is intended to express not only family roles but also all roles assumed outside of work (e.g., partner, friend, association president, etc.). In this regard, this study aims at examining what roles work salience and non-work salience would play in the relationship between working time outside work hours and work-life balance.

This research proposes that if women place a high value on the roles they undertake in their work life or a low value on the roles they undertake in their non-work life, the extra time they spend on work may not negatively affect their perception of work-life balance. In the literature, there are many work-life balance or work-family conflict studies examining the length of work hours (e.g., Adkins & Premeaux 2012; Hsu et al., 2019; McNamara et al., 2013; White et al., 2003). However, rather than evaluating the length of working hours, this study focused on the time that employees devoted to work activities outside work hours. In the work-life balance literature, no study has investigated the indirect effect of role salience, and the effects of time spent on work outside of working hours. Consequently, this study aims to fill the gap in the field by providing a new perspective on the explanation of the work-life balance of professional women.

## Work-Life Balance and Working Time Outside Work Hours

Thanks to the developing age of technology, work is no longer just performed in the workplace. Especially in recent years, the boundaries between employees' work and non-work lives have become blurred (Adisa & Gbadamosi, 2021). For instance, an employee may often come home feeling obligated to review a report after dinner, reply to a phone call about a work matter, or attend an online training organized by the company. A study found that high expectations for after-hours availability as perceived by employees, frequent use of work-related smartphones, and limited control over boundaries were associated with poor psychological detachment, which refers to an individual's physical and psychological disconnection from work during leisure time (Mellner, 2016). The prolongation of the time spent on such work-related activities has usually been examined in the literature under the terms of "working hours" (full/part-time, weekly working hours, etc.) or "flexible time practices" (e.g., Adkins & Premeaux 2012; McNamara et al., 2013) and found to be one of the main factors affecting life balance negatively. An individual's perceived work-life balance might be adversely affected by these work-related activities performed outside work hours as they leave limited time or energy for non-work activities. Supporting this view, Albertsen et al. (2008) found that larger numbers of work hours were strongly associated with lower work-life balance, with this relationship being notably stronger for women. It was reported in a more recent study that extended working hours were associated with work-life imbalance (Hsu et al., 2019). Therefore, the relationship between extra working hours and work-life balance is well established, and it could be expected for the present study that working time outside work hours would have a negative relationship with the work-life balance of professional women.

In addition to the working time outside work hours, the time allocated to non-work activities (e.g., spending time with family or friends, housework, care responsibilities, etc.) might have an undeniable effect on the perception of work-life balance. Previous studies have typically assessed the non-work domain through the family domain, with one study finding that family demands primarily affect employees balancing both work and family responsibilities, often hindering their ability to achieve the desired level of work-life balance (Chan et al., 2017). As emphasized before, it is possible for female employees to perceive their work-life balance negatively because of insufficient time left for non-work activities. Arslan (2013) reported that the conflict between work and family domains is higher for women than men, and their efforts to fulfill their traditional roles at home and their employee roles in modern business life were challenging. Accordingly, it can be said that the value given to the family by the Turkish society might increase the demands from women in non-work roles. Therefore, for working women, it might be important to fulfill their responsibilities both in the domains of work and non-work equally. In this case, women need to manage their time well for non-work activities. In this context, studies in the literature have shown that the balance between domains has positive effects on the job satisfaction (e.g., Haar et al., 2014), life satisfaction (e.g., Umer & Zia-ur-Rehman, 2013), family satisfaction (e.g., Chitra Devi & Sheela Rani, 2012) and well-being (e.g., Wilkinson, 2013) of women. Prakash (2018) asked a sample of Indian employees about which aspects of life, along with work, they believed contributed to a more balanced life perception. The researcher found that family was the most significant non-work domain contributing to a more balanced life, followed by friends, personal care, hobbies, leisure activities, community activities and volunteering work. Kelliher et al. (2019) argued that the term "life" was usually used to refer to family responsibilities and caring activities; in fact, in today's conditions, life encompasses various things including hobbies, education, exercise and religious activities. The number of studies emphasizing the significance of organizational support for leisure activities (e.g., Cheng, et al., 2021) or leisure benefit systems on the work-life balance or well-being of employees has been increasing (e.g., Lin et al., 2013). In spite of the attention paid to the non-work domain by researchers, there is currently not much research investigating the amount of time spent on non-work domain activities and

work-life balance. In this respect, only a study conducted by O'Driscoll et al. (1992) found that there was no conflict between the roles in the work and non-work domains because of the increase in the time that individuals spent on non-work activities. In line with these results, it is possible to expect that the increased time women employees spend on non-work activities such as exercise and sports, personal care, personal development, spending time with friends and family, housework and culture/art/entertainment activities may positively affect their perceptions of work-life balance. Based on this theoretical framework, the first hypothesis of the study is as follows:

**H1.** There is a positive relationship between the time allocated to non-work activities outside work hours and work-life balance.

