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## Balancing Work and Marriage: Job Stress and Marital Satisfaction in Dual-Career Couples

### *İş ve Evlilik Dengesi: Çift Kariyerli Eşlerde İş Stresi ve Evlilik Doyumu*

#### Abstract

Although the literature on work-family interactions is expanding, to our knowledge, significant gaps remain in understanding how job stress relates to the marital satisfaction of dual-career couples. Most of these studies primarily concentrate on individual stressors or overlook the complex interactions between personal and relational factors, specifically within a non-Western context. In this regard, the current study aims to enhance our understanding of the relationship between job stress and marital satisfaction among dual-career couples in Türkiye. Accordingly, the job stress and marital satisfaction levels of 108 dual-career couples ( $N=216$ , aged between 23 and 58 years old) living in Türkiye were investigated. Data were collected via A Job Stress Scale-20, Marital Satisfaction Scale, and a demographic form. The Actor–Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) was used to analyze data. Results revealed that wives' job stress significantly predicted wives' marital satisfaction and husbands' job stress significantly predicted husbands' marital satisfaction. None of the partner effects were significant. The findings were discussed in relation to existing literature, and further research suggestions and relevant practical implications were pointed out.

**Keywords:** Dual-career Marriages, Job Stress, Satisfaction, Actor Partner İnterdependence Model.

#### Öz

İş-aile etkileşimlerine ilişkin araştırmaların artmasına rağmen, bildiğimiz kadariyla, iş stresinin çift kariyerli çiftlerin evlilik doyumuyla nasıl ilişkili olduğunu anlamada literatürde hala önemli boşluklar vardır. Bu çalışmaların çoğu öncelikle bireysel stres faktörlerine odaklanmakta veya özellikle Batılı olmayan bir bağlamda kişisel ve ilişkisel faktörler arasındaki karmaşık etkileşimleri göz ardı etmektedir. Bu bağlamda, mevcut çalışma Türkiye'deki çift kariyerli çiftler arasında iş stresi ve evlilik doyumunun nasıl ilişkili olduğunu dair anlayışı geliştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, Türkiye'de yaşayan, yaşıları 23 ile 58 arasında değişen, 108 çift kariyerli çiftin ( $N=216$ ) iş stresi ve evlilik doyumu düzeyleri araştırılmıştır. Veriler, İş Stresi Ölçeği-20, Evlilik Doyumu Ölçeği ve demografik form aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Verileri analiz etmek için Aktör-Partner Karşılıklı Bağımlılık Modeli (APIM) kullanılmıştır. Sonuçlar, eşlerin iş stresinin eşlerin evlilik doyumunu ve erkeklerin iş stresinin kendi evlilik doyumlarını anlamlı bir şekilde yordadığını ortaya koymuştur. Partner etkilerin hiçbirini anlamlı değildir. Bulgular mevcut literatürle ilişkili olarak tartışılmış ve daha ileri araştırma önerileri ve ilgili pratik çıkarımlara işaret edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Çift Kariyerli Evlilikler, İş Stresi, Doyum, Aktör Partner Karşılıklı Bağımlılık Modeli.

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## Introduction

As more households feature both partners actively participating in the workforce, investing in the dynamics of dual-career couples becomes increasingly important. Rapoport and Rapoport (1969) were the first to define and analyze dual-career families, and their pioneering study highlighted both the advantages and disadvantages of these families. On the positive side, being part of a dual-career family can lead to higher family income and greater flexibility, as well as personal and professional growth for each partner, ultimately enhancing their overall well-being and allowing them to maintain their individual identity through employment. However, it may also present challenges, such as managing multiple responsibilities or roles, a lack of support from organizations, more sacrifices to balance work and life, and challenging traditional cultural norms (e.g., traditional or non-egalitarian distribution of family responsibilities between genders, see Radcliffe et al., 2023), particularly regarding women's participation in the workforce (Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003; Shockley et al., 2025).

Since the 1950s, the norm of treating work and home as separate spheres, with men responsible for outside work and women managing household chores, has declined. This norm no longer reflects today's reality, where men and women both participate in the workforce; thus, traditional roles of men as "breadwinners" and women as "homemakers" are becoming less relevant (Davies & Frink, 2014). In Türkiye, this shift has been especially noticeable over the past twenty years, as women's participation in the workforce increased after 2008 (Kaygusuz et al., 2023). According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK, 2025), the 2024 labor force report indicates that women comprise 32.5% of the workforce, while men account for 66.9%. Despite ongoing gaps in employment rates between genders, the rise of dual-career couples—where both partners work outside the home—has become an important focus of research. Türkiye further offers a unique context for studying dual-career couples, as traditional gender roles continue to influence women's participation in the workforce (Gedikli, 2014). This includes expectations that men are the main providers, while women are often expected to be selfless and prioritize caregiving roles (Sakallı-Uğurlu et al., 2018, 2021).

