



Navigating Spousal Support and Work–Family Conflict: A Qualitative Dyadic Study of Female Entrepreneurs and Their Spouses

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ABSTRACT

This study explores work–family conflict crossover and the meaning of spousal support among female entrepreneurs and their husbands as dyadic units. A qualitative exploratory design was employed involving six married couples, comprising six female entrepreneurs and their husbands. Data were collected through separate semi-structured interviews with each spouse, followed by joint confirmation sessions. Reflexive thematic analysis and a dyadic framework method were used to compare individual and within-couple narratives. Four themes were identified: work–family conflict evolved from women's individual burdens into shared experiences, spousal support functioned as both a resource and a constraint on business growth, dyadic coping involved role redistribution, emotional regulation, communication, and boundary management, and entrepreneurial success was negotiated through shared family values. Spousal support varied along a continuum comprising facilitative, adaptive, authority-centered, and restrictive patterns, reflecting differences in needs alignment, decision-making authority, and entrepreneurial autonomy. Work–family conflict, spousal support, and entrepreneurial success should be understood as relational processes that couples continuously negotiate. The findings extend the spillover–crossover perspective by identifying spousal support as a relational continuum that can simultaneously facilitate entrepreneurial activity and constrain professional autonomy.

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■ INTRODUCTION

Female entrepreneurship is increasingly important in discussions of economic development because it contributes to income creation, household sustainability, and the expansion of women's participation in productive activities. In Indonesia, women are heavily involved in micro and small businesses that often operate from home, use family resources, and run alongside domestic work. The Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs of the Republic of Indonesia (2022) reported that more than 60% of micro, small, and medium enterprises are female-owned. Studies in Indonesia also show that culture, family support, social capital, entrepreneurial characteristics, and self-efficacy are related to work-life balance and female business success (Kurniawan et al., 2025). This shows that female entrepreneurs' success depends not only on product quality, capital, or market access, but also on the social conditions that allow them to run their businesses sustainably. However, increasing women's participation in entrepreneurship does not by itself eliminate the gender-based division

of responsibilities within the family. When business activities increase without a reduction in domestic responsibilities, entrepreneurship can empower women while also creating new sources of pressure.

The characteristics of entrepreneurship result in work-family relationships that differ from the formal worker experience. Entrepreneurs have greater autonomy to determine when, where, and how they work, so business activities are often seen as offering flexibility to meet family responsibilities. At the same time, this flexibility can blur the line between work and family life because working hours are uncertain, customer problems can arise outside working hours, and business owners bear direct responsibility for business continuity. Jennings & McDougald (2007) emphasize that the work-family interface is an important part of entrepreneurs' reality. However, it has long lacked an adequate place in explanations of entrepreneurial processes and outcomes. This is especially relevant for women who manage a home business because the workspace and the family space are often physically and temporally

integrated. Digital connectivity through mobile phones and marketing platforms also lets business needs enter mealtimes, parenting, and interactions with partners. On the other hand, children's needs, housework, and a partner's schedule can limit customer meetings, networking activities, business trips, or order acceptance. Therefore, entrepreneurial flexibility does not necessarily eliminate work-family conflicts, but it can shift the responsibility for managing boundaries onto female entrepreneurs and their families. Qualitative studies of women entrepreneurs likewise show that flexibility and control may support work-life balance while time pressure, domestic expectations, and gendered norms continue to constrain it (Rehman & Roomi, 2012; Ugwu et al., 2016).

Work-family conflict refers to the misalignment of work and family demands, where involvement in one role makes it difficult to fulfill the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). This conflict is two-way: work can disrupt family life, and family life can interfere with work. Conflicts can also arise from time constraints, pressure from one realm to another, and incompatible behaviors required in the two realms. All three forms have concrete manifestations in female entrepreneurs, such as being late to children's activities because orders are not completed, difficulty concentrating on family because of concerns about customers, or a habit of managing employees that carries over to interactions at home. A meta-analysis by Amstad et al. (2011) shows that work-family conflict is associated with a variety of consequences for work, family, and individuals, including lower satisfaction and psychological tension. In entrepreneurship, the consequences can be broader because the owner's welfare and the business's sustainability are often directly connected. Padovez-Cualheta et al. (2019) found that entrepreneurial careers are associated with high job and family satisfaction. However, interrole conflicts remain an important mechanism explaining the variation in the quality of these experiences. Thus, entrepreneurship is not a career choice that automatically facilitates family balance. The impact depends on how the demands of both domains are governed and supported.

The gender dimension makes work-family conflict asymmetrical between female and male entrepreneurs. A systematic review by Cardella et al. (2020) shows that research on female entrepreneurship has grown rapidly. However, attention remains concentrated on motivation, access to resources, structural barriers, and business performance, while family life is not consistently treated as an integral part of the entrepreneurial process. In Indonesia, this

issue is particularly relevant because domestic responsibilities remain unevenly distributed between women and men. Data from Statistics Indonesia indicate that, in February 2024, approximately 36.07 million women reported housekeeping as their primary activity, compared with only 3.43 million men. During the same period, women's labor force participation rate was 55.41%, substantially lower than men's rate of 84.02% (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). These figures illustrate how Indonesian households organize domestic and economic responsibilities by gender. Consistent with this context, Brieger et al. (2024) found that female entrepreneurs experience greater work-family conflict and lower well-being than male entrepreneurs. However, this disparity is smaller in more gender-egalitarian environments. Such findings suggest that conflict arises not only from business demands but also from social expectations regarding responsibility for childcare and household work. Although female entrepreneurs have formal autonomy as business owners, they must negotiate this autonomy with their roles as mothers and wives. Consequently, they often evaluate decisions about accepting projects, traveling, extending working hours, or expanding a business in terms of their potential consequences for the family. Under these circumstances, entrepreneurial success may extend beyond financial growth to include family harmony, parental involvement, and relationship sustainability. Evaluating success exclusively through conventional business indicators therefore risks overlooking the relational and family-related considerations that shape women's entrepreneurial decisions.

The literature places family support, particularly spousal support, as an important resource for female entrepreneurs. Powell and Eddleston (2013) show that family support and family-to-business enrichment can contribute to entrepreneurial success. However, the benefits do not always follow the same patterns for females and males. Welsh et al. (2023) also found that family support is a key ecosystem element in reducing the gap in gender-based entrepreneurial success. Among married women in Tamil Nadu, the couple's emotional and instrumental support relates to female entrepreneurs' decision-making, performance, success, and psychological well-being (Kiruthika & Geetha, 2024). Research in Indonesia reinforces the importance of the family by showing the relationship between family support, work-life balance, and female entrepreneurs' business success (Kurniawan et al., 2025). These forms of support can include providing capital, operational assistance, childcare, housework, information, emotional strengthening, and approval of women's

involvement in business. Partner support is therefore not just a personal background; it can determine women's time, energy, security, and decision-making space. Nonetheless, most of these studies measured support as a variable that individuals possess and linked it linearly to business outcomes or well-being. This approach does not fully explain how wives and husbands give, receive, negotiate, or perceive support differently in everyday life.

Framing family support only as a positive factor can also oversimplify its ambivalent nature. Ning et al. (2025), through qualitative research on female micro-entrepreneurs in Cameroon, found that family assistance provides financial and non-financial resources but often comes with obligations, demands for compensation, and restrictions that can reduce the benefits of initial support. The findings matter because support can maintain household welfare, not always encourage women's autonomy or business growth. In a couple relationship, the husband can provide capital and take over housework while also setting limits on the wife's working hours, mobility, or effort. Such boundaries can be interpreted by the husband as protection for the family, while the wife can experience it as a reduction in professional opportunities. Thus, the amount of support alone is not enough to explain its effect; the meaning, conditions, timing, and suitability of the support for female entrepreneurs' needs also need to be understood. Support that one party considers helpful is not necessarily the same for the other. Such ambivalence is hard to capture when data come only from female entrepreneurs or when support is reduced to aggregate scores. An approach that examines both partners' narratives is needed to distinguish supports that expand female entrepreneurs' capacities, supports that maintain existing role-sharing, and supports that do both.

Work–family conflict experienced by female entrepreneurs may also affect their husbands through spillover and crossover processes. Spillover occurs when experiences in one domain influence another domain within the same person, whereas crossover occurs when those experiences affect a partner's psychological state, behavior, or circumstances (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013). In this study, spillover was examined through three dimensions: (1) time-based spillover, when business demands reduced time for family responsibilities, (2) strain-based spillover, when work-related stress or exhaustion affected family interactions, and (3) behavior-based spillover, when patterns developed in business activities entered family life. Crossover was examined through direct pathways, such as empathy and

emotional transmission, and indirect pathways, including changes in communication, household responsibilities, parenting arrangements, and spousal support. Previous studies demonstrate that work demands can affect partners through burnout, family interactions, and emotional transmission (Huang et al., 2023; Ilies et al., 2024; Ratnaningsih & Idris, 2024). However, existing evidence largely relies on quantitative studies of organizational employees, offering limited insight into how these processes unfold among entrepreneurial couples.