## Moderating Role of Role Salience Between Working Time Outside Work Hours and Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance may not be only about allocating time. Crooker et al. (2002) presented a theoretical framework for the effects of the complex and dynamic structure of life on work-life balance. In this context, the accessibility and abundance of resources around the individual, the diversity of personality traits and personal values might play important roles in the perception of work-life balance. In connection with these views, it was shown in the literature that personal resource management (e.g., Greenblatt, 2002), personality traits (e.g., Kundnani & Mehta, 2014), cultural values, job characteristics, and support systems (e.g., Sirgy & Lee, 2018) are associated with the perception of work-life balance. Therefore, the main emphasis of work-life balance research has shifted its attention from the length of working hours to how one perceives this situation. In line with the views suggested above, it is predicted that the perception of work-life balance may also be influenced by how individuals perceive the situation as well as the amount of time they allocate to different life domains. One of the important factors in this perception may be the salience that the person attaches to their work and non-work roles. Role is defined as behaviors that must be exhibited in that position and social status of the individual depending on the expectations of others (Tevrüz, 1989). Participation in various social roles and having different social identities adds purpose and meaning to individuals' lives (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

One important concept in relation to roles is "role salience." "Role salience" has been described as the importance and value given to participation in roles that are central to people's lives and identities (Greer & Egan, 2012). In the present study, we conceptualized role salience as consisting of two dimensions: The "importance or priority given to work roles" and the "importance or priority given to non-work roles". Unlike previous studies, Greenhaus and Allen (2011) defined work-life balance by looking at the degree of harmony between the individual's satisfaction and effectiveness in their work and family roles, in the order in which the individual prioritizes life roles over a given period of time. Supporting this view, Cinamon and Rich (2002) also argued that the domains would not necessarily conflict with each other due to the demands of the work and family, and that conflict might arise depending on the domain to which the individual attaches great importance.

In literature, there are only a few studies examining the relationships between work and family demands and role salience. One of these researchers, Noor (2004), examined the moderator and direct effects of family and work salience on working women with children in the context of work-family conflict, well-being and job satisfaction. While no significant findings related to family salience were found in that research, it was observed that work salience had a direct positive effect on job satisfaction and family-work conflict. Moreover, work salience had a moderating role in the relationship between work-family conflict and well-being, with higher levels of work-family conflict being linked to more distress symptoms only for women

who reported high work salience. In a study conducted on dual career workers, work role salience was only associated with work satisfaction, whereas family role salience was found to be related to work-family conflict, work satisfaction, and family satisfaction (Bhowon, 2013). In another study conducted with dual-career couples, for female participants with low levels of work role salience, work role demands (e.g., socializing for work purposes) negatively affected work family conflict. This result was attributed to the intertwined nature of work and family life in China. Additionally, for women, work role salience affected work family conflict (Chang et al., 2014).

Work salience should be distinguished from work centrality. Work centrality refers to the belief that work plays a significant role in life. It is the value people attach to work in general rather than the value attached specifically to one's current job. Therefore, work centrality is learned through the socialization process. Family values, religion or culture might be important to determine this belief. On the other hand, the term work salience refers to one's involvement with his/her present job (Paullay et al., 1994). One of the differences between the two concepts is that regarding work centrality, people could still place great importance on work even when they do not like their jobs. On the other hand, work salience refers to the perceptions of people in relation to their job-related experiences. In a study focusing on perceived working hours, it was observed that those with high work centrality were willing to devote more time to work (Kim, 2014). More recently, Shi et al. (2021) focused on work-family centrality in their research. Work-family centrality refers to the value attached to the work role compared to the family role. However, so far, neither the moderation role of work centrality nor work family centrality has been investigated in the relationship between working outside work hours and work-life balance. Based on the views expressed previously, it can be expected that the work-life balance of employees with low work role salience or high non-work salience would be more negatively affected by the excessive working time outside work hours. In other words, individuals who do not prioritize work roles or who prioritize non-work roles may experience a work-life imbalance due to the energy and time they dedicate to work outside regular hours.