Research on dual-career couples primarily examines how work-life experiences impact their marital functioning (e.g., Debrot et al., 2018; Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999; Sun et al., 2017). Although numerous individuals are increasingly finding it challenging to pursue their professional goals while managing conflicting expectations and aspirations, decision-making must consider both individual and shared objectives for those involved in dual-career marriages, thereby adding a layer of complexity (Pixley & Moen, 2003; Scurry & Clark, 2022). Understanding how personal and professional demands interact is essential for addressing the well-being and relationship dynamics of these couples. A key framework for understanding these tensions is the work-family conflict model (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). This model emphasizes that pressures from work and family roles are, to some extent, incompatible, leading to work-life conflict. Taking on one role, like family, can make it harder to fully engage in another, like work. Consequently, work and marriage demands can interfere with each other. The model identifies three types of family-work conflict: time-based, behavior-based, and strain-based. Time-based conflict results from the challenge of fulfilling obligations across roles. Behavior-based conflict occurs when behaviors expected in one role (e.g., at work) conflict with those in another role (e.g., at home). Finally, strain-based conflict suggests that stress experienced in one role (e.g., at work) can impair a person's ability to perform effectively in other roles (e.g., at home or in non-work settings). Therefore, this study aims to examine how work-related stress influences marital satisfaction for individuals and their partners in dual-career marriages, which is vital for relationship well-being.

## Job Stress and Marital Satisfaction: Spillover (Actor), and Crossover (Partner) Effects

Job stress occurs when a person perceives an imbalance between the demands of the job and their ability to meet those demands, typically manifesting as physical and psychological responses to such instances (Cox et al., 2000). Role incongruence and conflict in the workplace are among the primary reasons for job-related stress (Kahn et al., 1964; Tatar, 2020). As highlighted in the strain-based dimension of the work-family conflict model (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), the impacts of stress caused by the workplace environments in which people operate are not limited to their work domain, but they may also affect their personal lives (Debrot et al., 2018; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Martinez-Corts et al., 2015; Perry-Jenkins & Wadsworth, 2017; Voydanoff, 2005). This relationship can also be reversed (from family to work). Still, studies

generally agree that work-related stress has a more detrimental influence on family life than family-related stress has on professional life (Roehling et al., 2003).

Building on these insights into work-related stress and its potential effects on family life, it is crucial to explore how stress influences both partners in a household. In particular, spillover-crossover effects help to illustrate that workplace challenges can profoundly influence an individual not only in their non-work domains (spillover/actor) but also their partner's well-being (crossover/partner) (Bakker et al., 2008; Bakker & Demerouti, 2013; Bolger et al., 1989). While spillover specifically indicates intra-personal and across-domain processes, crossover theory suggests the transference of demands and the resulting stress between closely connected individuals, where stress that a person experiences at work may cause tension for their partner at home and therefore represents an inter-personal aspect (Bakker et al., 2008; 2009, 2014; Westman, 2001). Given these mechanisms, it is particularly important to examine how these processes unfold in dual-career couples, where both partners simultaneously manage demanding work and family roles, which could increase the complexity of balancing roles and may intensify the detrimental effects of job stress on relational well-being. Indeed, stress is widely recognized as a threat to the health and longevity of close relationships (Randall & Bodeman, 2008), and empirical research consistently demonstrates a negative link between job stress and marital satisfaction (Bakker et al., 2014; Kazmi et al., 2017; Yoge, 1986), which constitutes a pivotal dimension of relational well-being.

Marital satisfaction can be broadly defined as the happiness and stability experienced within a relationship (Tavakol et al., 2017). Li et al. (2011) defined marital satisfaction as "people's overall subjective evaluation of the quality of their marriage" (p. 246). They emphasized that stability in marriage alone does not ensure satisfaction; couples may choose to divorce even if their relationship is stable if it lacks quality. Additionally, it is essential to adopt a holistic perspective, as this comprehensive understanding of marriage has a significant impact on the family climate. As stated before, this conceptualization of marital satisfaction becomes further complex in the context of dual-earner couples, where the demands of work and family roles often intersect.