In Indonesia, Hamsyah et al. (2024) demonstrated that work experiences among dual-earner couples are associated with partners' well-being through work–family conflict, enrichment, and recovery. However, entrepreneurial work involves flexible schedules, personal business risks, and more permeable work–family boundaries, so these dynamics may differ. Husbands may also assume multiple roles, emotional supporters, business assistants, mentors, or informal decision-makers, creating shifting patterns of support and conflict. Accordingly, this study used time, strain, and behavior-based spillover, alongside direct and indirect crossover, as *sensitizing concepts* to examine interview narratives. Comparisons between spouses' accounts explored how business-related demands entered family life and influenced husbands' emotions, responsibilities, and involvement in entrepreneurial decisions, while allowing themes to develop reflexively from participants' experiences.

Entrepreneurship research increasingly examines subjective experiences beyond financial outcomes. Dirik and Özdoğan (2025) identified autonomy, identity, challenge, resilience, recognition, support, and work–life balance as sources of meaningful entrepreneurial work. For married female entrepreneurs, family can provide meaning while also constraining business decisions. Although previous studies have highlighted family support and work–life balance among Indonesian women (Kurniawan et al., 2025), the benefits of husbands' support (Kiruthika & Geetha, 2024), and the complexity of broader family support (Ning et al., 2025), they have rarely examined these processes through the perspectives of both spouses.

There are still three gaps that need to be filled. First, we still do not understand how work and family conflict develop within couples. Second, insufficient attention is paid to how entrepreneurial demands spill over onto husbands. Third, researchers tend to treat spousal support as uniformly beneficial, despite its potential to restrict women's business opportunities. A dyadic approach enables the identification of shared, divergent,

complementary, and responsive experiences between partners (Collaço et al., 2021), while illuminating how Indonesian couples negotiate gender roles, economic needs, and entrepreneurial aspirations.

Accordingly, this study examines work–family conflict, crossover, and spousal support among female entrepreneurs and their husbands through three questions:

1. How do female entrepreneurs experience work–family conflict, and how do these experiences cross over to their husbands?
2. How do wives and husbands similarly or differently interpret and respond to business-related family demands?
3. How does spousal support function as both a resource and a constraint in managing work–family demands and negotiating entrepreneurial success?

Based on separate interviews with six couples, the study conceptualizes conflict, support, coping, and entrepreneurial success as relational processes. Its findings explain how couples negotiate role distribution, emotional regulation, communication, and work–family boundaries, informing entrepreneurship programs that support business sustainability alongside family well-being.

METHOD

Because the study addressed sensitive experiences involving work–family conflict and marital relationships, the researchers established ethical safeguards before data collection. Ethical approval was obtained from the KPIN Research Ethics Committee (Approval No. 388/2025 Etik/KPIN, December 6, 2025). Each spouse provided informed consent individually and was

informed of the right to decline questions, pause, or withdraw without consequences. Separate interviews reduced partner pressure and self-censorship, while information disclosed individually was not shared with the other spouse. Direct and indirect identifiers were removed or generalized, quotations were screened for identifiable details, and data were stored in password-protected files accessible only to the research team. Couples were coded R1–R6, with identifiers distinguishing wife, husband, and joint-session accounts.

Informants

The study included six married couples: six female entrepreneurs and their husbands. Participants were recruited through personal networks using purposive sampling. Eligibility required that wives were the primary business operators, lived with their husbands, and that both spouses agreed to participate. Couples were selected to reflect variations in business type, age, family life stage, business duration, and spousal involvement. Each couple was treated as a dyadic unit while preserving the wife’s and husband’s perspectives as distinct data sources.

The female entrepreneurs were aged 23–55 years, and their husbands were aged 23–56 years. Businesses included food and beverages, management consultancy, bakery products, skincare, and laundry, ranging from small home-based operations to enterprises with multiple branches and family involvement. These variations provided different contexts for examining work–family conflict, spousal support, and dyadic coping strategies.

Table 1. Demographic and Business Characteristics of Participating Couples

Dyad	Wife’s age/ education	Husband’s age/ education	Husband’s occupation	Marriage Duration	Children	Business profile
R1	33/ Bachelor’s degree	34/ Bachelor’s degree	State-owned enterprise employee	6 years	One child, aged 2	Homemade juice and pickles; 5 years; one employee
R2	42/ Bachelor’s degree	42/ Master’s degree	Senior manager	18 years	Two children, aged 15 and 7	Management consultancy; 12 years; seven employees
R3	38/ Bachelor’s degree	40/ Master’s degree	Bank branch manager	16 years	Three children,	Bakery and custom cakes; 8

Dyad	Wife's age/ education	Husband's age/ education	Husband's occupation	Marriage Duration	Children	Business profile
					aged 14, 10, and 5	years; four employees
R4	36/ Diploma	38/ Master's degree	Oil and gas engineer	15 years	Two children, aged 11 and 8	Skincare distribution; 6 years; three employees
R5	23/ Diploma	23/ Bachelor's degree	Hospitality employee	2 years	No children	Online food and beverage business; 2 years; one employee
R6	55/ Senior high school	56/ Bachelor's degree	Hospitality employee	27 years	Three adult children	Laundry business; 8 years; two branches; five to six employees

Research Design and Approach

This exploratory qualitative study used a dyadic design to examine work–family conflict, crossover experiences, spousal support, and coping strategies among female entrepreneurs and their husbands. Each spouse was treated as an individual informant and as part of an interdependent couple (Wheeler et al., 2018). Individual-level analysis preserved distinct accounts, whereas dyadic analysis examined congruence, divergence, complementarity, and partner responsiveness. The design therefore enabled the study to examine how one spouse's experiences affected the other and how couples negotiated business and family demands (Hammer et al., 1997). The spillover-crossover framework guided attention to time-, strain-, and behavior-based processes without preventing inductive themes from emerging. Reporting was guided by the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ; Tong et al., 2007).

Data Collection

Data were collected offline between December 2025 and March 2026 through semi-structured interviews. The interview guide covered three areas: (1) work–family and family–work conflict, (2) crossover of time demands, strain, and behavior between spouses, and (3) strategies used to manage these demands. Wives were asked about their business and family routines, role distribution, work–family interference, responses to pressure, support needs, and expectations for family

life and business development. Husbands were asked about their wives' entrepreneurial roles, changes in family schedules and responsibilities, responses to their wives' fatigue or business pressures, support provided, and couple decision-making. Participants also explored family and religious values when they considered them relevant to business and family priorities.

Wives and husbands were interviewed separately before participating in a joint session. Separate interviews served as the primary data source, allowing each spouse to describe their experiences without correction, pressure, or domination by the partner. Joint sessions were used only to clarify shared events, examine how decisions were negotiated, and identify convergent or divergent perspectives. They did not replace either spouse's individual account.

To reduce power-asymmetry bias, the interviewer invited each spouse to respond in turn, prevented interruptions, and did not require consensus. Hesitation, repeated deference, contradictions, or changes from individual accounts were treated as possible indications of relational pressure and examined against the separate interviews. When discomfort emerged, the interviewer redirected questions individually, paused or changed the topic, and offered private follow-up. These procedures reflected methodological concerns regarding power and silencing in couple interviews (Polak & Green, 2016; Zarhin, 2018).

Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes and was conducted by interviewers with psychology backgrounds. With participants'

consent, interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, de-identified, and labeled according to dyad (R1–R6) and source (wife, husband, or joint session).

Data Analysis and Data Validity

Analysis was conducted in two stages. First, wives' and husbands' transcripts were read and coded separately to preserve their individual perspectives before within-dyad comparison. Meaning units related to role demands, conflict, time allocation, emotional strain, behavior, spousal support, boundary management, family values, and meanings of success were identified. This process produced 86 meaningful excerpts, each linked to a descriptive code, dyad, and source. Coding combined sensitizing concepts from the spillover–crossover framework with inductively developed codes. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and refine themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021). NVivo supported data organization, excerpt retrieval, source attribution, and comparison, while researchers remained responsible for interpretation.

Second, the separately analyzed accounts were entered into a dyadic framework matrix for each couple (Collaço et al., 2021). The matrix covered couple context, conflict interpretations, time-, strain-, and behavior-based processes, crossover, spousal support, coping, boundary management, and entrepreneurial success. Accounts were categorized as congruent when independently expressed interpretations were substantively similar, divergent when spouses interpreted the same event differently, complementary when one account extended the other, and reciprocal when one spouse's experience prompted the other's response or adjustment. Statements made only during joint sessions were recorded separately and were not classified as congruent unless both individual interviews supported them. Cross-case analysis subsequently identified recurring and contrasting patterns across R1–R6.

