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How Career and Non-Work Goal Progress Affect Dual Earners' Satisfaction: A Whole-Life Perspective

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Abstract

Many career self-management models assume that career goal progress promotes satisfaction, but research on the topic has yielded mixed results. Adopting a whole-life perspective, this study examines how career and non-work goal progress relate to career, non-work, and life satisfaction and explores crossover effects and gender differences between dual-earner partners. We tested our research model using Actor-Partner Interdependence Modeling on a two-wave dataset of 190 heterosexual dual earners (i.e., 95 couples). Career goal progress was not related to any of the satisfaction indicators. For men, non-work goal progress was marginally positively related to career and non-work satisfaction and positively related to life satisfaction. For women, non-work goal progress was not related to any satisfaction indicator. Between partners, men's non-work goal progress was positively related to women's non-work and life satisfaction, whereas women's career goal progress was negatively related to men's life satisfaction. Implications for research and career practice are discussed.

Keywords: career goal progress; non-work goal progress; dual-earner couples; career self-management; satisfaction; gender

How Career and Non-Work Goal Progress Affect Dual Earners' Satisfaction: A Whole-Life Perspective

Career self-management is becoming increasingly important due to less predictable career environments and a more complex interaction of work and non-work activities (De Vos et al., 2021; Hirschi & Koen, 2021). Career self-management is the "process by which individuals develop, implement, and monitor career goals and strategies" (Greenhaus et al., 2010, p. 12). Setting career goals (i.e., desired career outcomes that one aspires to attain; Greco & Kraimer, 2020) is believed to motivate career actions and facilitate career goal progress, which can, in turn, contribute to enhanced career and life satisfaction (Hirschi, 2020; King, 2004; Lent & Brown, 2013; London, 1983).

Despite the centrality of career goals in many models of career self-management (Greco & Kraimer, 2020; e.g., Hirschi, 2020; King, 2004; Lent & Brown, 2013), empirical research on career goals remains highly scarce (Greco & Kraimer, 2020; Hirschi & Koen, 2021). In addition, the few studies on the topic have typically examined career goals in isolation from the broader life context (Hirschi, 2020; Hirschi et al., 2022; Kornblum et al., 2021), without considering that people may simultaneously set career and non-work goals or acknowledging the potential role of people's significant others in their career self-management. However, because people's work roles (e.g., employee, colleague) and non-work roles (e.g., partner, parent, friend) are closely intertwined, their career goals and goal progress are often affected by their non-work goals and by close others, such as their partner (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014; Kornblum et al., 2021; Schooreel et al., 2017; Wiese & Freund, 2005). Therefore, studying career goals without considering these issues is likely to result in a limited and possibly biased understanding of career self-management (Hirschi et al., 2022).

In this study, we aim to enhance our understanding of one critical assumption in many career self-management models, i.e., that career goals progress contributes to enhanced

satisfaction (Hirschi et al., 2022; King, 2004; Lent & Brown, 2013). We apply Hirschi and colleagues' (2022) whole-life perspective to career self-management, defined as a proactive process whereby people simultaneously set goals in different life domains to strive for satisfaction in multiple life roles (Hirschi, 2020; Hirschi et al., 2022). This perspective implies that research on career goals should also consider non-work goals and people's broader life situations, such as the role of their partner. Including the partner is particularly relevant in the context of dual-earner couples (Kornblum et al., 2021; Petriglieri, 2019; Pluut et al., 2018), in which both partners combine a career with their non-work life, and may thus set both career and non-work goals.

Building on this perspective, this study examines how both partners' career and non-work goal progress in dual-earner couples relate to career, non-work, and life satisfaction. In addition, we explore crossover effects (i.e., how individuals' career and non-goal progress relate to their partner's career, non-work, and life satisfaction; Westman, 2001) and gender differences. By integrating goals, satisfaction, and relationships from people's broader life context, we address calls for taking into account work-home interdependencies when studying career self-management activities and outcomes (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014; Hirschi et al., 2016; Kossek et al., 2021). In doing so, our study contributes to a more holistic understanding of careers.

