When Balance Fails to Matter: Career Planning and Performance of Part-Time Student Workers

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Abstract. The growing prevalence of part-time employment among university students in developing economies raises concerns about their ability to maintain effective job performance alongside academic and personal demands. Grounded in the Job Demands Resources and Study Demands Resources frameworks, this study examines the effects of career planning and work study life balance on job performance among part-time student workers and tests the moderating role of work study life balance. Survey data were collected from undergraduate students in a secondary Indonesian city who combined full-time study with part-time employment. Using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling, the results show that career planning and work-study-life-balance independently predict job performance. However, work study life balance does not moderate the relationship between career planning and job performance, indicating that the positive effect of career planning remains consistent across different balance conditions. These findings extend the Job Demands Resources framework to a non-metropolitan developing economy context and highlight career planning as a resilient personal resource that supports job performance even under role strain. The study offers practical implications for universities and employers by emphasising low-cost career-planning interventions for part-time student workers.

Keywords: career planning, work-study-life balance, job performance, part-time student workers, Job Demands Resources theory.

1 Introduction

The convergence of higher education expansion and economic pressures in developing economies has dramatically transformed the landscape of university student life. Across Southeast Asia, and particularly in Indonesia, a substantial proportion of undergraduates now combine full-time academic commitments with part-time employment to finance tuition, living expenses, or family obligations. National labour-force statistics reveal that between 38% and 45% of Indonesian university students engage in paid work, with the figure often exceeding 50% in secondary cities where government scholarships and institutional financial aid remain limited. Samarinda, the capital of East Kalimantan yet classified as a secondary city outside the Java-centric metropolitan core, exemplifies this

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trend: local universities report that more than six out of ten students hold part-time jobs, predominantly in retail, food and beverage, online transportation, and freelance digital services. This dual-role phenomenon creates a distinctive population of emerging adults who must simultaneously meet rigorous academic demands, fulfil workplace responsibilities, and maintain personal well-being (1,2).

The simultaneous enactment of student and worker roles generates considerable potential for inter-role conflict, energy depletion, and impaired functioning in either domain. Classic conservation of resources theory and boundary theory predict that multiple role occupancy drains psychological and physical resources unless compensatory mechanisms are activated (3). Within organisational psychology, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model has emerged as one of the most robust frameworks for explaining how individuals cope with high-demand environments (4,5). The model posits two parallel processes: a health-impairment process whereby excessive demands erode well-being and performance, and a motivational process whereby job and personal resources foster engagement and superior outcomes. An important extension of JD-R to the higher-education context is the Study Demands-Resources (SD-R) framework, which explicitly incorporates academic workloads, deadlines, and study-related resources alongside occupational and personal factors (1,4).

Personal resources occupy a central position in both JD-R and SD-R theorising because they are relatively stable individual characteristics that help people control and impact their environment successfully (6). Among the array of personal resources examined in the literature, career adaptability and career competencies have received particular attention in student and early-career populations (7,8). Career planning defined as the deliberate formulation of career goals, exploration of occupational options, and development of strategies to achieve desired future positions represents a behavioural manifestation of these underlying competencies (9). Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that students who engage in structured career planning report higher life satisfaction, greater study engagement, and indirectly better academic performance (7). However, the extent to which career planning translates into enhanced job performance in concurrent part-time employment remains underexplored, especially outside Western contexts.

Work-study-life balance (WLB) has been conceptualised both as an outcome of successful demands resources interplay and as a potential boundary condition that alters the efficacy of other resources (1,10). High WLB implies effective segmentation or integration of roles such that energy invested in one domain does not systematically undermine functioning in another. From a JD-R perspective, balanced role management should amplify the positive effects of personal resources on performance outcomes, whereas chronic imbalance may attenuate or even reverse these effects. Yet surprisingly few studies have explicitly tested WLB as a moderator of personal-resource and performance relationships among student workers, and virtually none have done so in developing-economy or non-metropolitan settings.