Based on these views, it is possible to argue that even if the work were extended beyond the working hours, the work-life balance perceptions of women with a high level of work role importance (high work salience) or low non-work salience would be less likely to be impaired. Thus, the two interconnected hypotheses of this research (Hypotheses 2 and 3) are presented as follows:

*H2.* On the relationship between working time outside work hours and the perception of work-life balance, participants with a higher level of work salience will have a less negative impact on the perception of work-life balance than those with a lower level of work salience.

*H3.* On the relationship between working time outside work hours and the perception of work-life balance, participants with a lower level of non-work salience will have a less negative impact on the perception of work-life balance than those with a higher level of non-work salience.

**Figure 1**
*The Research Model*
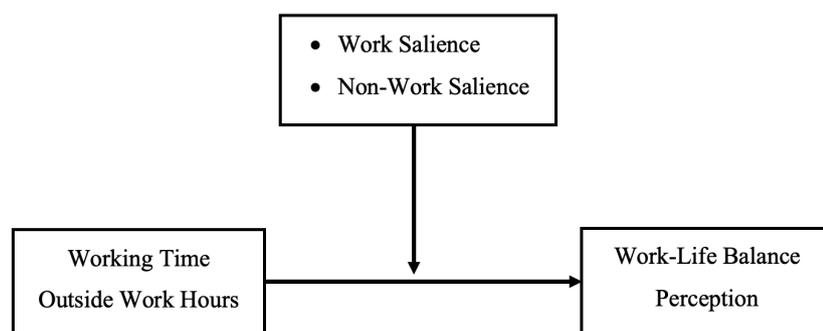
# Method

## Participants

This research was conducted with 145 professional and qualified female employees from various work organizations. The participants had to meet the following criteria to be included in the sample of the study: These are: having a bachelor's and/or a postgraduate degree, currently working in a field in which she was educated (e.g., being employed as doctor, nurse, lawyer) and/or working in the private sector and having one of the following titles such as "expert," "manager," "executive/president," "employer," or "managing partner" in her work place. Therefore, the sample of this research consisted of white-collar female employees working actively in the private sector, including doctors and nurses working in the public sector and lawyers working in private law offices. All these participants were required to do their jobs mainly in their workplaces. The reason for including these employees in the study is that their demanding job conditions might create difficulties for them to maintain their work-life balance. To conclude, of the participants, 75 (51.7%) were white-collar employees, 30 were nurses (20.7%), 26 were doctors (17.9%), and 14 were lawyers (9.7%).

The mean age of the participants was 31.25 ($SD$ = 6.67). Sixty-two (42.8%) of the participants were married and 83 (57.2%) were single. In terms of educational background, 111 (76.6%) participants had a bachelor's degree, 30 (20.7%) participants had a master's degree, and four participants had a PhD degree (2.8%).

The participants had been working for their jobs for an average of 7.2 years ($SD$ = 6.5) and had been working at their organization for an average of 4.9 years ($SD$ = 5.4). As reported by the participants, the majority had been working five days a week ($SD$ =.54) and working 9.38 hours daily ($SD$ = 1.8) on average. Based on these data, the average of the total weekly working hours of the participants was calculated as 46.58 hours ($SD$ = 8.4).

## Measures

### Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance perception was measured using items developed by Vatansever (2008). Vatansever (2008) found the scale's internal consistency coefficient to be. 79. In the current study, some minor adjustments in relation to the statement of the items were made. For example, instead of the term "private life", the term "non-work life" was preferred in this study. In addition to these minor changes, one item was removed because it contained a similar expression, and three more items were added to the scale, resulting in six items. Therefore, in its final form, two item examples from the scale are as follows: "I feel that there is a balance between my work and non-work life" and "I am satisfied with the time and quality I devote to activities I want to do in my non-work life."

A 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (5) was used to evaluate the responses. Higher scores indicate a higher level of work-life balance perception. Item analysis showed that all item-total correlation values were positive and above .20. According to the exploratory factor analysis, the scale items were loaded on a single factor. In addition, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was found to be .88.