Data validity was strengthened through source triangulation and analytical cross-checking. Separate accounts were compared, and joint sessions were used for clarification, while unresolved differences were retained as findings. The research team checked coded excerpts, theme definitions, contrasting cases, and dyadic matrices against verbatim transcripts. Interpretive differences were resolved by returning to the source data and documenting the rationale for final classifications. Source identifiers, NVivo records, and case matrices formed an audit trail linking transcripts, codes, dyadic patterns, and themes (Nowell et al., 2017).

This procedure triangulated perspectives, not actual activities, because the study did not include observation, time-use diaries, or activity logs. Quotations were translated into English and checked against the Indonesian transcripts to preserve contextual meaning.

■ RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 presents a thematic map of the dyadic patterns identified across six entrepreneurial couples. The map is organized into three interconnected components: key work–family situations, spouses' responses, and the resulting dyadic patterns. Key situations represent business or family demands that generate tension, such as childcare responsibilities, business expansion, increased orders, work-related travel, or emotional exhaustion. Spouses' responses describe how husbands and wives interpret and manage these demands through practical assistance, emotional support, negotiation, or role redistribution. The resulting dyadic patterns capture how their experiences relate, including congruence, divergence, complementarity, and partner responsiveness (Collaço et al., 2021; Eisikovits & Koren, 2010; Falconier & Kuhn, 2019; Vogl et al., 2018).

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between key work–family situations, spouses' responses, and the dominant dyadic patterns identified across six entrepreneurial couples. The analysis compares wives' and husbands' narratives to identify overlaps, differences, and complementarities, consistent with qualitative dyadic and multiperspective approaches (Collaço et al., 2021; Eisikovits & Koren, 2010; Vogl et al., 2018). Congruence refers to shared interpretations or priorities, divergence reflects differences in meaning or expectations, and complementarity describes situations in which one spouse's account or actions extend or supplement the other's (Eisikovits & Koren, 2010; Vogl et al., 2018). Partner responsiveness is considered separately to capture emotional, behavioral, or practical adjustments to the other spouse's experience, as reflected in the spillover–crossover model and research on dyadic coping (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013; Falconier & Kuhn, 2019).

R1 demonstrated congruence and complementarity through shared childcare priorities and the husband's involvement in parenting. R2 showed divergence because the spouses interpreted restrictions on business activities differently, requiring negotiation. R3, R4, and R5 illustrated complementarity and partner responsiveness through adjustments in parenting, household responsibilities, and emotional support. R6 reflected complementary

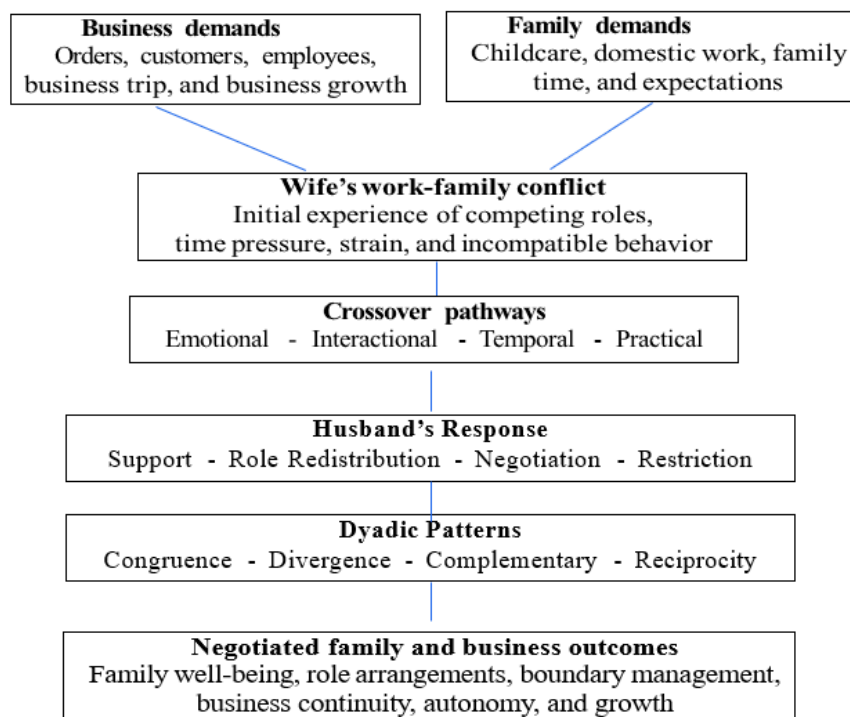


Figure 1. Relational Process Model of Work-Family Conflict and Dyadic Responses

family involvement alongside an asymmetrical distribution of business authority. These variations indicate that business-related strain does not remain confined to female entrepreneurs but extends into their partners' experiences and family arrangements, consistent with the interpersonal processes described by Bakker and Demerouti (2013). The findings also show that spouses respond to these demands through different combinations of practical support, emotional adjustment, and role redistribution, as outlined in the dyadic coping literature (Falconier & Kuhn, 2019).

Theme 1. Conflict That Begins as a Wife's Burden Develops into a Shared Experience

Across the dyads, work–family conflict generally emerged from female entrepreneurs' efforts to manage business demands alongside family responsibilities. However, its intensity and expression varied according to family circumstances, business characteristics, and the husband's involvement. Although the wife often described the initial pressure, its consequences extended to the husband through changes in childcare arrangements, emotional interactions, domestic responsibilities, and business participation.

In R1, conflict emerged when customer orders coincided with a young child's needs. The wife described the situation as a difficult

choice: "On one side, customers have already placed their orders, but on the other side, my child also needs me. Both feel equally important." When her child became ill, she canceled orders despite feeling uncomfortable about disappointing customers. The husband did not report experiencing the same stress, but he supported the decision and helped with childcare. Their joint interview illustrates how an individual dilemma became a shared family response:

Wife: "When I am busy, or our child is sick, we immediately share the responsibilities. I focus on the child when the situation requires attention, while explaining any delay or cancellation to the customer." Husband: "I usually help by looking after our child or listening when my wife feels confused. We do not blame each other."

The same alignment was evident when they reflected on a specific incident:

Wife: "When our child was sick, and I had to cancel an order, my husband never blamed me for that decision." Husband: "I believe it was the right decision. Customers can still be explained, but a child's health cannot be postponed. In that situation, I felt that we shared the same priorities."

These accounts indicate a congruent understanding of family priorities and a complementary response: the wife experienced the initial role conflict. At the same time, the husband helped manage its consequences without necessarily sharing her emotional distress.

In R2, the wife's business demands also became a relational concern, but the spouses interpreted the situation differently. Opportunities to expand her consulting business sometimes required weekend or family-time work. The husband viewed restrictions on weekend work as necessary to protect family togetherness, whereas the wife experienced the same restrictions as limiting her professional development. Here, the crossover process emerged through disagreement and negotiation over business boundaries rather than direct emotional transmission.

R3 and R4 demonstrated more visible changes in family routines and emotional interactions. In R3, the wife reported arriving late to a child-related activity because she needed to complete customer orders. She also explained that employees sometimes depended on her decisions when family responsibilities required her to leave the production site. These competing demands generated pressure as a business owner and guilt as a mother. Her husband observed that "when my wife is stressed, the atmosphere at home becomes tense," and responded by taking over some childcare responsibilities. This pattern reflects partner responsiveness: the wife's strain influenced the home environment and prompted the husband to adjust his role.

A similar process appeared in R4, where business travel and sales targets affected both spouses. After returning home, the wife remained preoccupied with work, while her husband described feeling worried even though he did not manage the business himself. When she traveled, he adjusted his routine by preparing breakfast, accompanying the children, and handling household responsibilities. In this dyad, crossover involved both the husband's emotional concern and the redistribution of practical family duties.

In R5, the crossover process occurred through changes in communication and emotional availability. The wife explained that increased orders and domestic responsibilities sometimes left her exhausted. Rather than expressing her frustration immediately, she chose to remain silent and spend time alone to prevent an emotional outburst. Although her husband did not report sharing her stress, her withdrawal initially created uncertainty about how he should respond. As the wife explained:

"My mood can change. However, I prefer to remain silent and spend some time alone rather than letting my emotions get out of control. I do that to prevent a bigger argument. My husband sometimes feels confused about how to respond and asks, 'I do not know what I should do. What do you want me to do?'"

The husband's account clarifies how this initial uncertainty developed into a more responsive form of support:

"I understand that when my wife is tired, she needs time for herself or quality time together. We have talked about this before. Usually, I take the initiative to buy something she likes so that she feels better."

His response also included giving her a massage, helping with household tasks, or assisting with business-related activities when his work schedule allowed. The transition from confusion to practical support therefore occurred through prior conversations, recognition of the wife's emotional cues, and adjustments to her stated preferences. Rather than indicating an immediate or automatic understanding, this pattern demonstrates how responsiveness developed through communication and repeated interaction.

R6 presented a different configuration because the business was already integrated into everyday family life. The wife spent most of her time at the laundry business, while the husband contributed operational expertise, handled customer complaints, and helped when employees were unavailable. Their adult children also participated when additional support was needed. Consequently, the family distributed business-related demands rather than shifting them only from the wife to the husband.