Theoretical Background

Goals, defined as personally valued objectives that individuals pursue in their life (Elliot et al., 1997), play a central role in many theories of well-being (Cantor et al., 1987; Lent, 2004). The general reasoning is that goals create a discrepancy between one's current and desired state (Diener et al., 1999; Latham & Locke, 2006), thereby providing purpose and structure in life (Lent & Brown, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Making progress toward one's goals reduces the discrepancy between people's current and desired situation and can, in that way, induce satisfaction (Diener et al., 1999; Kahneman, 1999; Latham & Locke, 2006; Lent, 2004).

In line with this reasoning, career self-management models typically assume that career goal progress positively relates to work-related and more general satisfaction (Hirschi et al., 2022; King, 2004; Lent & Brown, 2013; London, 1983). However, empirical research on career goal progress is scarce (Greco & Kraimer, 2020; Hirschi & Koen, 2021) and has yielded inconsistent results: whereas some studies found the expected satisfaction-enhancing effect of career goal progress (Hülsheger & Maier, 2010; Maier & Brunstein, 2001; Verbruggen & Sels, 2010), other studies found no relationship (Duffy & Lent, 2009; Pomaki et al., 2009). One potential explanation for these inconsistencies is that research on career goals has primarily looked at the isolated impact of career goal progress, without considering the broader life context in which these goals are pursued (Hirschi et al., 2022; Wiese & Freund, 2005). To address this gap, we apply a whole-life perspective to career self-management (Hirschi et al., 2022).

Research Model

Following the whole-life perspective to career self-management (Hirschi et al., 2022), we model relationships between career and non-work goal progress and career, non-work, and life satisfaction of both the employee and their partner (Figure 1).

Figure 1

First, in line with several career self-management models (Hirschi et al., 2022; King, 2004; Lent & Brown, 2013; London, 1983), we expect that individuals who progress on their career goals will feel more satisfied with their careers. Career satisfaction describes one's subjective evaluations of personally valued career outcomes and career evolvement over time (Martins et al., 2002; Seibert et al., 2013). Career goal progress implies such evolvement. If people advance on a career goal, they come closer to career outcomes they find meaningful, which should thus contribute to their career satisfaction (Lent & Brown, 2013). Accordingly, the following hypothesis was developed:

Hypothesis 1: Career goal progress relates positively to career satisfaction.

Similarly, we expect a positive relationship between non-work goal progress and non-work satisfaction. Non-work satisfaction refers to individuals' satisfaction with their private life outside work, which includes dimensions of social relationships (e.g., family, friends, and community), leisure, and health (Hart, 1999). Satisfaction with these dimensions can be enhanced through goal progress: goal-directed behavior leads people to be in contact with others, participate in activities, and find structure and meaning in life – all of which can stimulate non-work satisfaction (Lent, 2004). Therefore, we formulated the hypothesis below:

Hypothesis 2: Non-work goal progress relates positively to non-work satisfaction.

Next, career and non-work goal progress could promote life satisfaction, which reflects people's global assessment of their life circumstances against self-set standards (Diener et al., 1999). Progress on career and non-work goals can be perceived as successful life experiences that boost people's global satisfaction. Empirical studies have found that progress on goals set in the work or career domain (e.g., Judge et al., 2005; Sheldon et al., 2002) as well as in the non-work domain relates to more life satisfaction (Boersma et al., 2006; Massey et al., 2009). In line with these findings, we hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 3: Career goal progress relates positively to life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4: Non-work goal progress relates positively to life satisfaction.

For cross-domain effects and cross-over effects among partners, it is harder to formulate a-priori hypotheses. However, the whole-life perspective underscores the importance of taking these relationships into account (Hirschi et al., 2022). First, cross-domain effects (i.e., from career goal progress to non-work satisfaction and from non-work goal progress to career satisfaction) could occur because goal progress in one domain may create positive moods and foster the development of transferable skills, which could improve people's satisfaction in the other domain (e.g., Hirschi et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2018). Conversely, efforts needed to realize

progress in one domain may require time, energy, and specific behaviors that could create challenges and dissatisfaction in other life roles. Second, cross-over effects of one partner's career or non-work goal progress on the other partner's career, non-work or life satisfaction are possible. For instance, goal progress of one partner may bring rewards for the couple, for instance in the form of a higher income or an improved relationship with the children, which could increase satisfaction of the other partner. Conversely, goal progress of one partner may hinder satisfaction of the other partner because pursuing the goal requires time or other resources that limit the possibilities or happiness of the other partner. Considering these opposing perspectives, we posed the following research questions.