### Time Allocated to Work and Non-Work Activities Outside Work Hours

Based on the work of O'Driscoll et al. (1992) and Houston et al. (2005) and a scale used by Vatansever (2008), a list of work and non-work activities that might be carried out outside work hours were determined. For non-work activities, seven items including "exercise and sports," "personal care," "personal development," "spending time with friends," "housework," "culture/arts/entertainment," and "spending time with

the family" were used. Another seven items were also determined for work activities: these items included "business trips/business lunches/business meetings outside working hours," "workplace trainings after working hours," "phone calls related to work," "texting about work matters," "voluntary work carried out in relation to work," "work brought home," and "having to spend time with people from work." In this regard, working time outside work hours was measured by the assessment of the time allocated to work activities outside work hours.

To evaluate the time allocated to work and non-work activities outside work hours, the participants were asked about how much time on average they spent weekly on these activities, considering the past year. Responses were obtained using the following 7-point scale: "Never" (1), "30 min-1 hour" (2), "2-3 hours" (3), "4-5 hours" (4), "6-7 hours" (5), "8 –9 hours" (6), "10 hours" (7). The scale produces two subscores: one for the work activities and one for the non-work activities. For the work activities subscale, all item total correlation coefficients were found to be above. 20 and positive. For the non-work activity subscale, the item "exercise and sports", which had a value below .20, was removed from the scale. Because of an exploratory factor analysis subjected to the overall scale, three items were further removed from the work activity subscale. These items include "business trips/business lunches/business meetings outside working hours," "workplace trainings after working hours," and "having to spend time with people from work." Finally, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated and found to be .64 for the six-item non-work activity subscale and .72 for the remaining four-item work activity subscale.

### Role Salience

To measure role salience, the Work Involvement Scale developed by Kanungo (1982) was used. The 11-item Work Involvement Scale, which was adapted into Turkish by Aycan and Balcı (2001), was previously used by Bıçaksız (2009) in his doctoral thesis. In his study, Bıçaksız (2009) evaluated work salience with six items ($α$ = .64). In this study, work salience was also measured using these items. To measure non-work salience, the same items of the work salience measure were used, replacing the word "work" with "non-work." Thus, the two-dimensional role salience scale, consisting of a total of 12 statements, was evaluated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from "1" (Strongly Disagree) to "5" (Strongly Agree). Higher scores indicated higher role salience in the relevant subdimension. The sample items that made up the work salience subscale were: "The most important things that happen in life involve work" and "Work is something people should get involved in most of the time." Examples of non-work salience subscales were: "The most important things that happen in life involve non-work life," and "Life outside work is something people should get involved in most of the time."

For both subscales, item analyses were conducted. For both subscales, the items "Work/Life outside of work should be only a small part of human life" were removed as their item total correlation coefficients were lower than .20. With the remaining items, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the work salience and non-work salience subscales were determined as .73 and .69, respectively.

## Procedure

For the purpose of the study, life balance perception, the time allocated to work and non-work activities outside work hours, and the salience of roles (work salience, non-work salience) were measured by the self-report scales explained above. Demographic information was also obtained from preliminary survey questions.

All data were collected before the start of the 2020 pandemic. Ethical approval of the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University. The purpose of the study was explained to all participants face to face, and the study was conducted on a voluntary basis with volunteers. The questionnaire, which

included all scales, the demographic information form and the informed consent form, was compiled and distributed to all participants in person. These participants completed the form in their office or in the common break rooms and delivered it by hand.

## Data Analysis

To test the hypotheses of the research, first correlation analysis and then to test the moderating roles, hierarchical regression analyses were performed. In line with *H2* and *H3*, hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to test moderation (Aiken & West, 1991). Before analyses, linearity, which are the criteria of standard regression analysis, and the normal distribution between the predictor and the predicted variables were examined. For the linear regression analysis, it was assumed that this distribution showed a normal distribution, since the number of our cases was above 100 (Blalock, 1979; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Multicollinearity violation was evaluated with the tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF), and the tolerance values between 0.200-1.00 and the VIF values between 1.00-10.00 were accepted as evidence of the absence of multicollinearity (Field & Miles, 2010).

Before the regression analysis, the scores of the predictor and moderator variables were finally converted to standard Z scores. In addition, the interaction variables were calculated by multiplying the standardized values of the predictive and moderator variables. As Louis (2009, p. 1) asserted, "In moderation (to get a significant interaction), the IVs need not be correlated with each other or with the DV." The author further suggested that moderation is the differentiation of the link between the independent variable and the dependent variable for high and low levels of the moderator. Dawson (2014, p. 5) also stated that "the interaction term is at the heart of testing moderation. If (and only if) this term is significant… we say that Z is a statistically significant moderator of the linear relationship between X and Y". Moreover, simple slope analyses were conducted to show the direction of the moderation.