However, shared operational involvement did not necessarily mean that both spouses experienced the same emotional strain. The husband explicitly stated, *"If both of us become stressed, the situation will become more difficult."* He therefore attempted to remain calm, sometimes delaying discussion until the situation affected the family or business more directly. In this dyad, crossover was most evident in shared responsibilities, coordinated problem-solving, and integrating business demands into family routines, rather than in the direct transmission of stress.

Overall, the findings indicate that work-family conflict extended beyond female entrepreneurs through several relational pathways: shared childcare responsibilities in R1, negotiation over business boundaries in

R2, emotional concern and domestic role adjustments in R3 and R4, communication-based responsiveness in R5, and collective business involvement in R6. These patterns show that crossover does not require both spouses to experience identical emotions; it can also occur when one spouse's business demands alter the other spouse's responsibilities, interpretations, or responses.

Theme 2. Spousal Support as Both a Resource and a Constraint on Business Growth

Spousal support appeared across all six dyads, but its meaning varied by the wife's needs, the husband's level of involvement, and the couple's assumptions about family roles. Support included emotional reassurance, childcare, domestic assistance, financial contributions, and direct participation in business activities. However, comparing the spouses' accounts showed that support could simultaneously facilitate entrepreneurship and limit the wife's professional autonomy.

In R1, support was primarily emotional and practical. The wife emphasized that she needed someone to listen when business and childcare demands became overwhelming:

"I need someone to listen to me. Sometimes, I simply want to talk when I feel confused. My husband usually reassures me and tells me not to worry too much. That already helps me considerably." (R1, wife)

The husband described a corresponding response:

"When my wife is busy, I usually take over childcare or help with light household tasks so that she can complete her orders." (R1, husband)

These accounts show congruence between the wife's expressed needs and the husband's understanding of how to help. His support did not involve controlling business decisions or managing operations; instead, it reduced the domestic and emotional pressures that interfered with her ability to complete customer orders.

In R3 and R4, support involved a more explicit redistribution of family responsibilities. When demand increased in R3's bakery business, the husband accompanied the children to school activities and tutoring, and occasionally helped deliver orders. The wife explained:

"During busy periods, my husband often takes over the responsibility of taking the children to their tutoring sessions or

attending school meetings. Several times, he has also helped deliver orders when the couriers were fully booked." (R3, wife)

In R4, the husband assumed household and childcare responsibilities when his wife traveled for business:

"When I travel outside the city, my husband takes the children to school, prepares breakfast, and helps with the household tasks I usually handle. He really has to change his routine." (R4, wife)

In both dyads, support operated through complementary role adjustments. The husbands did not necessarily participate extensively in the core business, but their willingness to assume family responsibilities enabled the wives to meet operational demands or maintain professional mobility.

R5 presented a combination of financial, practical, and emotional support shaped by the husband's changing work schedule. Because he worked rotating shifts, assistance depended on his availability rather than continuous involvement. He explained:

"First, I provide financial support. When possible, I also help prepare food ingredients because my wife runs a food business through an online ordering service. In addition, I provide emotional support and encouragement." (R5, husband)

The husband also described how he responded when his wife became exhausted:

"I take the initiative to help. For example, after the work is finished, I give her a massage, buy her favorite food, or do other things that she enjoys." (R5, husband)

The wife adjusted her business schedule to align with her husband's days off, while he used his available time to help with household tasks or business preparations. Their arrangement therefore involved mutual adjustment, though the forms of support depended on his work schedule. During the joint session, the wife described the relational meaning of this arrangement:

"A burden that is carried together feels lighter than one that is faced alone. We can share with each other even though we may think differently, because ultimately our goals remain the same." (R5, wife; joint session)

In R6, support was embedded in an integrated family-business arrangement. The husband provided capital, operational guidance, and help with technically demanding laundry services, while the couple's adult children supported delivery and promotion. The husband described this distribution of responsibilities:

"We complement one another in running the business. Without my wife, the business would not operate. Without the children or me, it would not run properly either. Each person has different tasks and abilities. One of our children helps ensure that orders reach customers. My wife handles marketing so that the business becomes known to the community. I provide financial support, while another child helps prepare promotional materials such as pamphlets and banners. Therefore, the business operates through the contributions of all family members."(R6, husband)

Although this account shows extensive operational support and complementary expertise, the business's origin also reveals an unequal marital framework. The husband explained:

"Around 2016 or 2017, I asked my wife to stop working and spend more time at home. After she stopped working, she had few activities, so I suggested starting a laundry business. I had some knowledge of the field and helped establish the business."(R6, husband)

The wife similarly interpreted her professional activities through a gendered understanding of marital roles:

"I used to work in an office, and the job required overtime and business travel. I felt uncomfortable when a wife traveled frequently while her husband remained at home. Therefore, I felt that I had to yield. However, yielding does not mean losing. In my view, as a wife, my activities should not exceed my husband's activities."(R6, wife)

However, this asymmetry did not eliminate the wife's decision-making authority within the business. She described having primary responsibility for employee-related decisions:

"Problems involving employees are generally my responsibility. Usually, I make the initial decision. If I cannot decide, or if my husband has a different consideration, we can discuss the decision further. However, if someone has

taken money and acted dishonestly, I do not want to keep that employee."(R6, wife)

Thus, R6 cannot be characterized simply as a husband-controlled business. Instead, the dyad combined hierarchical marital expectations with complementary responsibilities and the wife's authority in specific operational domains. Spousal support enabled business participation while remaining embedded in assumptions about permission, family hierarchy, and appropriate roles.

The tension between support and restriction was most visible in R2. The husband described himself as supportive because he provided additional capital and accepted his wife's entrepreneurial activities. However, this support was conditional on preserving weekends for family life:

"I have supported my wife in running her business from the beginning. I have even helped by providing additional capital. However, I also set one condition: she should not work on weekends. I want weekends to remain dedicated to the family."(R2, husband)

He further explained that his income was sufficient to support the household, which reduced the perceived need for the business to expand substantially. The wife, however, understood these arrangements differently:

"More precisely, my family limits my freedom of movement. I feel this business could grow if I had more flexibility to build professional relationships. Sometimes, I see younger consultants meeting clients in the evening and taking part in various networking activities, while I go home. As a result, there are several opportunities that I eventually have to give up."(R2, wife)

Her concern therefore extended beyond immediate income to professional growth, networking opportunities, and entrepreneurial identity. Although the couple discussed important business decisions together, the wife acknowledged that she was usually the one who adjusted:

"We discuss it. If the project is very important, we try to find a middle ground. However, if it is not particularly urgent, I am usually the one who yields."(R2, wife)

Their joint interview shows how agreement could coexist with unequal consequences:

Wife: “I received an offer for a fairly large project, but it required considerable time during weekends. We discussed it for quite a while and eventually decided not to accept the project.” Husband: “It was not an easy decision. However, we felt more at ease because we made it together. In my opinion, the business can still find other opportunities, whereas time spent with the family cannot be repeated.” (R2, joint session)

The R2 accounts reveal a divergent dyadic pattern: the husband interpreted boundaries as protective support, whereas the wife experienced those same boundaries as restricting professional opportunities. Consequently, support cannot be evaluated solely by identifying whether husbands provide money, assistance, or encouragement. Its meaning depends on how both spouses interpret the arrangement, whose priorities shape business decisions, and who bears the consequences when family and entrepreneurial goals conflict.

Across the six dyads, spousal support formed a continuum from facilitative assistance in R1, through adaptive role redistribution in R3, R4, and R5, to authority-centered but operationally collaborative support in R6 and explicitly conditional support in R2. This variation indicates that support is neither inherently beneficial nor restrictive; its implications emerge from how each couple distributes practical assistance, relational expectations, and decision-making authority.

Theme 3. Dyadic Coping through Role Sharing, Emotional Regulation, and Communication

The couples managed work–family conflict through interconnected strategies, including sharing responsibilities, regulating emotional responses, communicating about competing demands, and adjusting business practices. Although both spouses used these strategies, they applied them differently based on family circumstances, business characteristics, and how decision-making authority was distributed.

In R1, coping primarily involved situational role sharing when business demands coincided with childcare responsibilities. Rather than following a fixed arrangement, the couple adjusted their contributions according to the child’s needs and the wife’s workload. Their joint interview illustrates this process:

Wife: “When I am busy, or our child is sick, we immediately share the responsibilities. I focus on the child when the situation requires attention, while explaining any delay or cancellation to the customer.” Husband: “I usually help by looking after our child or

listening when my wife feels confused. We do not blame each other.” (R1, joint session)

This exchange shows that practical help and emotional reassurance were closely linked. The husband’s involvement reduced the wife’s immediate pressure, while avoiding blame helped maintain a shared understanding of family priorities.