The Indonesian context adds further layers of complexity. First, labour-market conditions in secondary cities differ markedly from those in Jakarta, Surabaya, or Bandung: formal employment opportunities are scarcer, wages are lower, and part-time jobs are concentrated in informal or semi-formal sectors with limited supervisory support and training (11,12). Second, cultural expectations around filial piety and self-reliance often oblige students to contribute financially to households, intensifying role pressure. Third, university career services remain underdeveloped outside major urban centres, restricting access to structured career-planning support (13–16). These contextual peculiarities raise critical questions about the generalisability of JD-R findings derived predominantly from full-time employees or students in affluent economies.

Theoretical integration of career construction theory with JD-R suggests that career planning may function as a particularly potent personal resource for young adults navigating transitional life stages (7). By providing a coherent narrative and future-oriented direction, career planning can motivate proactive behaviours such as job crafting, actively reshaping task boundaries, relational configurations, and cognitive meanings of work (17,18). Job crafting, in turn, has been repeatedly linked to higher work engagement and performance across diverse occupational groups (8,19). Thus, career planning may sustain performance even when work-study-life balance is suboptimal by encouraging individuals to craft more meaningful and manageable roles within existing constraints.

Despite the theoretical promise, empirical gaps persist on multiple fronts. First, direct evidence linking career planning to job performance (rather than academic performance or general well-being) among part-time student workers is scarce. Second, the few existing studies in developing economies focus almost exclusively on full-time employees or metropolitan samples, leaving secondary-city contexts unexamined (11,12). Third, explicit tests of WLB as a moderator in the career planning and performance pathway are virtually absent, creating uncertainty about boundary conditions. Fourth, measurement instruments tailored and validated for Indonesian student workers remain limited, complicating comparative research (13,14).

The present study seeks to address these gaps by examining three interrelated research questions among part-time working university students in Samarinda, Indonesia:

1. To what extent does career planning directly and positively influence job performance?
2. Does work-study-life balance exert an independent positive effect on job performance?
3. Does work-study-life balance moderate the relationship between career planning and job performance, such that the positive effect of career planning is stronger when balance is high?

By focusing on a non-metropolitan developing-economy setting and employing robust structural equation modelling, this research offers several contributions. Theoretically, it tests the boundary conditions of personal-resource effects within an extended JD-R/SD-R framework. Methodologically, it validates

concise measurement instruments suitable for time-constrained populations in emerging economies. Practically, it provides evidence-based guidance for employers and universities seeking cost-effective interventions to enhance the productivity and retention of student workers.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. The next section details the research methodology, including participant characteristics, measurement instruments, and analytic strategy. Results are then presented and discussed in relation to existing theory and empirical findings. The paper concludes with implications for theory, practice, limitations, and directions for future research.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to address several important gaps in literature by examining the direct effects of career planning and work-study-life balance on job performance among part-time working university students in a non-metropolitan developing economy context. Specifically, this study investigates whether career planning functions as a key personal resource that enhances job performance and whether work-study-life balance strengthens or constrains this relationship.

By explicitly testing the moderating role of work-study-life balance, this research offers a theoretically meaningful examination of boundary conditions within the Job Demands Resources and Study Demands Resources frameworks. In doing so, it contributes to career development and student employment literature by clarifying whether the effectiveness of career planning depends on balance conditions or remains robust under role strain. The findings are expected to refine existing assumptions regarding personal resources in transitional, high-demand contexts and to extend JD-R theorising to part-time student workers in secondary-city settings of developing economies.

2 Research Methods

2.1 Research Design and Participants

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative design to examine the relationships among career planning, work-study-life balance, and job performance in a sample of part-time working university students. Data were collected from March to June 2025 in Samarinda, East Kalimantan, Indonesia a typical secondary city outside the dominant Java-centric metropolitan areas. The target population consisted of actively enrolled undergraduate students who simultaneously held part-time employment. Inclusion criteria were: (1) minimum 15 hours of paid work per week, and (2) at least six consecutive months of current employment to ensure sufficient workplace exposure.