In addition, item analyses were carried out for all scales and exploratory factor analyses were conducted with the Time Allocated to Work and Non-Work Activities Outside Work Hours and the Life Balance Scales. Based on these analyses, some modifications were made. As the number of cases exceeded 100, it was assumed that the data were normally distributed (Blalock, 1979; Tabachnick & Fidel, 2013). To test for multicollinearity, the tolerance and variance inflation factors were used. After the general criterion tests, the hypotheses were tested. All data were analyzed using the SPSS 22.0 package program.

## Results

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated among all variables examined in the study. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Coefficient Values of Among Study Variables*

|  | *Min.* | *Max.* | *M* | *SD* | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Work-Life Balance Perception | 6 | 30 | 16.53 | 5.57 | *(.88)* | .37* | -.10 | .16 | .10 |
| 2. Time Allocated to Non-work Activities | 6 | 36 | 9.28 | 3.75 |  | *(.64)* | .14 | .16 | .10 |
| 3. Working Time Outside Work Hours | 4 | 28 | 19.58 | 5.27 |  |  | *(.72)* | .12 | .04 |
| 4. Work Salience | 6 | 36 | 11.11 | 3.47 |  |  |  | *(.73)* | -.04 |
| 5. Non-work Salience | 5 | 34 | 16.05 | 4.06 |  |  |  |  | *(.69)* |

*Note. p* < .001. The values reported in parentheses are Cronbach's alpha coefficients.

As can be seen in Table 1, no significant relationship was found between the working time outside work hours and work-life balance. On the other hand, there was a moderately positive significant relationship

between the time allocated to non-work activities and work-life balance. This positive significant relationship supports *H1*. In addition, no statistically significant relationship was found among the role salience variables and other variables of the study.

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to test *H2* and *H3*. As shown in Table 1, no significant relationship was found between the independent variable (time allocated to work activities outside of work hours) and the dependent variable (work-life balance). Tolerance and VIF values showed that there was no multicollinearity between the working time outside work hours and work salience and non-work salience (Tolerance =.984, VIF = 1.017; Tolerance =.998, VIF = 1.002).

In the hierarchical regression analysis conducted for *H2*, the working time outside work hours was entered as the predictor variable in the first step, the work salience as the moderator variable in the second step, and the interaction variable in the third step. Findings related to the relevant regression analysis are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis Results on the Moderating Effect of Work Salience on the Relationship between the Working Time Outside Work Hours and Perception of Work-Life Balance*

| | $\Delta R^2$ | *B* | *β* | *SD* | *t* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The working time outside work hours | .003 | -.587 | -.105 | .460 | −1.277 | .204 |
| Work salience | .028 | .854 | .153 | .462 | 1.848 | .067 |
| The working time outside work hours X Work salience | .048 | .767 | .166 | .381 | 2.014 | .046 |

*Note.* The regression coefficients in the table were taken from step 3 (Coefficients table).