In R3, role sharing extended beyond childcare to changes in business organization. During busy periods, the husband took on additional responsibilities for the children, while the wife began delegating work to employees. She explained:

“I am starting to learn how to delegate tasks to my employees. Previously, I had to handle everything myself. Now, I am beginning to trust that employees can take on some responsibilities, giving me more time for my family.” (R3, wife)

The couple also negotiated how many orders the business could realistically accommodate. During the joint session, the wife described a specific decision:

“Before Eid last year, the number of orders almost doubled. At first, I wanted to accept all of them, but my husband reminded me not to exceed our capacity. Eventually, we limited the number of orders. That decision allowed us to complete all the work on time without sacrificing our health or time with the family.” (R3, wife; joint session)

In this dyad, coping involved more than the husband temporarily taking over family responsibilities. It also required restructuring operational decisions so business growth remained compatible with the family’s capacity.

R4 demonstrated a more anticipatory form of coping. Because the wife’s work occasionally required travel, the couple discussed arrangements before accepting activities that could disrupt family routines. The wife described how they prepared for a three-day professional training event:

“Last year, I had the opportunity to attend a national distributor training program for three days. Starting a week beforehand, we arranged how responsibilities would be divided, including the children’s school schedules and household needs. Everything went smoothly because we trusted and helped each other.” (R4, wife; joint session)

The husband confirmed that these arrangements required adjustments to his own schedule:

"When my wife travels outside the city, I take over almost all responsibilities involving the children. I have to adjust my work schedule so that I can still take them to school and pick them up." (R4, husband)

These accounts indicate that dyadic coping was not limited to responding after conflict. Planning enabled the couple to anticipate potential disruptions and distribute responsibilities before the wife's professional activities interfered with family routines.

In R5, emotional regulation functioned as an initial step before joint problem-solving. When exhausted, the wife preferred to withdraw temporarily rather than continue an interaction while emotionally overwhelmed. She explained:

"We agree to calm down first. When someone is angry, emotions can run out of control, and a person may say things they should not. Therefore, we take a break. Only after we have both calmed down do we discuss the problem." (R5, wife)

The couple confirmed this shared approach during the joint session:

"In our relationship, there are similarities that make us compatible. One of them is that when we face a problem, we both need some time alone first. We have agreed to take a pause, calm ourselves, and then discuss the issue again with a clear mind." (R5, joint session)

This temporary withdrawal should not be interpreted as avoidance or disengagement. Instead, it served as an agreed strategy to reduce emotional intensity before communication resumed. The wife further explained that, when her husband felt insufficiently prioritized, she first acknowledged his feelings and then discussed how similar situations could be handled differently:

"Sometimes my husband feels that I focus too much on the business, even though I have tried to divide my time as well as possible. He can feel less prioritized, especially when he is tired from work and wants more attention. On the other hand, I feel that I have already prepared breakfast and fulfilled my responsibilities. However, if he still feels neglected, I usually apologize first. After that, we talk and evaluate better ways to deal with similar situations." (R5, wife)

Accordingly, R5's coping developed through a sequence of temporary separation, emotional stabilization, direct discussion, and practical adjustment.

R6 also delayed discussion until emotional tension decreased, but the process occurred within a broader family-business system. The husband described his approach:

"I usually step away first until the situation becomes calmer. After that, we discuss what actually happened and look for a solution." (R6, husband)

Business-related problems were subsequently addressed through family discussions after the workday ended:

"We usually discuss problems after the shop closes and we are already at home. We talk about what happened and the possible solutions. As the head of the family, I usually offer an initial solution first. After that, my wife and children provide their input." (R6, husband)

These accounts suggest that emotional regulation and collective problem-solving were closely connected. However, the husband's description also indicates that participation occurred within an unequal family structure: he typically initiated the discussion, while other family members subsequently contributed their perspectives. Dyadic and family coping therefore involved coordination, but not necessarily equal influence.

R2 further demonstrates that communication did not always resolve competing interests equally. The couple discussed opportunities that required additional evening or weekend commitments, but preserving family time often depended on the wife limiting her business activities. She explained:

"We discuss it. If the project is very important, we try to find a middle ground. However, if it is not particularly urgent, I am usually the one who yields." (R2, wife)

During the joint session, the spouses described a decision concerning a substantial project:

Wife: "I received an offer for a fairly large project, but it required considerable time during weekends. We discussed it for quite a while and eventually decided not to accept the project." Husband: "It was not an easy decision. However, we felt more at ease because we made it together. In my opinion, the business can still find other opportunities,

whereas time spent with the family cannot be repeated.”(R2, joint session)

Although both spouses described the decision as negotiated, their individual accounts suggest the consequences were not equally distributed. The husband protected family time, while the wife gave up a professional development opportunity. In this case, the agreement reflected a negotiated outcome rather than evidence that both partners’ priorities were fulfilled equally.

Across the dyads, coping also involved adjusting the structure and pace of business activities. R1 maintained a manageable number of orders rather than intensifying promotion. R2 pursued gradual business development and declined opportunities that conflicted with family commitments. R3 delegated responsibilities and limited production volume, while R4 established working-hour boundaries and transferred selected tasks to administrative staff. R5 used the flexibility of a home-based business to coordinate time with her husband’s rotating shifts. R6 distributed operational responsibilities among family members based on their contributions.

Overall, dyadic coping emerged as a relational process combining practical role redistribution, emotional regulation, communication, and business adjustments. However, its outcomes varied across couples. In some dyads, these strategies produced complementary cooperation, whereas in others, particularly R2 and R6, they remained shaped by unequal authority and gendered expectations.

Theme 4. Entrepreneurial Success Negotiated within Family Boundaries and Shared Values

Across the six dyads, participants did not define entrepreneurial success solely by financial growth, business expansion, or increased sales. Participants also considered parental presence, family relationships, personal well-being, religious values, and the business’s long-term sustainability. However, couples did not always share the same meaning of success. In some couples, these priorities reinforced each other, whereas in others, they reflected ongoing negotiations between entrepreneurial aspirations and gendered family expectations.

In R1, success was tied to gradual business growth that remained compatible with caring for a young child. The wife did not reject future growth, but expected her entrepreneurial involvement to change as her child became more independent:

“I hope the business can grow gradually without reducing the time I spend with my

family. I also hope that when my child is older, I will be able to focus more on developing the business.”(R1, wife)

Her husband expressed a similar expectation:

“I hope her business grows, but not at the expense of our time together as a family. The values we always hold are gratitude and the belief that our sustenance has already been determined by Allah.” (R1, husband)

These accounts suggest a congruent understanding of success as sustainable growth adjusted to the family’s current circumstances. The postponement of more intensive business development was understood as a temporary response to childcare needs rather than a rejection of the wife’s entrepreneurial aspirations.

In R3, entrepreneurial success was explicitly evaluated against the quality of family relationships and the couple’s ability to preserve their health. During a period of increased demand, the spouses chose not to accept every available order:

Wife: “Before Eid last year, the number of orders almost doubled. At first, I wanted to accept all of them, but my husband reminded me not to exceed our capacity. Eventually, we limited the number of orders. That decision allowed us to complete all the work on time without sacrificing our health or time with the family.” Husband: “In my opinion, that experience showed that we were learning to make decisions together. We both want the business to grow, but we also agree that business success should not come at the expense of the quality of our family relationships.”(R3, joint session)

The wife similarly explained that she wanted her children to recognize both her professional achievements and her continued presence in their lives:

“I hope this business continues to grow. However, I also want my children to feel that I am present in their lives. I want them to be proud that their mother works without neglecting the family.”(R3, wife)

Success in this dyad therefore involved maintaining business development while protecting the emotional and relational conditions that enabled the family to support it.

A similar orientation appeared in R4, although the couple emphasized organizational improvements rather than limiting growth itself. The wife wanted her children to remember their

parents as present and involved despite her professional activities:

"I hope this business continues to grow. However, I also want my children to remember their childhood as a time when both of their parents remained present in their lives."(R4, wife)

The husband supported continued expansion but associated sustainable growth with improved delegation and business systems:

"I hope my wife's business continues to grow, but with the support of a better system so that she does not have to be present for every activity. That way, the family can still have enough time together."(R4, husband)

Their accounts indicate a complementary understanding of success. The wife emphasized parental presence, while the husband identified organizational improvements that could make business growth compatible with family life. Growth was not rejected; rather, it was expected to become less dependent on the wife's constant availability.

In R5, entrepreneurial success depended on flexibility, ongoing spousal support, and the ability to maintain a cooperative relationship despite the husband's rotating work schedule. The wife explained that operating a home-based business allowed her to coordinate work with family time:

"That is why I chose to run a business from home. Besides having control over it, I can also adjust my days off to my husband's schedule so that conflict can be minimized."(R5, wife)

During the joint session, she further described shared responsibility as an important foundation for their relationship:

"A burden that is carried together feels lighter than one that is faced alone. We can share with each other even though we may think differently, because ultimately our goals remain the same."(R5, wife; joint session)

The husband also expressed a clear aspiration for business growth:

"I hope her business continues to develop and becomes increasingly successful."(R5, husband)

Taken together, these accounts suggest that success involved both entrepreneurial progress

and preserving a supportive marital relationship. Business flexibility mattered because it let the couple maintain shared time and adjust to their different schedules.