Understanding the mechanisms by which job stress affects marital satisfaction within family life requires further attention, especially in dual-income families. Regarding the spillover/actor effects, the active participation of both partners in the workforce can reduce the time and energy they need to dedicate to their roles as spouses or parents. These deficits in time and energy are believed to make it harder for them to meet family obligations effectively, which can lead to increased stress levels both individually and within the family. As a result, this strain may negatively impact family dynamics and overall well-being (Shockley et al., 2025). More specifically, individuals often juggle multiple roles, such as being a spouse, parent, and worker (Goode, 1960), as each role has its own expectations and responsibilities; however, personal resources, including time and energy, are limited (ten Brummelhuis et al., 2010). This can make it challenging to meet the demands of all roles simultaneously, leading to work-related stress spilling over into non-work areas due to the scarcity of personal resources (Edwards & Rothbart, 2000). On the other hand, several mechanisms have been identified through which work-related stress can crossover and affect the partner, including empathy, sharing stressors as a couple, and reduced communication or social interaction between partners (Westman, 2006). For example, couples can be affected by each other's stress, either through empathy or because they face similar strains from shared experiences, home life, or children (Howe et al., 2004; Price et al., 1998). The stress one person experiences can also influence others through mechanisms such as reduced communication or social support (Westman, 2006). As a result, job stress can operate through both actor and partner effects—manifesting as spillover when individuals' own stress undermines their marital satisfaction, and as crossover when one partner's stress transmits to the other, thereby influencing their partners.

The literature has provided convincing results on both the spillover/actor and crossover/partner effects, as some studies have demonstrated spillover effects, while others have shown evidence of both spillover and crossover effects of the work domain on family life. For instance, Story and Repetti (2006) found that managing negative arousal from a demanding workday can lead to increased withdrawal and self-focused behaviors, which, in turn, affect marital interactions (a spillover effect). Similarly, Mauno and Kinnunen (1999) conducted a study demonstrating how work-related stressors, such as job insecurity, time pressure, and poor organizational relationships, impact family life. They found that these job stressors cause exhaustion and physical symptoms in both partners, which spill over into their own marital well-being; however, the researchers did not identify a crossover effect of these factors on family life. In their meta-analytic study, Fellows et al.

(2016) found that work-family conflict has a greater impact on the quality of relationships in single-earner couples than in dual-earner couples. Dual-earner spouses often understand each other's struggles with balancing work and family, leading to greater sympathy when work impacts family life. The researchers also suggested that a reduced crossover effect could stem from the fact that dual-earner couples allow their shared work focus to strengthen their bond, thereby minimizing the impact of work-related concerns on their relationship. In terms of both spillover and crossover effects, Schulz et al. (2004) reported that men's withdrawal after emotionally demanding days can negatively influence their wives' marital satisfaction (crossover effect). Bakker et al. (2013) found that job engagement promotes work-family facilitation, enhancing life satisfaction for individuals and their partners. In contrast, workaholism is linked to work-family conflict, which diminishes marital satisfaction for both parties, indicating both work-family facilitation and workaholism had spillover and crossover effects. The research conducted by Schnettler et al. (2021) revealed that achieving a better work-life balance significantly enhances satisfaction in the family domain for both partners and each other's overall well-being. The reverse is therefore possible, as Dargahi et al. (2021) showed that dual-career couples often experience strain in fulfilling multiple roles, which can reduce perceived support and mutual understanding, thereby exacerbating marital dissatisfaction. To summarize, the spillover and crossover effects provide a theoretical explanation for these effects, demonstrating how individual and partner stress can impact the quality of marital interactions, ultimately affecting the satisfaction of both individuals and their partners.