The results of the analysis showed that the working time outside work hours explained 0.3% of the change in the perception of work-life balance, but this effect was not at a significant level (*p* > .05). In addition, the findings revealed that work salience explained 2.8% of the change in this model, but this contribution was not significant (*p* >.05) either. The interaction effect, which was analyzed in the third step, was found to explain 4.8% of the change in the perception of work-life balance, and this contribution was found to be marginally significant (*p* < .05). Thus, based on the present findings, *H2* was supported. To examine the direction of the moderating effect, a slope analysis was performed, and the graph is presented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*The Interaction Between Working Time Outside Work Hours and Work Salience on Perception of Work-Life Balance*
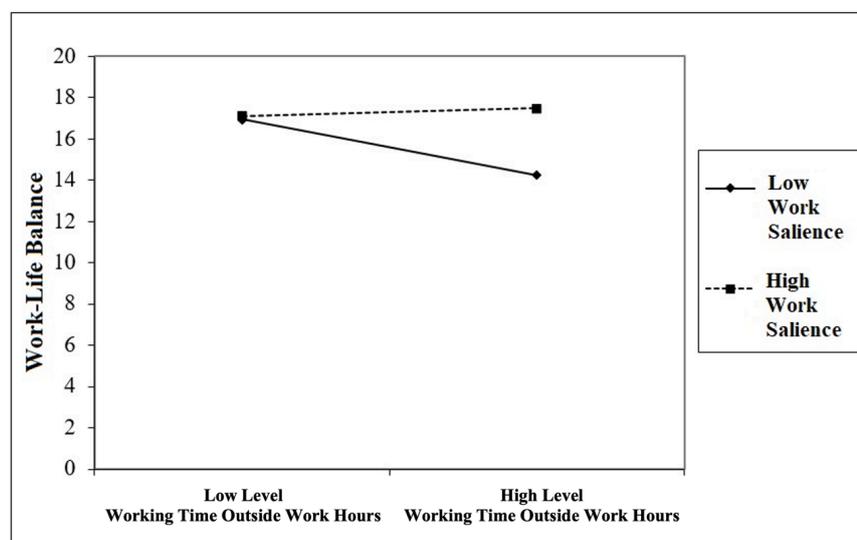
According to Figure 2, the effects of working time outside work hours on the perception of work-life balance differed at different levels of work salience. Compared to those who saw their work roles as less important, participants with high work salience perceived their work-life balance less negatively even under the conditions of longer hours spent on work activities outside of working hours. However, in cases where work roles were of low salience, the perceived work-life balance decreased significantly with the increase in the working time outside work hours (simple slope = −1.354, *t* = −2.386, *p* = .018). Although the group with a high level of work salience had a slightly increased level of perceived work-life balance under the increased length of time allocated to work activities, this effect was not found to be statistically significant (simple slope = 0.180, *t* = 0.285, *p* = .776). In addition, when the working time outside work hours was high, those with low work salience had lower perceptions of work-life balance. On the other hand, when the working time outside work hours was low, the level of work salience decreased its determinant on the perception of work-life balance. These results showed that *H2* was supported.

In order to test *H3*, another hierarchical regression analysis was repeated by entering the working time outside work hours as the predictor variable in the first step, non-work salience as the moderator variable in the second step and the multiplication of the non-work salience with the working time outside work hours as the interaction variable in the third step. The relevant analysis results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis Results on the Moderating Effect of Non-Work Salience on the Relationship between Working Time Outside Work Hours and Perception of Work-Life Balance*

|  | ΔR² | B | β | SD | T | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The working time outside work hours | .010 | -.356 | -.064 | .463 | -.768 | .444 |
| Non-work salience | .009 | .485 | .087 | .457 | 1.061 | .290 |
| The working time outside work hours X Non-work salience | .037 | -.949 | -.196 | .403 | −2.357 | .020 |

*Note.* The regression coefficients in the table were taken from step 3 (Coefficients table).

According to these findings, it was observed that our predictor variable did not contribute significantly to the model with an explanatory level of 0.3% as in the first analysis (*p* > .05). Similarly, it was found that the non-work salience explained 0.6% of the change in the perception of work-life balance and did not contribute significantly to the model (*p* > .05). It was found that the interaction effect variable added in the last step explained 3.7% of the change in the perception of work-life balance, and this contribution was significant (*p* < .05). In this analysis, in addition to the significant contribution of the interaction to the model, the impact power was also significant. In line with the findings of the moderator analysis, it was determined that the non-work salience had a moderating role on the relationship between the working time outside work hours and work-life balance. Therefore, *H3* was supported. In order to determine the direction of this effect, a slope analysis was carried out and the graphic is demonstrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

*The Interaction of Working Time Outside Work Hours and Non-Work Salience on Perception of Work-Life Balance*
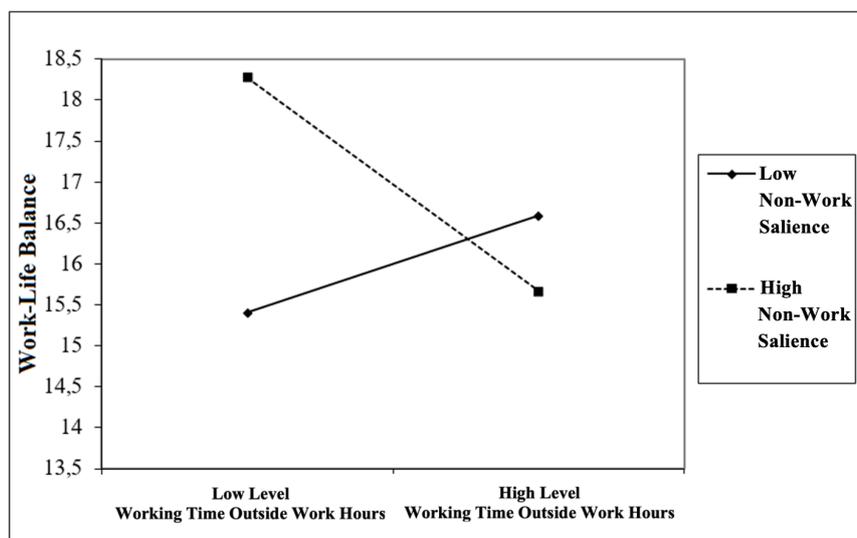