In R6, success extended beyond the couple to include the family business's continuity across generations. The husband explained that business development was important because it could provide future opportunities for their adult children:

"We hope the business continues to grow and become more successful. Our children are already adults and have decided not to work in offices. If the business continues to develop, we can pass it on to them. They will not have to start as pioneers but can become the next generation of the family business. However, we do not want to simply hand it over without preparing them. The children must be involved from now on so they understand the business's needs, know how to solve problems, and can develop their own ideas. Eventually, they should be able to run the business without us having to remain its main driving force."(R6, husband)

For this family, success meant economic continuity, transferring practical knowledge, and collective participation in sustaining the business. However, these shared goals existed alongside an unequal marital framework. The wife understood her activities through expectations about her position relative to her husband, while also exercising authority over employee-related decisions. Consequently, family-business continuity coexisted with both role asymmetry and domain-specific agency.

The clearest difference in how spouses understood success emerged in R2. The husband evaluated the business primarily in relation to household financial security and family time:

"In my opinion, the children remain the priority. Fortunately, my income is already sufficient to meet our family's needs, so my wife's business does not need to be forced to grow substantially."(R2, husband)

The wife, however, emphasized that her entrepreneurial aspirations could not be reduced to financial necessity:

"I want my husband to understand that I still have the desire to develop the business further. My purpose is not simply to earn money, but also to grow professionally."(R2, wife)

She also linked future business expansion to the possibility of having greater freedom once her children became more independent:

“I hope that one day, when the children are more independent, I will have greater opportunities to develop the business without feeling guilty about leaving my family.”(R2, wife)

These accounts show that family security and professional development did not carry the same meaning for both spouses. The husband’s financial stability reduced his perceived need to expand the business, whereas the wife continued to value entrepreneurship as a source of professional growth and personal development. Their shared commitment to family therefore did not eliminate differences in aspiration or the unequal costs of postponing business opportunities.

Religious values also shaped how participants interpreted entrepreneurial decisions, family responsibilities, and declined opportunities. In R1, the wife drew on religious beliefs to manage disappointment when childcare required her to cancel orders:

“I believe that sustenance has already been determined by Allah. If I have to cancel an order because my child is sick, I am confident that Allah will replace it with another opportunity. I also believe that caring for my child is part of worship, so I do not blame myself excessively.”(R1, wife)

In R4, a similar belief helped the wife evaluate professional opportunities in relation to family needs:

“I believe that every decision should consider its benefits. If my family needs me more, I do not feel that I have suffered a loss by canceling a work activity. I believe that sustenance does not come from only one opportunity.”(R4, wife)

R5 described entrepreneurial success through the combined importance of effort, prayer, and trust in God:

“For us, trust in God is important. We make our best effort and then leave the outcome to Allah. We also have to make an effort; prayer alone is not enough. Trust in God, effort, and prayer form a unity in our pursuit of success.”(R5, joint session)

In R6, religious practice was incorporated into everyday family and business life:

“We do not turn to God only when we face a major complaint. Every day, we pray for things to become easier. If the problem is more serious, we ask even more for a way forward. We also worship together every day, both in the morning before leaving and at night. We do this in the hope of receiving ease in our household and our business.”(R6, husband)

These accounts indicate that religious values provided a shared language for understanding work as meaningful effort and family as a responsibility to protect. However, these values did not produce identical outcomes across couples. In R1, R3, R4, and R5, they generally reinforced shared priorities and relational cooperation. In R2 and R6, they also intersected with existing gendered expectations, requiring closer attention to whose aspirations were accommodated and whose activities were limited.

Overall, entrepreneurial success emerged as a negotiated relational outcome rather than an individual or exclusively financial achievement. Its meaning included gradual growth, parental presence, family harmony, organizational sustainability, professional development, religious meaning, and intergenerational continuity. However, how much these goals were shared or contested depended on each couple’s family circumstances, role expectations, and how decision-making authority was distributed.

Synthesis of Findings

The findings indicate that work–family conflict among female entrepreneurs extends beyond individual experiences and becomes embedded in couple relationships. Conflicts wives initially manage affect husbands through changes in household atmosphere, emotional strain, childcare responsibilities, reduced leisure time, and involvement in business operations. Husbands respond by providing emotional, financial, domestic, or operational support, but these responses have different implications for female entrepreneurs’ autonomy. Some forms of support facilitate business activities through shared priorities and flexible redistribution of roles, whereas others involve unequal decision-making authority or restrictions on working time and business expansion. Spousal support can therefore be understood as a qualitative continuum ranging from facilitative to restrictive.

Figure 2 maps the six dyads across two analytically distinct dimensions: the extent to which support aligned with the wife’s expressed needs and the extent to which she retained autonomy in business decisions. R1 occupied the high-alignment, high-autonomy area, while R3, R4, and R5 also showed relatively high alignment

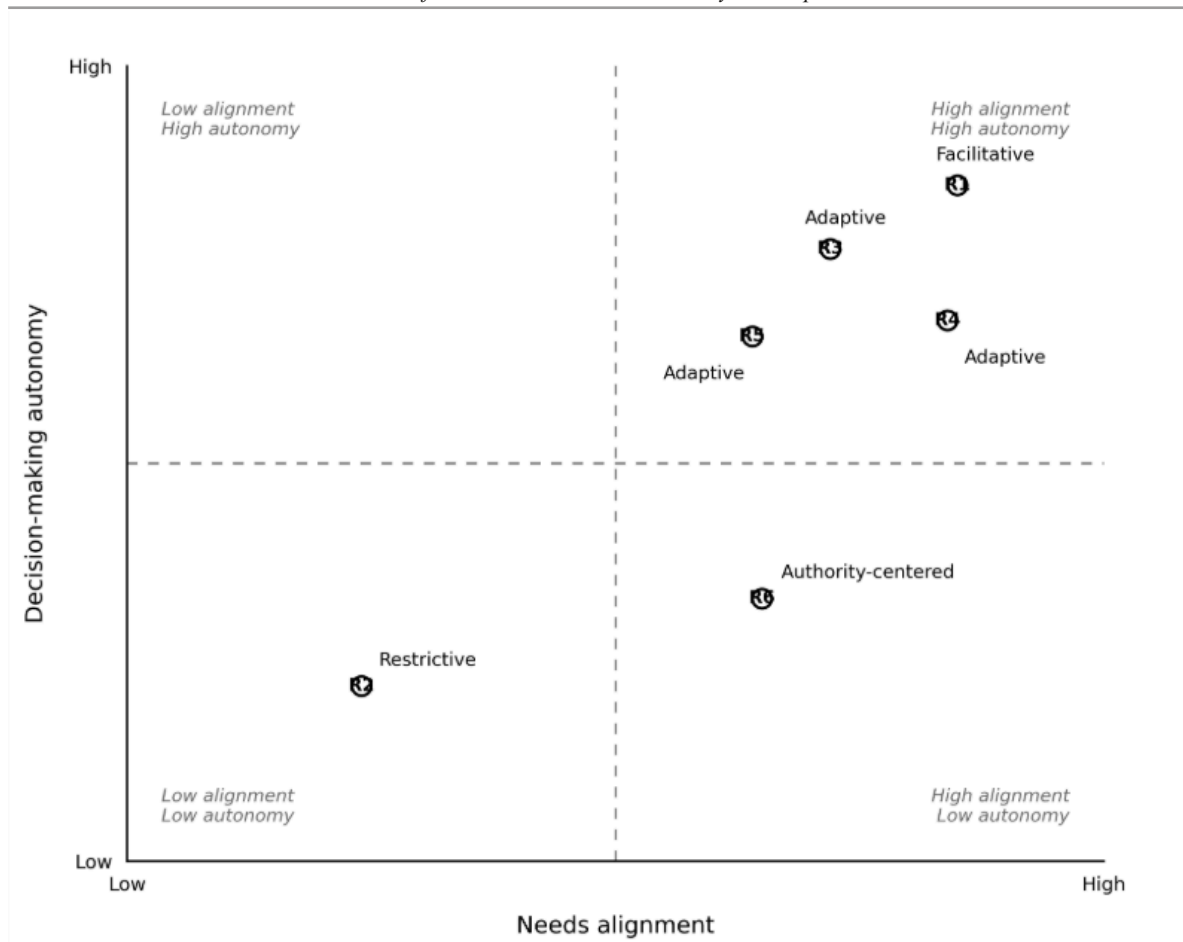


Figure 2. Two-dimensional mapping of spousal support across six entrepreneurial couples

and autonomy through adaptive support. R6 combined substantial practical involvement with lower decision-making autonomy and was therefore mapped as authority-centered support. R2 showed the lowest alignment between the wife's professional aspirations and the conditions attached to support, together with constrained autonomy. These positions are qualitative interpretations rather than scale scores.