Some research also highlighted the effects of culture (Allen et al., 2020; Fellows et al., 2016) and gender in terms of spillover and crossover effects (ten Brummelhuis & Greenhaus, 2018; Westman, 2006). In collectivist cultures (e.g., Turkish culture, Hofstede, 1980), where people often see themselves mainly in connection with larger social units (like family, social groups, or the nation) and their behavior is guided mainly by shared norms, values, and obligations of these groups (Triandis, 1995), there is usually less conflict between different roles because of a strong belief in their interconnectedness. Therefore, in such cultures where the boundaries between work and family roles are often blurred, one domain (e.g., work) is less likely to affect the satisfaction levels in other domains (e.g., family) of life (Allen et al., 2020). Conversely, in individualistic cultures, where an independent self is emphasized and personal needs, desires, and rights are the primary motivators, with individual goals taking precedence over group objectives (Triandis, 1995), there may be more conflict across roles. Thus, in individualistic cultures, individuals may be more likely to transmit these conflicts across various domains of life, potentially affecting their personal and relational satisfaction (Allen et al., 2020). Similarly, in their meta-analysis, Fellows et al. (2016) found that compared to individualistic cultures (i.e., North America), in collectivist cultures (i.e., Asia), work is considered a positive sacrifice, where dedicating additional hours or pouring extra energy into work is often perceived as a meaningful contribution to the family resources. In terms of gender, Shimazu et al. (2013) found that the crossover effect occurs from husbands to wives. A woman's psychological health is affected by her husband's work-family balance, while a husband's is not influenced by his wife's. Similarly, Chen and Ellis (2021) also found that crossover occurs from husbands to wives, as husbands' increased job stress affected their wives' nightly relaxation. The researchers attribute this result to traditional gender roles, where women often feel guilty about their husbands' work-to-home conflicts, believing they should be the primary caregivers. In contrast, men typically do not feel guilty, as they associate these responsibilities with women. Taken together, these findings emphasize the importance of considering culture and gender roles as key contextual factors; therefore, examining the relationship between job stress and marital satisfaction in dual-career couples is especially crucial within the Turkish context, which is previously described above as a collectivist culture with strict gender norms.

## The Current Study

While a growing body of literature exists on work-family dynamics, critical gaps persist in our understanding of how job stress is related to marital satisfaction in dual-career couples. Many studies tend to focus solely on individual stressors or fail to address the intricate interplay between personal and relational factors. Additionally, it is crucial to conduct further research that examines these dynamics within diverse cultural contexts, as societal norms and expectations surrounding work and family vary significantly across communities.

Accordingly, this study aims to enhance our understanding of the relationship between job stress and marital satisfaction within dual-career couples living in a non-Western context, Türkiye. To the best of our knowledge, job stress and marital satisfaction in dual-career couples in Türkiye have not been previously examined using an actor-partner interdependence

model (APIM). Since marital satisfaction and job stress are shaped not only by one's own experiences but also by those of the partner, employing APIM enables the researchers to examine the interdependent nature of job stress and marital satisfaction with dyadic data, by estimating both actor and partner effects. This approach is theoretically consistent with the present study, which tested the actor and partner effects of job stress on marital satisfaction, as illustrated in Figure 1. The hypotheses of the current study are as follows:

*Hypothesis 1 (H1):* There will be a negative actor effect of job stress on the marital satisfaction of dual-career married couples.

H1a: Wives' job stress will have a significant and negative effect on their own marital satisfaction (actor effect).

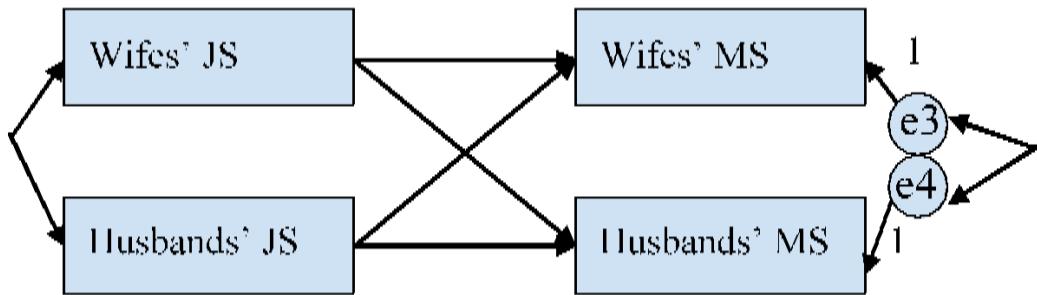
H1b: Husbands' job stress will have a significant and negative effect on their own marital satisfaction (actor effect).

*Hypothesis 2 (H2):* There will be a negative partner effect of job stress on the marital satisfaction of dual-career married couples.

H2a: Wives' job stress will have a significant and negative effect on their husbands' marital satisfaction (partner effect).

H2b: Husbands' job stress will have a significant and negative effect on their wives' marital satisfaction (partner effect).

**Figure 1.** Proposed Model



Note. JS: Job stress; MS: Marital satisfaction.