As seen in Figure 3, the effect of working time outside work hours on the perception of work-life balance differed at different levels of non-work salience. It was seen that those with a high level of non-work salience perceived their work-life balance at a much more negative level than those with low non-work salience when the working time outside work hours was higher. The slope indicated a significant decrease in the level of work-life balance perceived by those who had a high level of non-work salience (simple slope = −1.305, *t* = −2.325, *p* = .021). However, the slope showing the change in the level of work-life balance perceived by those who had a low-level non-work salience with the increase in the working time outside work hours was not statistically significant (simple slope = 0.593, *t* = 0.895, *p* = .372). In addition, when the working time outside work hours was low, high non-work salience led to an increase in the perception of work-life balance, while the low non-work salience led to a decrease in the perception of work-life balance. However, in cases where the working time outside work hours was high, the perception of work-life balance between the low and high levels of non-work salience came close to each other and the effect of the non-work salience in determining the perception of work-life balance decreased. This finding supports *H3*.

## Discussion

The current study examined the moderator role salience in the relationship between the working time outside work hours and the perception of work-life balance. As a result of the analyses, it was observed that there was an insignificant relationship between working outside of work hours and work-life balance, and that work salience and non-work salience moderated this relationship, consistent with *H2* and *H3*. Accordingly, while the effect of the time allocated on work activities outside of work hours on work-life balance was negative and significant in those with low work salience and high non-work salience, this relationship was found to be insignificant in those with high work salience and low non-work salience. In addition, there was a positive relationship between the time allocated to non-work activities and the perception of work-life balance.

In relation to the relationship between working outside of work hours and work-life balance, Pichler (2009) reported that women could not fulfill the requirements of their roles and might have difficulties in maintaining work-life balance if working hours were prolonged. Some studies have shown that long working hours are associated with work-life imbalance (Fernandez Nievas & Thaver, 2015; Pichler, 2009). Brauner et al. (2019) reported that the work-life balance perception of employees in jobs with high working hours was

low. In addition, it is known that today's working women complain that they cannot spare enough time for themselves or their families due to the demands of the workplace, or that time outside of work is not enough for them and therefore they do not feel a certain balance in their lives (Topgül, 2016). However, in this study, the zero-order correlational analysis did not support the previous findings. The moderation analyses conducted later provided the explanation that work and nonwork salience would be important in this relationship.

When the findings for *H1* of the research were examined, a positive relationship was found between the time employees allocated to non-work activities and their perceptions of work-life balance. In other words, the increase in the time that the individual spares for herself outside work hours brings a more positive perception of work-life balance. In Vatansever's (2008) study, it was observed that there was a positive relationship between work-life balance and individual demands (personal development, spending time with friends, etc.). Another study conducted by Allis and O'Driscoll (2008) found that there was no relationship between the time spent on family or personal activities and family-work conflict or work-family conflict. In addition, it was seen that putting family or personal activities at the center positively affected work roles. According to the findings, *H1* was accepted. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that the findings of this study supported the results of the literature.

The results of the moderation analysis for *H2* showed that the negative relationship between the working time outside work hours and the perception of work-life balance was less strong in those with a higher level of work salience than those with a lower level of work salience. For those with higher work salience, the perceived work-life balance did not significantly differ according to the working time outside work hours. However, longer hours outside work hours were the main determinant of the work-life balance of lower level of work salience participants. The results of the moderation analysis related to *H3* also showed that those with a low level of non-work salience were affected less negatively by the longer time devoted to the work activities outside work hours. Moreover, their work-life balance was much lower than their counterparts under the condition of lower working time outside work hours. As a result, *H2* and *H3* were accepted. Although no significant direct relationship was found between the independent variable (working time outside work hours) and the dependent variable (perception of work-life balance), the moderation analysis indicated that this relationship was moderated by (low levels of) work salience and (high levels of) non-work salience. In a similar study examining the moderating role, it was presented that the relationship between the dependent and independent variables was significant at certain levels of the moderating variable but became insignificant at other levels (Ayyıldız & Arslan, 2023). In this study, as Louis (2009) mentioned regarding the moderating role, a differentiation was observed in the relationship between the dependent and independent variables across different levels of the moderating variable.