This study demonstrates that work-family conflict among female entrepreneurs cannot be understood solely as an individual experience. Although wives often initially managed business-related demands, the consequences extended to husbands through emotional concern, changes in communication, additional childcare responsibilities, domestic adjustments, and participation in business operations. These findings are consistent with the spillover-crossover model, which distinguishes experiences transferred between work and family domains within the same individual from experiences that influence another member of the couple (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013).

The findings also clarify that crossover does not require both spouses to experience identical emotions. In R1, the husband supported his wife when childcare responsibilities interfered with customer orders but did not report experiencing the same emotional strain. In R3 and R4, the wives' business demands influenced the husbands through concern and the redistribution of family responsibilities. In R5, the wife's temporary withdrawal initially created uncertainty for her husband, who subsequently developed more responsive forms of support through discussion and increased recognition of her needs. In R6, business demands were already embedded in family routines, making it difficult to clearly distinguish the source and recipient of operational pressure. Crossover therefore occurred through affective, interactional, and practical pathways rather than through emotional transmission alone.

These patterns extend previous findings that work-related experiences can influence partners through burnout, relationship dynamics, and changes in family interaction (Huang et al., 2023; Ilies et al., 2024). However,

entrepreneurship introduces conditions that differ from formal employment. Business owners are directly accountable to customers, employees, production schedules, and professional opportunities, and decisions about accepting orders or attending meetings can immediately affect household arrangements. These findings support the view that the work–family interface is integral to entrepreneurial activity, not an external issue that affects business owners only after work ends (Jennings & McDougald, 2007).

The findings further suggest that entrepreneurial flexibility has an ambivalent function. Flexible work arrangements enabled participants to respond to childcare needs and coordinate family schedules, but also allowed customer communication, employee supervision, and business concerns to enter domestic time. Conversely, family responsibilities influenced decisions about accepting orders, traveling, attending professional events, and expanding business activities. Work and family therefore operated as interdependent systems that shared time, space, attention, and practical resources. The central issue was not simply whether participants managed their time effectively, but how couples negotiated the boundaries between overlapping responsibilities.

Spousal Support as a Continuum of Facilitation and Constraint

This study's central contribution is conceptualizing spousal support as a continuum ranging from facilitative to restrictive support. Previous entrepreneurship research has generally emphasized family support as a resource that strengthens entrepreneurial performance, business capacity, and subjective well-being (Powell & Eddleston, 2013; Wan et al., 2024). Although these findings support the importance of these resources, they also show that support cannot be evaluated solely by its presence or intensity. Its meaning depends on whether assistance corresponds with the wife's needs, preserves her decision-making autonomy, and expands or restricts her professional opportunities.

As shown in Figure 2, four patterns emerged: facilitative support, adaptive support, authority-centered support, and restrictive support. These positions reflect differences in how support aligns with the wife's entrepreneurial aspirations and how authority is distributed within the relationship. The continuum should not be interpreted as a measurement of the amount of assistance provided. Extensive involvement may coexist with unequal decision-making, whereas

relatively limited assistance may still protect the entrepreneur's autonomy.

Facilitative support, represented by R1, emerged when the husband's assistance matched the wife's expressed needs and shared family priorities. Childcare assistance and emotional reassurance reduced immediate obstacles without imposing additional conditions on the business's direction. This pattern aligns with family-to-business enrichment, in which family-domain resources support entrepreneurial functioning (Powell & Eddleston, 2013). The defining feature was not assistance alone, but the combination of needs alignment, practical support, and preservation of the wife's agency.

Adaptive support, observed in R3, R4, and R5, involved situational adjustments to changing business and family demands. In R3 and R4, husbands assumed childcare or domestic responsibilities when production increased, or business travel disrupted family routines. In R5, the husband initially experienced uncertainty when his wife withdrew while exhausted, but prior conversations helped him recognize whether she needed personal space, emotional reassurance, or practical assistance. These patterns resemble supportive and delegated dyadic coping, in which one partner responds to the other's stress through emotional assistance or temporarily assumes responsibilities (Falconier & Kuhn, 2019).

However, adaptive support did not necessarily eliminate the underlying gendered distribution of family responsibilities. Assistance was often mobilized when the wife's workload increased, while routine domestic and childcare obligations remained primarily associated with her role. Adaptive support therefore reduced immediate conflict, but its longer-term implications depended on whether situational assistance developed into a more sustained redistribution of responsibilities.

Authority-centered support, represented by R6, combined extensive business involvement with unequal marital expectations. The husband provided operational knowledge, capital, and help with customer complaints, while other family members handled daily activities. However, the business began after he asked his wife to leave her outside employment, and she understood her entrepreneurial activities as not exceeding her husband's. At the same time, she retained authority over employee-related decisions and other operational matters.

R6 should therefore not be interpreted simply as a husband-dominated enterprise. Instead, it illustrates how substantial support and domain-specific agency can coexist with a broader hierarchical structure. This interpretation aligns with research showing that female

entrepreneurs may face social environments that simultaneously support competence and relatedness while restricting autonomous decision-making (Hailemariam et al., 2019). Authority-centered support thus involves a tension between practical collaboration and unequal influence over the conditions under which entrepreneurship is considered acceptable.

Restrictive support, most clearly observed in R2, emerged when assistance was conditional on limits that narrowed the wife's professional opportunities. The husband provided capital and supported the business, but expected evening and weekend activities to remain restricted. He saw these conditions as protecting family time, whereas the wife saw them as missed projects, reduced networking opportunities, and constrained professional development.

This pattern shows that restrictive support is not the same as the absence of support. Rather, it describes assistance that permits entrepreneurial participation while regulating its acceptable scale, timing, or mobility. Similar ambivalence has been identified in research showing that family support may provide valuable resources while carrying obligations and conditions that undermine its entrepreneurial benefits (Ning et al., 2025).

The continuum consequently reveals a support paradox: the same relationship can reduce immediate work–family strain while reproducing constraints on entrepreneurial autonomy. Capital, emotional reassurance, and operational assistance may help women remain in business. However, these resources can become limiting when linked to expectations that entrepreneurship must remain secondary to family obligations or subordinate to the husband's preferences. Support therefore needs to be assessed through both its immediate practical benefits and its longer-term consequences for professional choice, business development, and decision-making authority.

The dyadic design was essential for identifying these differences. If only husbands' accounts had been examined, financial contributions and protective restrictions might have appeared uniformly supportive. If only wives' accounts had been considered, the husbands' intentions and practical contributions might have been less visible. Comparing both perspectives shifted the analysis from whether support existed to how it was interpreted, whose priorities shaped its conditions, and who absorbed the consequences of foregone opportunities.

Importantly, the continuum represents dominant relational patterns rather than fixed categories or a developmental sequence. The same couple may demonstrate facilitative

support in one situation and restrictive support in another. Support can also change as children grow, businesses develop, work schedules shift, or couples renegotiate their responsibilities. Its analytical value lies in identifying how assistance and constraint may coexist within particular relational arrangements.

Dyadic Coping, Boundary Management, and Unequal Adjustment

The findings show that couples responded to work–family conflict through role sharing, emotional regulation, communication, planning, delegation, and adjustments to business capacity. These strategies indicate that coping was not limited to the individual entrepreneur but developed through coordination between spouses. This interpretation is consistent with evidence that work experiences, recovery processes, and well-being are interconnected within Indonesian couples (Hamsyah et al., 2024).

The specific form of coping depended on the nature of the demand. In R1, childcare responsibilities were redistributed when customer orders coincided with the child's needs. In R3, the husband took on additional parenting responsibilities while the wife delegated tasks and limited the volume of orders. In R4, advance planning enabled the couple to prepare for business travel. In R5, emotional withdrawal was followed by discussion after both partners had calmed down. In R6, the couple discussed problems within the broader family-business system.

These patterns correspond to several dimensions of dyadic coping, including stress communication, supportive responses, delegated responsibilities, and collaborative problem-solving (Falconier & Kuhn, 2019). However, the findings also indicate that apparently successful coordination should not automatically be interpreted as equitable. A couple may avoid overt conflict or reach a joint decision while distributing adjustment costs unevenly.

This issue was particularly evident in R2. Discussions about professional opportunities led to an agreement to decline projects that required weekend commitments, but the wife remained the one who relinquished professional development and networking opportunities. In R6, family discussions supported business continuity, yet the husband described himself as the first to propose solutions, indicating an unequal starting point in collective decision-making.

Research on dyadic coping distinguishes constructive responses from potentially problematic patterns such as overprotection, protective buffering, ambivalent support,

hostility, and disengaged avoidance (Falconier & Kuhn, 2019). The present data do not provide sufficient evidence to classify the couple's interactions as hostile or dysfunctional. Nevertheless, they show that coordination may preserve family stability while restricting one partner's aspirations. The quality of dyadic coping should therefore be assessed not only by agreement or reduced tension, but also by recognizing both partners' needs and how adjustment costs are distributed.