A combination of convenience and snowball sampling was used. Initial respondents were recruited through university career centres, official student organisation WhatsApp groups, and direct outreach at popular part-time employment locations (cafés, minimarkets, co-working spaces, and ride-hailing driver waiting points). Each participant was requested to forward the questionnaire link to up to three eligible peers. A total of 293 responses were received; after

removing 27 cases due to incomplete data or failure to meet inclusion criteria, the final usable sample comprised 266 respondents (90.8% effective response rate).

The demographic profile confirms a predominantly Generation Z cohort: 65.4% were under 20 years old, 28.6% were 20-22 years old, and only 5.6% were 23-25 years old. Females represented 57.1% of the sample. Part-time job types were heavily skewed toward informal and semi-formal sectors: freelance/digital work (34.2%), "other" categories (primarily retail, food service, and online transportation, 43.6%), contract employees (17.7%), internships (4.5%), and lanyard/magang equivalents (0.0%). Weekly working hours were generally moderate: 55.3% worked fewer than 10 hours, 17.7% worked 10-20 hours, 9.0% worked 21-30 hours, and 18.0% exceeded 30 hours per week.

2.2 Measures

All latent variables were measured using five-item short scales previously validated in student or early-career populations and adapted to the Indonesian context through forward, backward translation and pilot testing (n = 42). Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Table 1. Operationalisation of Variables

Variable	Number of Items	Sample Item	Original Source / Adaptation Basis
Career Planning (CP)	5	"I have a clear plan for achieving my career goals in the next five years"	Adapted from Koivisto et al. (2011); Akkermans et al. (2018) (7,9)
Work-study-life Balance (WLB)	5	"I am able to satisfactorily balance my studies, work, and personal life"	Adapted from Lesener et al. (2020); Vîrgă et al. (2015) (1,10)
Job Performance (JP)	5	"I complete all tasks required in my part-time job on time and accurately"	Adapted from Williams & Anderson (1991); Akkermans et al. (2018) (7,20)

Control variables (age, gender, weekly working hours, and job type) were initially included in preliminary regression models but later excluded from the final structural model because none exhibited significant effects on job performance ($p > 0.10$).

2.3 Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was administered online via Google Forms. A brief screening question verified eligibility before granting access to the main instrument. Informed consent was obtained electronically, and anonymity was guaranteed. Participants received no monetary incentive, but entry into a lottery for mobile

credit vouchers was offered to increase response rates. Ethical clearance was granted by the university research ethics committee.

2.4 Justification for Analytical Approach and Model Selection Stages

Several analytical options were considered given the research objectives, sample characteristics, and nature of the hypothesised relationships. Ordinary least squares (OLS) multiple regression was initially evaluated because of its familiarity and ease of interpretation. However, three critical limitations led to its rejection: (1) it cannot simultaneously handle measurement error in latent constructs, (2) it treats moderation via simple product terms without properly accounting for multicollinearity and indicator-level variance, and (3) it provides no framework for assessing overall model fit or predictive relevance.

Covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) was then examined. Although CB-SEM excels at confirmatory theory testing and offers global goodness-of-fit indices, it imposes stringent assumptions (multivariate normality, large sample requirements for model complexity, and reflective measurement only) that were not fully satisfied. Preliminary Shapiro–Wilk tests revealed significant non-normality in several indicators ($p < 0.001$), and the sample size of 266, while adequate, lies near the lower boundary for models containing interaction terms under CB-SEM.

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was ultimately selected after systematic comparison for the following reasons:

1. The study is exploratory in a relatively under-researched context (secondary-city Indonesian student workers) and prioritises predictive accuracy over strict confirmatory testing (21).
2. PLS-SEM effectively manages non-normal data and smaller sample sizes relative to model complexity.
3. It natively supports moderation analysis through both product-indicator and two-stage approaches without requiring orthogonalisation.
4. It provides complementary predictive metrics (R^2, Q^2, PLSpredict) essential for theory development in emerging contexts.
5. Recent guidelines explicitly recommend PLS-SEM when testing moderation on formative or reflective constructs with interaction effects (Hair et al., 2022).