## Method

### Recruitment and Participants

In the current study, the data were collected from dual-career married couples residing in Türkiye. The sample was reached via snowball and purposive sampling. The eligibility criteria for being included in this study were as follows: (1) being 18 years old and above, (2) being in a dual-career marriage, (3) being married for at least three months, and (4) living in Türkiye. The minimum sample size sufficient to test the actor and partner effects for an Actor–Partner Interdependence Model analysis with distinguishable dyads—given a desired level of power (.70) and alpha (.05), with beta as a measure of the effect size—is 102 dyads (Ackerman & Kenny, 2016). The sample comprised 108 dual-career married couples ( $n = 216$ ); therefore, we can state that our sample size was sufficient for conducting the APIM. Women's ages were between 23 years and 55 years ( $M = 31.79$ ,  $SD = 6.35$ ) while men's ages were between 25 and 58 years ( $M = 34.48$ ,  $SD = 6.89$ ). Most of the women ( $n = 86$ , 79.6%) and men ( $n = 70$ , 64.8%) had an undergraduate degree, followed by a graduate degree ( $n = 20$ , 18.5% for women;  $n = 26$ , 24.1% for men), and a small percentage of the sample were graduated from a high school or a lower education level ( $n = 2$ , 1.9% for women;  $n = 12$ , 11.1% for men). For the total income of the couples, 7 of them (6.5%) had an income between 0–8000 TL, 10 of them (9.3%) between 8001TL– 16000TL, 25 of them (23.1%) between 16001TL– 20000TL, and 66 of them (61.1%) 24001TL and above, during the time of data collection. These indicate that the sample comprised highly educated and middle-to-high-income participants. The duration of dual-career couples' marriages ranged from five months to 329 months (approximately 27 years) ( $M = 65.47$ ,  $SD = 70.89$ ). Almost half of the sample had children ( $n = 53$ , 49.1%).

## Procedure

Firstly, approval (No. 2023-14) from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the university where the first author is affiliated was obtained to initiate data collection. After receiving approval, data collection began in early September 2023 and continued until November 2023. The questionnaires were prepared in Google Forms, and the data were collected online through social media platforms, including WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. In addition, due to the nature of snowball and purposive sampling techniques, participants who voluntarily participated in this research were able to ask their dual-career married companions to complete the questionnaire. Filling out the questionnaires took approximately 20-25 minutes. The voluntary participation of the couples was ensured via informed consent. Couples participating in the research were not required to provide any identification. Still, they were asked to use the same pseudonym as their spouses to match their data, which is a prerequisite for conducting the actor–partner interdependence model.

## Measures

### Job Stress

To evaluate the job stress, A Job Stress Scale-20 (AJSS-20; Tatar, 2020) was used. AJSS-20 is a one-factor, 20-item scale. It is rated on a 5-point scale (*1 = not suitable for me at all; 5 = completely suitable for me*). A sample item from AJSS-20 reads, "My job environment is very noisy." Tatar (2020) reported the reliability coefficient as .91 for women and .90 for men, and also provided validity evidence for AJSS-20 by testing its correlations with the scales that measure similar (convergent validity; *r* values range between .37 and .63) and different (discriminant validity; *r* values range between -.50 and -.40) constructs. High scores obtained from the scale reflect increased job stress. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was .92 for both women and men in the current study, as presented in Table 1.

### Marital Satisfaction

To assess marital satisfaction in this study, the Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS; Çelik & İnanç, 2009) was used. MSS is a 13-item scale, with three subscales: family, sexuality, and self. It is rated on a 5-point scale (*1 = not suitable for me at all; 5 = completely suitable for me*). A sample item of MSS read, "I feel that my spouse doesn't value me." Çelik and İnanç (2009) have tested the criterion-related validity of the scale, in addition to conducting a test-retest reliability study with 70 married individuals over a one-month interval. The test-retest correlation coefficient of the MSS is .86, providing evidence for MSS as a valid and reliable measure. In this study, the total score of MSS was used. Although subscales may provide a more detailed perspective, the primary aim of the study was to examine the overall marital satisfaction of dual-career couples in relation to job stress; thus, the total score was deemed most appropriate. High scores obtained from the scale indicate high levels of marital satisfaction. The Cronbach alpha coefficient calculated for women was .85 and .80 for men in the current study, as depicted in Table 1.

### Demographic Form

To gather information about the individual and relational characteristics of dual-career married couples in this study, a demographic form was used. This form included individual questions such as the age, gender, education level, and income of the participants. Furthermore, the form consisted of relational questions, such as the duration of marriage and whether the couple had any children.