Boundary management further illustrates the complexity of these processes. Time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based conflicts emerged when customer communication continued into family time, work-related worries persisted after business activities ended, or workplace habits influenced interactions at home. These patterns align with the multidimensional view of work–family conflict proposed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985).

Participants responded by limiting evening communication with customers, reducing order volume, declining selected projects, delegating operational tasks, coordinating travel, and adjusting business schedules. These strategies demonstrate that work–family boundaries were not fixed divisions between separate domains. Instead, they were negotiated arrangements that shifted with family needs, business opportunities, and available support.

However, boundary-setting was not always equally determined. In some couples, limits reflected shared priorities and reciprocal adjustments. In others, the wife was primarily responsible for changing her work schedule, reducing business activities, or accepting slower growth. Boundary management should therefore be understood as a relational and potentially gendered process rather than a neutral strategy for achieving balance.

Entrepreneurial Success as a Negotiated Relational Outcome

The findings also challenge the assumption that business growth, income, or market expansion alone can adequately evaluate entrepreneurial success. Participants linked success to family relationships, parental presence, health, emotional stability, professional development, and business sustainability. This broader understanding aligns with research emphasizing meaningful work, autonomy, identity, support, and work–life balance as key dimensions of entrepreneurial experience (Dirik & Özdoğan, 2025).

However, the study extends this perspective by showing that female entrepreneurs did not define entrepreneurial success alone. Its meaning emerged

through ongoing negotiation between spouses about acceptable business demands, family responsibilities, and future aspirations.

In R1, success involved gradual business development compatible with caring for a young child. In R3, it included preserving family relationships and health while maintaining production. In R4, success meant organizational improvements that would let the business grow without requiring the wife's constant presence. In R5, a home-based business's flexibility supported both entrepreneurial activity and time with the husband. In R6, success included intergenerational continuity and preparing adult children to participate in the family enterprise.

These examples suggest that entrepreneurial outcomes were embedded in the family life cycle. The presence of young children, the husband's work schedule, the scale of the business, and the involvement of other family members influenced which goals were considered realistic or desirable. Consequently, limiting growth should not automatically be interpreted as entrepreneurial failure. In some circumstances, slower expansion reflected a deliberate effort to preserve valued family relationships and maintain a sustainable business.

Nevertheless, family-oriented definitions of success require careful interpretation because they may also reflect unequal gender expectations. Brieger et al. (2024) argue that broader gender-equality conditions shape female entrepreneurs' work–family conflict. The present findings similarly indicate that wives were frequently expected to adjust their business activities when family demands increased, even when husbands expressed support for their entrepreneurial involvement.

The tension was clearest in R2, where the husband saw financial security as reducing the need to expand the business. At the same time, the wife regarded entrepreneurship as an opportunity for professional development beyond household income. Their shared commitment to family did not eliminate differences in aspiration. Instead, it created a situation in which preserving family time carried greater professional costs for the wife.

A related complexity appeared in R6, where the family business provided economic continuity and meaningful shared participation, while remaining embedded in hierarchical expectations about marital roles. The wife's operational authority shows that agency existed, but within a framework that positioned her activities in relation to her husband's approval and family leadership.

Religious values also shaped how participants interpreted business decisions and family responsibilities. Beliefs concerning

ikhtiar (endeavor), *tawakal*, *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *rezeki* (sustenance) helped participants understand work as meaningful effort while viewing family care as a responsibility to protect. These values supported emotional acceptance when orders were canceled, travel was postponed, or growth was moderated.

However, religious meaning did not operate uniformly across dyads. In some couples, shared beliefs reinforced cooperation and mutual reassurance. In others, religious and family values intersected with existing gendered expectations about the wife's role. The findings do not suggest these values were inherently restrictive; rather, their consequences depended on how each relationship interpreted and negotiated them.

Entrepreneurial success should therefore be understood as a relational outcome shaped by both shared values and unequal possibilities. Family harmony and business sustainability may represent meaningful achievements. However, they should not be assumed to reflect fully shared preferences when one spouse bears a disproportionate share of the professional sacrifices.

Contributions and Implications

Conceptually, this research makes three contributions. First, the study broadens understanding of crossover by showing that conflict transfer in entrepreneurial couples occurs through emotions, changes in interaction, redistribution of family tasks, and operational involvement in the business. Second, the research shows that partner support is a relational process that can facilitate and limit outcomes. These findings complement research linking family support to business success by showing that the benefits of support depend on appropriateness, terms, meaning, and the distribution of authority. Third, the study framed business success as a couple-negotiated outcome, not solely an individual achievement. The dyadic approach allows congruence, divergence, complementarity, and asymmetry to appear within the same pair. This advantage favors dyadic analysis for relational phenomena because including entire interviews without keeping the pair as a unit can obscure important differences (Collaço et al., 2021). Thus, the research not only adds the husband's perspective but also shows how the two perspectives reinforce, complement, or contradict each other.

In practice, supporting female entrepreneurs requires addressing both business aspects and family relationships. Business development programs can include mapping support needs, dividing domestic roles, setting

digital boundaries, planning for high-demand periods, and mechanisms for discussing business decisions. Partner involvement should not be limited to obtaining the husband's approval. Instead, it should build a shared understanding of the wife's business aspirations and the family costs to manage. The couple also needs to distinguish the support the wife actually asks for from help that comes with taking over decision-making. Interventions can help couples discuss measures of success, including business goals, family needs, well-being, and the wife's professional development. For MSME companion institutions, operational support such as delegation, record-keeping, admin use, and capacity planning can reduce the business's dependence on a woman's presence at all times. This step helps ensure conflict resolution does not always come at the cost of reduced business opportunities. Ultimately, supporting female entrepreneurs must maintain family sustainability without making family an automatic reason to limit women's growth and autonomy.

Limitations and Further Research Directions

This study has several limitations. First, the findings were derived from six couples with different business characteristics, family life stages, and levels of spousal involvement. This variation enabled an in-depth examination of relational processes, but the qualitative design was not intended to estimate the prevalence of the identified patterns among female entrepreneurs. Second, the analysis relied on retrospective verbal accounts. It did not include direct observation, daily time-use diaries, weekly time-sharing logs, or operational records of each spouse's household and business activities. The study therefore could not independently verify whether reported role divisions matched the partners' actual time and workload allocation. This limitation matters most when interpreting apparently shared or complementary arrangements, because agreement does not necessarily indicate an equal distribution of responsibilities. Separate interviews and source-specific dyadic matrices reduced the risk of treating relationally pressured agreement as pure congruence, but they could not substitute for prospective activity data. Third, joint sessions may still have made some tensions difficult to express despite turn-taking, private interviews, and the decision not to require consensus. Future research should combine separate dyadic interviews with daily time-use diaries, weekly role-sharing logs, relevant business records, or direct observation. Longitudinal designs could also track changes in demands, emotions, support, and business decisions over time.

Further studies should examine variation by children's age, business scale, the wife's income contribution, joint ownership, and the husband's level of involvement. Quantitative dyadic research could test associations among the wife's conflict, the husband's responses, support alignment, family satisfaction, decision-making autonomy, and entrepreneurial outcomes.

■ CONCLUSION

This study extends the spillover–crossover perspective by showing how work–family conflict among Indonesian female entrepreneurs is shaped by integrating business activities into family life, gendered domestic responsibilities, and shared religious and family values. In home-based and family-supported businesses, crossover occurred not only through emotional transmission but also through changes in childcare arrangements, domestic labor, business operations, and negotiations over professional opportunities. These processes varied by family life stage, business structure, husband's work schedule, and the involvement of other family members.

The central contribution is identifying a continuum of spousal support comprising facilitative, adaptive, authority-centered, and restrictive patterns. This continuum shows that support cannot be evaluated solely by the presence of emotional, financial, or practical assistance. Its implications depend on whether support corresponds with the wife's needs, preserves her decision-making autonomy, and enables or limits professional development. In particular, assistance embedded in hierarchical marital expectations may sustain business participation while simultaneously restricting mobility, working time, or growth opportunities.

The findings further indicate that couples negotiate dyadic coping and entrepreneurial success within existing family relationships rather than determine them individually. Communication, role redistribution, emotional regulation, delegation, and boundary management helped couples coordinate business and family demands, but agreement did not always reflect an equal distribution of adjustment costs. Consequently, initiatives supporting female entrepreneurship should address not only business capabilities but also shared family responsibilities, spousal communication, decision-making autonomy, and support that respects women's entrepreneurial aspirations.

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■ DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI USAGE IN THE WRITING PROCESS

The authors utilized AI tool during the preparation of this manuscript exclusively for language editing. All content generated or suggested by the tool was thoroughly reviewed and refined by the authors, who retain full accountability for the integrity and final content of the published work.

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