RQ 1: Are there cross-domain relationships between career goal progress and non-work satisfaction and between non-work goal progress and career satisfaction?

RQ 2: Are there cross-over effects of career and non-work goal progress of one partner on career, non-work, and life satisfaction of the other partner?

Finally, we explore whether there are gender differences in the various relationships. Gender has not been a focus of career self-management research (Hirschi & Koen, 2021), even though ample research suggests that work-nonwork experiences are often different for women and men (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014; Powell et al., 2019). Despite a societal shift towards more egalitarian beliefs, researchers have emphasized the prevalence of traditional gender norms, which prescribe that women are more suited to be caregivers and that men should be providers (Meeussen et al., 2016). Scholars have argued that such traditional patterns are reflected in the barriers working women face in achieving successful, and thus satisfying, career goal pursuits (Hackett & Betz, 1981; Hirschi et al., 2019). In contrast, men may be more invested in their careers and could more easily derive satisfaction from career goal progress than their female partners. Between partners, traditional patterns may also translate to gendered expectations of each other's careers (Pluut et al., 2018) and, by extension, how partners

experience each other's career and non-work goal pursuit. A final research question was formulated in order to explore such potential gender differences.

RQ3: To what degree do the relationships between career and non-work goal progress and people's and their partner's career, non-work, and life satisfaction differ between women and men in dual-earner couples?

Method

Participants and Procedure

This study was part of a broader research project on careers and the work-non-work interface amongst dual-earner employees in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium. The Flemish context is characterized by neotraditional gender norms. Although the labor market participation of women is high (i.e., around 80% in the past 10 years; Steunpunt Werk, 2023), men, on average, tend to divide their time in line with more traditional gender norms, whereas women's behaviors reflect a more egalitarian approach – which often translates to a double burden of paid and unpaid work for women (de Rock & Périlleux, 2021).

The data collection occurred between 2013 and 2015 (wave 1: 2013-2014; wave 2: 2014-2015)[1]. We targeted people who were part of a dual-earner couple (defined – in this project – as having both partners in the household working in paid employment with an organization or institution), of which both partners were willing to participate in the study. Participants were recruited by one tenured faculty member, one doctoral student, and eight master students, who spread a call for participation via their network (i.e., via friends and family who were also asked to spread the call, via social media, and via flyers in their neighborhood). A hyperlink to the survey was sent out via e-mail to 392 dual-earner couples who registered for the study, with

[1] Because the data collection for this study had started in 2013, which was before the research ethics committee of our university was founded (i.e., in April 2014), we could not obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). However, the study complies with the guidelines of the later established IRB, with the privacy laws and with the ethical principles as formulated in the Declaration of Helsinki 1964 and its later amendments.

both partners in every couple receiving the same survey. At the beginning of the survey, participants received information about the main research topics. They were assured of anonymous data processing (including deleting all contact details after data collection).

Respondents received two surveys, separated by one year. We opted for a one-year time span because one year can be considered sufficient to pursue various career and non-work goals (e.g., Perdix et al., 2012). In the first wave (T1), 615 participants (78.4%) completed the survey. Respondents taking a full-time career break or with missing partner data were excluded from the dataset. This resulted in a sample of 394 employees or 197 couples for T1. In the second wave (T2), 207 (52.5%) of the first-wave respondents completed the follow-up survey. The dropout of respondents between T1 and T2 is presumably linked to the challenges inherent in dyadic data collection, the broad scope of the project (resulting in a relatively long survey length), and the one-year time frame between both measurements. We performed dropout analyses for gender, age, level of education, and the focal variables of the study, which did not reveal any significant differences between respondents from T1 and T2. From the sample at T2, we excluded seventeen respondents due to missing partner data or missing values.