The specific PLS-SEM implementation followed a two-stage process: (1) evaluation of the measurement model (indicator reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity), followed by (2) assessment of the structural model (path coefficients, coefficient of determination, effect sizes, predictive relevance). Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was applied to obtain stable standard errors and confidence intervals. The interaction term (WLB × CP) was constructed using the standardised product-indicator approach to minimise multicollinearity. Analyses were conducted using SmartPLS version 4.0.9.9.

3 Results and Discussion

The assessment of the measurement model confirmed excellent psychometric properties across all constructs. All indicator outer loadings exceeded the conservative threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.713 (JP5) to 0.846 (CP4), demonstrating strong indicator reliability. Convergent validity was fully satisfied at the construct level: average variance extracted (AVE) values were 0.639 for career planning, 0.627 for work-study-life balance, and 0.566 for job performance. Composite reliability (ρc) ranged from 0.867 (job performance) to 0.898 (career planning), while Cronbach's alpha values were consistently above 0.80 (0.860, 0.854, and 0.809 respectively). Discriminant validity was established through both Fornell-Larcker criterion and heterotrait-monotrait ratios (all HTMT < 0.85). These results not only validate the use of concise five-item scales in an Indonesian secondary-city student-worker population but also contribute a methodologically robust, culturally adaptable instrument set for future research in similar developing-economy contexts (13,14).

Table 2. Measurement Model Quality Criteria

Construct	Cronbach's α	ρ_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
CP	0.860	0.880	0.898	0.639
WLB	0.854	0.881	0.893	0.627
JP	0.809	0.810	0.867	0.566

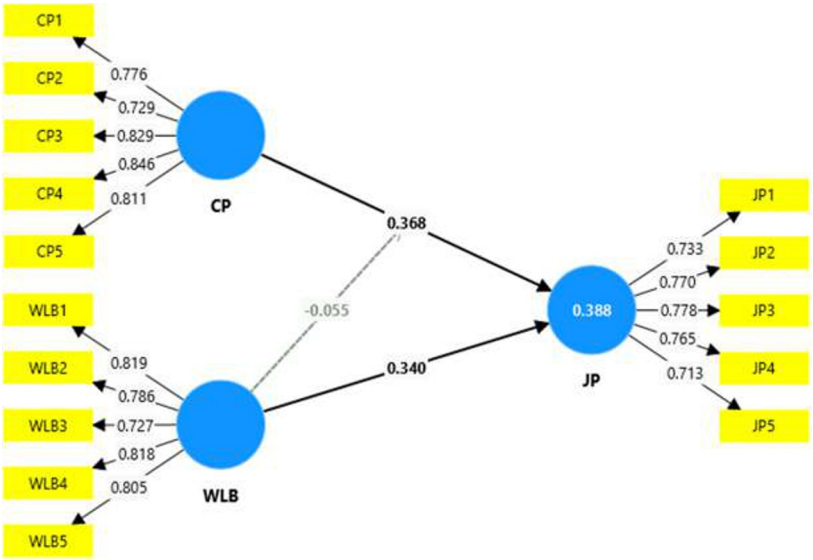


Figure 1. Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The structural model explained 38.8% of the variance in job performance ($R^2 = 0.388$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.381$), a value considered moderate-to-substantial in behavioural research involving student samples characterised by numerous uncontrolled exogenous influences (22). Predictive relevance was strong ($Q^2 = 0.359 > 0.35$), and out-of-sample predictive performance was superior to a naïve benchmark (RMSE = 0.812, MAE = 0.624). Effect sizes (f^2) revealed medium contributions from both main predictors: career planning ($f^2 = 0.166$) and work-study-life balance ($f^2 = 0.149$), while the interaction term exhibited a negligible effect ($f^2 = 0.006$).