According to the results of the study, women attach different values to different roles of life and their values about these roles might be influential on how they perceive their work-life balance. In other words, if a woman perceives that work roles are important, prolonged working hours do not necessarily decrease her work-life balance. Similarly, if women do not perceive non-work roles as important and do not have much work-related activities to fill their time, their work-life balance decreases significantly than their counterparts who attach more importance to non-work roles. This result supports the compensation model proposed by Guest (2002), which suggest that a deficiency in one domain of life, in terms of demand or satisfaction, can be compensated for by engagement or fulfillment in another domain. Considering the results of the current study, it can be inferred that women who attached less importance on non-work roles might have seek to compensate for this deficiency by increasing their engagement in work-related activities. This heightened involvement in the work domain may enable them to preserve a subjective perception of work-life balance, even in the absence of fulfilling experiences in their personal or non-work spheres. In

this context, the participation of these women in work activities serves as a compensatory mechanism that helps maintain overall well-being and a sense of balance across different life domains.

According to the current findings, it was understood that the importance that female professionals attached to their work and non-work roles had an indirect effect on their perceptions of work-life balance. Although previous researchers in this field could not provide any empirical findings, they expressed the view that role salience may have indirect effects on work-life balance (Eby et al., 2005). Parasuraman et al. (1996) presented findings partially supporting the fact that work salience causes work-family conflict and family salience causes family-to-work conflict. This could be seen as the opposite to the current study's findings. This difference could be attributed to the differences in the participant characteristics. The study by Parasuraman et al. (1996) predominantly involved married women, many of whom had children, whereas the current study employed a sample including many single or childless women. Another study (Bhowon, 2013) that found a relationship between family role salience and work-family conflict partly supports our findings. Erdogan et al. (2021) also supports the current study's findings that for women, non-traditional gender roles were related to less work-family conflict. The authors suggest that setting priorities between work and family roles may decrease work–family conflict.

In future studies, it may be important to consider similar variables on samples with different demographic characteristics (e.g., married women with children) for the generalizability of the results. In addition, conducting a similar study on certain occupational groups with intense work activities or flexible working opportunities (e.g., remote working) for future studies will contribute to the literature. The current study has some limitations, and one of them is that only self-report scales were used in data collection. However, the current study focused only on female employees, considering the greater variety of roles they undertake in life compared to men. However, future researchers examining the role of role salience on mixed male and female participants will make comparisons in the literature.

Considering the study's findings, certain recommendations can be made for organizations. First, it could be important to be able to identify employees who can comply with the organization's working hours schedules. During the recruitment process, determining the level of salience that candidates attach to their work and non-work roles can provide a foresight about their expectations and the satisfaction they would receive from the organization. In addition, determining the level of role salience might help predict the employee's performance, motivation, and whether they could adapt to the work pace of the organization. In addition, organizations may offer various alternatives to their employees based on their work and non-work salience. For example, within the scope of their work-life balance policies, they can mobilize various support systems such as flexible working hours and provide autonomy to employees to plan their own schedule, such as working from home. Since flexible working practices allow employees to choose their own work area or working hours, employees might become more autonomous to be able to decide about allocating their time to the roles they care about. In this way, practices suitable with the role salience of female employees might reduce their turnover rate and increase their motivation, performance and commitment to the organization. Managers should also be made aware that life balance policies will primarily benefit their organizations.

As a result of this study, it was determined that the level of perceived role salience in women may be important in terms of work-life balance. In this context, it may be advisable to conduct studies examining the factors (e.g., upbringing conditions, parental attitudes, role models, etc.) that affect women to give more or less importance to their work and non-work roles. Studies on work-life balance, especially on the variables affecting work-life balance, would also be helpful both for the well-being of employees and for the benefit of organizations.

Interestingly, this study showed that increased working time outside work hours was an important element that added meaning to the lives of women with a lower level of non-work salience. To clarify this situation for future research, a qualitative research study could be conducted with women with a lower level of non-work salience on the significance of work in their lives.

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