### Data Analyses

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between job stress and marital satisfaction in dual-career married couples residing in Türkiye. First, the initial processes of data screening and data cleaning were completed on the raw data. Afterwards, the assumptions (distinguishability and non-independence) of the Actor–Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Kashy & Kenny, 2000) were tested. In the second step, descriptive statistics were conducted to provide information about the individual and relational characteristics of the participants. Finally, the actor and partner effects of job stress on marital satisfaction were examined via APIM. Preliminary analyses were done with SPSS Version 29. APIM was conducted via AMOS 29.

## Results

### Preliminary Analyses

Before the main analyses, one of the basic assumptions of APIM—the distinguishability of the dyad members—was tested. To be referred to as “distinguishable”, the two dyads need to be assigned to two different groups (Kenny et al., 2006). In the current study, the data were collected from both wives and husbands, who are distinguishable dyad members. To test for the other assumption of APIM -non-independence-, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed. The correlations depicted that both partners’ marital satisfaction ( $r = .51, p < .01$ ) were correlated within dyads, indicating non-independence.

Additionally, preliminary analyses were conducted to assess whether the duration of marriage and presence of children should be included as covariates in the analyses. The correlational analyses revealed that there was not a significant association between the duration of marriage and wives’ marital satisfaction ( $r = -.02, p > .05$ ), and there was a weak correlation between the duration of marriage and husbands’ marital satisfaction ( $r = -.25, p < .01$ ). Hence, duration of marriage was not considered as a covariate. Furthermore, an independent samples t-test was conducted to evaluate whether wives’ and husbands’ marital satisfaction differed with respect to their parental status (having children or not). The results showed that both wives’ and husbands’ marital satisfaction did not differ with respect to having children or not ( $t(106) = -1.67, p = .21$ ;  $t(106) = -1.86, p = .62$ , respectively). Therefore, parental status was not included as a covariate in the analyses.

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, ranges, reliabilities, and bivariate correlations among the variables. The lowest correlation was between wives’ job stress and their marital satisfaction ( $r = -.25, p < .01$ ), and the same for husbands ( $r = -.25, p < .01$ ). The highest correlation was between the marital satisfaction of wives and husbands ( $r = .51, p < .01$ ).

### Actor and Partner Effects of Job Satisfaction on Marital Satisfaction

It was hypothesized that job stress would have both actor and partner effects on the marital satisfaction of dual-career married couples residing in Türkiye. Along with this hypothesis of the current study, firstly, a saturated model was tested. Afterward, the non-significant paths were removed from the model. The goodness of fit indices depicted that this model fits the data very well;  $\chi^2(2) = 2.49, p = .29, \chi^2/df = 1.24$ , GFI = .99, AGFI = .94, TLI = .97, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .05. The squared multiple correlations ( $R^2$ ) of outcome variables were assessed to calculate the amount of variance explained by the hypothesized model. Wives’ job stress accounted for 7% of the variance in their own marital satisfaction, and husbands’ job stress accounted for 3% of the variance in their own marital satisfaction.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations among the Study Variables

	1	2	3	4
1. Wives’ JS	1			
2. Wives’ MS	-.25**	1		
3. Husbands’ JS	.05	-.16	1	
4. Husbands’ MS	.02	.51**	-.25**	1
M	42.75	54.16	42.71	55.80
SD	16.66	9.46	16.24	8.06
Range	20 - 93	27- 65	20 - 82	29 - 65
Reliability	.92	.85	.92	.80

Note. JS = Job stress; MS = Marital Satisfaction; M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation; \*\* $p < .01$ .

The findings of the current study revealed no partner effects but two actor effects, as shown in Table 2. Specifically, wives' job stress predicted their own marital satisfaction ( $\beta = -.26, p < .01$ ), and husbands' job stress predicted their own marital satisfaction ( $\beta = -.18, p < .05$ ), negatively. That is, the marital satisfaction of wives and husbands is not influenced by their spouses' job stress. However, in the case of spouses who experience stress at work, their own marital satisfaction is negatively affected, meaning that as job stress increases, their level of marital satisfaction tends to decline.

**Table 2.** Actor and Partner Effects of Job Stress on Marital Satisfaction

	B	SE	t	p	$\beta$
Actor effects					
Wives' JS→Wives' MS	-.15	.05	-3.28	.001***	-.26
Husbands' JS→ Husbands' MS	-.09	.04	-2.22	.03*	-.18
Partner effects					
Wives' JS→ Husbands' MS	.01	.05	.32	.75	.03
Husbands' JS→ Wives' MS	-.08	.05	-1.56	.12	-.15

Note. JS: Job stress; MS: Marital satisfaction; \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \* $p < .05$ .