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	SE	t-value	p-value	f^2	Decision
H1	CP → JP	0.368	0.058	6.353	0.000	0.166	Supported
H2	WLB → JP	0.340	0.055	6.232	0.000	0.149	Supported
H3	WLB × CP → JP	–0.055	0.057	0.970	0.332	0.006	Rejected

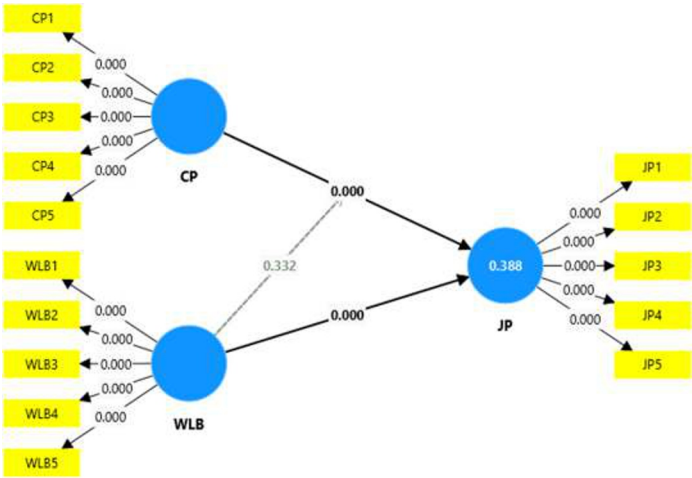


Figure 2. Structural Model / Inner Model

Career planning exerted the strongest direct influence on job performance (β = 0.368, SE = 0.058, t = 6.353, $p < 0.001$). This finding provides empirical confirmation that deliberate career goal-setting and strategic preparation constitute a powerful personal resource capable of enhancing workplace effectiveness even among individuals juggling intense academic and occupational demands. The result aligns closely with Akkermans et al. (2018), who demonstrated that career adaptability and competencies directly predict life satisfaction and indirectly enhance academic performance through heightened engagement. The present study extends this logic to part-time employment settings, showing that students who

possess a clear career vision and proactive planning strategies exhibit superior task completion, initiative, and overall contribution in their paid roles. Within the Job Demands-Resources framework, career planning appears to activate a motivational pathway that operates independently of external job characteristics, reinforcing its classification as a resilient personal resource (1,4,5,8).

Work-study-life balance emerged as a comparably strong independent predictor ($\beta = 0.340$, SE = 0.055, $t = 6.232$, $p < 0.001$). Students who perceive satisfactory harmony across study, work, and personal domain consistently deliver higher performance in their part-time jobs. This outcome corroborates the Study Demands-Resources extension of JD-R theory, which posits that effective boundary management and role integration mitigate the energy-depletion process and preserve motivational resources for task execution (1,23). Indonesian studies on young workers similarly report positive associations between work-life balance constructs and job satisfaction, an established proximal antecedent of performance (11,12). The near equivalence of the two path coefficients underscores that both personal (career planning) and contextual (balance) factors are critical drivers of performance in this population.

Most strikingly, the hypothesised moderating effect of work-study-life balance on the career planning and job performance relationship was not supported ($\beta = –0.055$, SE = 0.057, $t = 0.970$, $p = 0.332$). Although the negative sign hints at a potential weakening tendency under conditions of low balance, the effect is statistically indistinguishable from zero and practically negligible. This null finding represents a significant theoretical contribution, as explicit documentation of non-significant moderation in career-development models among Southeast Asian university students remains exceedingly rare (24). The robustness of career planning effects across varying levels of work-study-life balance challenges conventional boundary-management assumptions that personal resources require favourable external conditions to achieve maximum impact (10).

Several complementary mechanisms may account for this resilience. First, career planning fosters proactive job crafting behaviours deliberately expanding or reframing tasks, relationships, and cognitive interpretations of work. Which enable individuals to create more meaningful and manageable roles despite objective imbalance (8,17,18). Students with strong career vision appear capable of cognitively reappraising part-time jobs as steppingstones rather than burdens, thereby sustaining motivation and performance even when study work conflicts arise. Second, the overwhelmingly young Generation Z composition (93.4% aged 22 or younger) implies lower fixed family obligations and greater psychological flexibility during a life stage dominated by exploration rather than long-term role entrenchment (7). Third, most respondents maintained relatively light working hours (73% below 20 hours weekly), reducing the prevalence of extreme imbalance and consequently compressing variance in the moderator, though the interaction term remained non-significant even in subgroup analyses of higher-hour workers.