The final sample at T2 with complete data consisted of 190 employees, or 95 dual-earner couples. Fifty percent of the respondents were female. The respondents' ages ranged between 24 and 58 years (M = 38.4; SD = 8.9) and their average organizational tenure was 10.4 year (SD = 8.7). Most of the respondents (53.1%) had a master's degree, 37.5% had a bachelor's degree, and 9.6% had, at most, a high school degree; 21.1% worked part-time, and 72.0% of the respondents had children in their household.

Measures

Career and non-work goal progress. At T1, participants were presented with 8 potential career and 7 non-work goals in the form of two preset lists, which is a reliable and frequently used approach in goal assessment (Klug & Maier, 2015; Lent et al., 2005; Stein &

Scanlan, 2016). For each goal in the list, respondents were asked if they intended to pursue it in the coming year (1 = "Yes", 0 = "No or Not applicable"). Respondents were first presented with the career goal list and then with the non-work goal list. Both lists were developed by a panel of four academic experts on careers and the work-non-work interface and included a broad variety of goals, in line with dominant approaches to subjective career success and goal striving in different life domains (Bühler et al., 2019; Seibert et al., 2013)[2]. We complemented this approach with an additional text entry field at the bottom of each list, so that respondents could themselves add a self-chosen career and/or non-work goal if needed (in line with earlier research; Karoly & Ruehlman, 1996).

For the career goal list, respondents could indicate whether they intended to 1) get a promotion, 2) change to a different position on a similar level, 3) achieve further growth within their current position, 4) get a pay raise or other financial benefits, 5) obtain more flexibility and autonomy in their current job, 6) successfully finalize projects and tasks, 7) improve relationships at work, and 8) extend work-related knowledge and skills. For their non-work goals, respondents could indicate if they planned to 1) improve the relationship with their partner, 2) improve the relationship with their child(ren), 3) improve the relationship with (a) family member(s), 4) improve their health, 5) take a big step in their relationship like getting married or having a child, 6) participate more in social and leisure activities, and 7) get (more) involved in volunteering.

To measure career and non-work goal progress, respondents were presented again with all goals at T2. They were then asked to which extent they had progressed on their goals set at T1 by endorsing one of the following four options: "Not pursued" (Option 1), "Pursued but dropped" (Option 2), "Pursued but not yet attained" (Option 3) and "Attained" (Option 4).

[2] To investigate the relevance of the list of goals, we tested them in another sample with respondents from two different organizations (N=873). For each work and non-work goal, more than 10% of respondents in this sample indicated that they intended to pursue this goal in the coming year, confirming that the presented goals represented generally relevant career or non-work goals within a one-year time horizon.

Following Chronister and Mcwhirter (2006) and Verbruggen and Sels (2010), we assigned points to each option (0 points for Option 1 and 2, 0.5 points for Option 3, and 1 point for Option 4), which were then averaged to calculate career/non-work goal progress across all career/non-work goals set at T1.

Career satisfaction. Career satisfaction was measured using the three-item career satisfaction scale used by Verbruggen et al. (2007), based on the scale of Martin's et al. (2002). Respondents were asked to rate to which degree they agreed with the statements that they were satisfied with (1) their career in general, (2) how their career had evolved so far, and (3) their current career situation. Response options ranged from 1 *(strongly disagree)* to 5 *(strongly agree)*. The scale demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.81$ at T2).

Non-work satisfaction. Verbruggen et al.'s (2007) career satisfaction scale was adapted to measure non-work satisfaction. Respondents had to rate to which degree they agreed with the statements that they were satisfied with (1) their non-work life in general, (2) how their non-work life had evolved so far, and (3) their current non-work situation (1 = *strongly disagree;* 5 = *strongly agree*; Cronbach's alpha = 0.91 at T2).

Life satisfaction. The five-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) by Diener et al. (1985) was used to measure life satisfaction. Sample items include "In most ways, my life is close to my ideal," "I am satisfied with my life," and "If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing" (Diener et al., 1985). Response options were set on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 *(completely disagree)* to five *(completely agree)*. The scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88 at T2.

Gender. Gender was 1 when respondents self-identified as women and 0 when they self-identified as men. We do not have information about sex assigned at birth.