## Discussion

The various determinants of marital satisfaction have been widely researched previously (hidden for anonymity, under review); however, there is a paucity of research addressing the role of job stress on marital satisfaction through the lens of the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) in dual-career couples. In the present study, we investigated the relationship between partners' job stress levels and their marital satisfaction using the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) framework. Supporting our first hypothesis (both H1a and H1b), the results revealed significant actor effects, where an increase in job stress experienced by a partner was associated with a decline in their own marital satisfaction. However, we did not confirm our second hypothesis (both H2a and H2b), which proposes partner effects, where the partners' job stress levels affect their partners' marital satisfaction. Contrary to our initial hypotheses, the partner effects were not significant; that is, one partner's high level of job stress was not associated with the other partner's marital satisfaction level. Overall, the current study's findings revealed that job stress levels in dual-career couples influence the individual's own relationship satisfaction but not their partners'.

The results of our study align with those of Mauno and Kinnunen (1999), who reported a spillover effect among participants experiencing work-related stress and facing challenges to their well-being. It is expected that individuals will extend work-related stress to their personal lives, particularly if they lack effective coping strategies, such as communication skills, healthy lifestyle habits, problem-solving skills, and social support from family and friends, to handle the stress. Personality characteristics may play a significant role in the transmission of stress from the work domain to the family domain, where role expectations differ (Huang et al., 2023). Huang et al. (2023) explained spillover from work-to-family conflict with the concept of cross-role trait consistency. Cross-role trait consistency refers to individuals maintaining the same role across different environments (Church et al., 2008). Although cross-role trait consistency is perceived as a healthy trait that leads people to form their integrity and core, it may detrimentally affect relationships if it restrains individuals from adapting to the demands of different roles. Therefore, individuals with more cross-role trait consistency may be more likely to transmit work-related stress to their family or couple relationships. This can lead to lower marital satisfaction as they struggle to set boundaries for their job's requirements and have difficulty in adopting a new role in their couple relationships.

Although the actor effects for job stress on marital satisfaction were statistically significant, the proportion of variance explained was relatively small (7% for wives and 3% for husbands). This finding suggests that, while job stress is associated with individuals' own marital satisfaction, it is only one of the factors that affects a partner's marital satisfaction. Marital

satisfaction is a complex phenomenon influenced not only by personality traits, communication patterns, and socioeconomic context, but also by the individual's life stage and family structure. Especially, being a parent can dramatically affect individuals' marital satisfaction as parenting introduces additional responsibilities, financial and time constraints for people. In the present study, preliminary analyses indicated that marital satisfaction did not differ significantly with respect to parental status. Future research could extend our findings by testing other models that include potential moderators or mediators of the relationship between job stress and marital satisfaction. Finally, the marital satisfaction scale used in this study has subscales; however, we used the total scores to maximize statistical power, given our limited sample size. Future studies recruiting larger samples could test the same model presented in this study to explore whether job stress is related to a specific dimension of marital satisfaction.

On behalf of the partner effects, although previous studies have demonstrated the presence of a crossover effect from one partner's job stress to the other partner's marital satisfaction (e.g., Carnes, 2015; Liang, 2015), our study did not confirm this effect for both parties (neither from wife to husband nor from husband to wife). Cultural factors might play a significant role in understanding this dynamic. In collectivist cultures, such as Türkiye (Hofstede, 1980), dual-income couples often view work and family as intertwined rather than distinct entities. This perspective leads them to see the time and energy one partner invests in their job as a valuable contribution to the family's overall well-being, not just a personal ambition. Consequently, the stress associated with one partner's work might be less likely to undermine their partner's marital satisfaction, as the work domain is viewed as a positive sacrifice for the family. This viewpoint is further supported by studies conducted by Allen et al. (2020) and Fellows et al. (2016), highlighting the strength of this cultural approach. Another cultural factor may be the gender roles prevalent in a society. Saginak and Saginak (2005) discussed couples' perceptions of the division of labor as critical in understanding the relationship between marital satisfaction and work-family conflict. In this regard, gender roles in society can affect couples' understanding of the division of labor; that is to say, as long as couples perceive that roles and responsibilities are fair and equal, they are more likely to experience success in balancing work and family. In their study, Sakallı-Uğurlu et al. (2021) assessed stereotypes assigned to married men and women in Türkiye. The common adjectives to define gender roles for married men included breadwinners, protectors, or householders, while the common adjectives to define gender roles for married women included nurturing, housewife, self-sacrificing, and organizer at home. These prevailing gender roles towards married women and men in Türkiye may help explain why the crossover effect might not occur, as the stress experienced by men due to work may be perceived as usual and, therefore, does not affect their partner's marital satisfaction. On the other hand, the job stress experienced by women might not be reflected in their partners because it may conflict with their other roles at home (i.e., nurturing, homemaking, self-sacrificing).