The absence of moderation enriches JD-R theorising by identifying a boundary condition under which personal resources retain efficacy independent of

work-life boundary status. In transitional, high-demand contexts typical of student employment in developing economies, career planning functions as a "stand-alone buffer" that does not require harmonious role integration to deliver performance gains. This insight contrasts with studies conducted among full-time adult employees, where work-life imbalance more consistently attenuates resource effects (10,25,26) and highlights developmental and contextual specificity in resource outcome dynamics.

The study's novelty is further amplified by its setting in Samarinda, a secondary city where labour-market structures, supervisory support, and university career services differ markedly from metropolitan hubs. Most JD-R research in Indonesia remains concentrated in Jakarta or Surabaya and focuses on permanent employees rather than student workers (11,12). By demonstrating that concise, validated instruments perform excellently and that career planning exerts robust effects in a resource-constrained non-metropolitan environment, the research addresses a critical geographic and demographic gap. The findings also carry methodological value: the five-item scales exhibited superior reliability and validity compared to longer instruments frequently abandoned due to respondent fatigue in time-poor student populations.

Practical implications are direct and actionable. Employers in secondary cities, particularly in retail, hospitality, and gig-e sectors can implement low-cost career-planning support initiatives (short mentoring sessions, transferable-skill certification pathways, or goal-setting workshops) with confidence that performance benefits will materialise even among students experiencing balance difficulties. The negligible interaction effect implies that such interventions need not be restricted to "high balance" individuals; broad-based implementation is justified. Universities, in turn, should integrate structured career-planning modules into orientation programmes and career-centre offerings, recognising that these interventions simultaneously enhance future employability and immediate workplace contribution that often finances studies (7,9).

In conclusion, career planning and work-study-life balance emerge as powerful, independent drivers of job performance among part-time working university students in an Indonesian secondary city, with career planning displaying marginal primacy. The non-significant moderating role of balance constitutes the study's most provocative finding: far from being contingent on harmonious role management, career planning operates as a resilient personal resource that sustains performance across the full spectrum of balance experiences. These results extend the explanatory reach of the Job Demands-Resources framework to non-metropolitan developing-economy contexts and position career planning as a uniquely cost-effective lever for enhancing productivity among Generation Z student workers.

4 Conclusions

4.1 Conlusion

This study demonstrates that career planning and work-study-life balance are important and independent drivers of job performance among part-time working university students in a non-metropolitan developing-economy context. Career planning emerges as a particularly resilient personal resource, sustaining job performance regardless of students perceived balance between academic, work, and personal roles.

Contrary to assumptions derived from boundary-management perspectives within the Job Demands Resources framework, the effectiveness of career planning does not depend on favourable balance conditions. Instead, career planning appears to operate as a stand-alone motivational resource that enables student workers to remain effective even under role strain. By extending JD-R and Study Demands-Resources theorising to secondary-city student employment contexts, this study refines existing understanding of how personal resources function during transitional and high-demand life stages.

From a practical perspective, the findings highlight the value of integrating structured career-planning support into university services and workplace practices. Such initiatives represent a cost-effective strategy for enhancing both immediate job performance and longer-term employability among part-time student workers.

4.2 Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that suggest directions for future research. The cross-sectional design limits causal inference, and future studies are encouraged to adopt longitudinal or experimental approaches to examine dynamic relationships between career planning, balance, and performance over time. In addition, reliance on self-reported job performance may introduce common-method bias; incorporating supervisor ratings or objective performance indicators would strengthen future investigations.

The sample was drawn from a single secondary city, which may constrain generalisability. Comparative studies across metropolitan and non-metropolitan settings, as well as across different cultural contexts, would help clarify contextual boundary conditions. Future research could also explore potential mediating mechanisms, such as job crafting, engagement, or future time perspective, to further illuminate how career planning sustains performance under conditions of role strain.

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