In addition to cultural and gender-related explanations for the lack of a significant partner effect in the current study, methodological considerations should also be taken into account. Although we conducted an a priori power analysis and determined that, for a power of .70 and  $\alpha = .05$ , with  $\beta$  representing the effect size, a minimum of 102 dyads would be required (Ackerman & Kenny, 2016), our sample size of 108 dyads is only slightly larger than the sample needed. Ledermann et al. (2022) demonstrated through Monte Carlo simulations that partner effects are typically smaller than actor effects and require larger sample sizes for robust detection, particularly in distinguishable dyads. Therefore, the absence of partner effects in this study should be interpreted with caution, as it may be a reflection of limited statistical power. Another possible explanation for the absence of partner effects might be related to the characteristics of our sample and the measurement tools employed. Participants in our study were a relatively homogeneous group in terms of age, education, and socioeconomic status, which may have reduced the variability in job stress and marital satisfaction, potentially leading to a failure to detect partner effects. Additionally, the use of self-report measures is more focused on the individual. It may fail to detect partner effects, which could be more effectively identified with a multi-method approach. Furthermore, strong actor effects may have overshadowed the unique contribution of partner effects in the APIM. Finally, although a significant correlation was found between wives' and husbands' marital satisfaction, APIM controls for actor effects and interdependencies, which can render partner effects non-significant. This suggests that the observed parallelism in marital satisfaction may reflect a shared marital climate or joint life conditions rather than direct crossover of job stress. Taken together, these points provide a more nuanced interpretation of the absence of partner effects in our findings.

## Limitations and Future Directions

Although this study has several strengths, including the use of APIM, recruitment of dual-career couples, and data collection from both partners, it also has several limitations. First, participants are predominantly middle-aged and from middle-to-high socioeconomic backgrounds, and the findings may only be generalized to couples with similar characteristics. Further research is needed for individuals at different stages of their lives and relationships, as well as those from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Second, data is limited to heterosexual couples, and future researchers are welcome to explore if these patterns are reliable for same-sex marriages. Additionally, future researchers may want to investigate the relationship between job stress and relationship satisfaction in non-marital relationships. Third, because the data were collected via the snowball sampling technique, the sample may overrepresent certain groups. Fourth, the present study employs a cross-sectional design, and future longitudinal research is necessary to assess the consistency of the findings over time. Fifth, data were collected via quantitative self-report questionnaires, and it is known that self-reported responses may be biased. In future studies, qualitative data collection methods should be employed in conjunction with quantitative surveys. Also, couples' evaluation of each other would enrich the self-report data. Sixth, in the current study, job stress levels of different industries were not compared. Given that certain jobs have the potential to create higher levels of stress than others, researchers could investigate the changing nature of job stress and marital satisfaction across various industries. Lastly, there are limited studies in Türkiye regarding the marital dynamics of dual-career married couples. For example, the research by Özgülük Üçok and Hatipoğlu Sümer (2023) highlights the strong actor effect of both wives' and husbands' relationship satisfaction on their commitment. Therefore, further studies may extend beyond the current study to investigate other relational outcomes, such as commitment and relationship maintenance. In a similar vein, several individual (i.e., psychological stress, anxiety, distress, exhaustion) or work-related (i.e., time pressure, workaholism, poor organizational relationships) factors could also be employed in future studies to better understand the relationship between job stress and marital satisfaction in dual-career couples.

## Practical Implications

Considering that the findings revealed an inverse association between people's job stress and their own marital satisfaction, tailored individual-level interventions are suggested to mitigate the negative effects of job stress on marital satisfaction. Clinicians should prioritize raising awareness of work-related stress and help their clients gain skills in self-management, emotion regulation, stress management, boundary setting, balancing work and life domains, mindfulness, and relaxation strategies. Additionally, clinicians could work on improving their clients' communication skills and encourage them to share their work-related stress with their partners. Since both partners have careers, this constructive sharing would help individuals to prevent the possibility of transferring the detrimental effects of job stress they may have experienced in their marriage. Hereby, the couples could be guided by mental health professionals in terms of utilizing dyadic coping strategies to handle the crossover and spillover of the stressors into their marriages.

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