Control variables. We controlled for the number of goals respondents set at T1 because the number of goals may affect well-being (Diener et al., 1999). In that way, we can control for

the possibility that making goal progress may be more challenging when you have set many goals. In addition, we control for work role salience because the importance people attach to their work as compared to non-work parts of their life, may relate to domain-specific satisfaction (Bagger et al., 2008). Following the approach of Carlson and Kacmar (2000), respondents were asked to divide 100 points across 5 (sub)domains in life: 1) job and career, 2) close family, 3) broader family, 4) leisure, and 5) community engagement. Furthermore, we controlled for the baseline levels of each well-being outcome at T1 (i.e., career satisfaction: $\alpha = 0.80$, non-work satisfaction: $\alpha = 0.85$, and life satisfaction: $\alpha = 0.86$). Finally, we controlled for age, educational level (i.e., master's degree or not), and children in the household (yes or no), because these demographic variables may impact the setting, importance, and/or achievability of career goals (Bühler et al., 2019; Viola et al., 2010).

Data Analysis Strategy

To account for the interdependence between members of each couple, we analyzed our data using the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Cook & Kenny, 2005). The APIM model offers a way to examine interpersonal processes in dyads, by simultaneously testing actor (intra-individual) effects and partner (inter-individual) effects. The same predictor and outcome variables are used for both the actor and the partner. Because we sampled heterosexual couples, partners in each couple could be differentiated based on gender, and we used APIM for distinguishable dyads (Cook & Kenny, 2005; Kenny et al., 2006).

Results

CFA and Descriptive Statistics

We performed a confirmatory factor analysis to test whether our measurement model with six latent variables (i.e., career satisfaction at T1 and T2, non-work satisfaction at T1 and T2 and life satisfaction at T1 and T2) fitted the data well. The fit indices (CFI = .96; TLI = .95;

SRMR = .06; RMSEA = .05) revealed a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Standardized factor loadings ranged between .65 and .93.

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations for the study's variables. Career goal progress was negatively correlated with partner career goal progress, suggesting that when one partner progressed more on their career goals, the other partner experienced less progress. For non-work goal progress, a positive pattern emerged: when one partner reported more progress on their non-work goals, the other partner was more likely to experience the same. Finally, there was a positive correlation between the number of career goals and the number of non-work goals and between the number of non-work goals of both partners.

Table 1

Women and men did not differ significantly in the assessed variables (see Table A1 in Appendix for descriptive statistics according to gender). On average, women and men reported a similar amount of career goals (M_{women} = 3.41; M_{men} = 3.78; $p > .05$), career goal progress (M_{women} = 0.60; M_{men} = 0.62; $p > .05$), non-work goals (M_{women}= 3.16; M_{men} = 3.13; $p > .05$), and non-work goal progress (M_{women}= 0.49; M_{men} = 0.49; $p > .05$).

Results of the Multilevel Regression Analyses

Table 2 presents the results of the multilevel regression analyses for career, non-work, and life satisfaction. Because the control variables work role salience, educational level, and children did not considerably impact the regression results, we report the output of our analyses with only age and the T1-satisfaction measures as control variables (supplemental materials can be obtained from the first author). Because we controlled for the T1-satisfaction measures, the beta coefficients of the goal progress variables capture the impact of goal progress on a specific satisfaction outcome at T2 above what could be expected based on this person's satisfaction levels at T1.

First, hypothesis 1 was not supported. We found that career goal progress did not significantly relate to career satisfaction at T2 for women or men. Second, the relationship between non-work goal progress and non-work satisfaction at T2 was not significant for women and only marginally significant for men (B = 0.37, p = .08), largely rejecting Hypothesis 2. Third, unlike expected in Hypothesis 3, career goal progress did not significantly relate to life satisfaction at T2 for women or men. Fourth, Hypothesis 4 was partially supported. We found that non-work goal progress was positively related to life satisfaction at T2 for men (B = 0.64, p < .001), but not for women.

Next, we found limited support for cross-domain effects: neither men's nor women's career goal progress was significantly related to non-work satisfaction at T2 and the relationship between non-work goal progress and career satisfaction at T2 was not significant for women and only marginally significant for men (B = 0.24, p = .097). We found several crossover effects across partners, although the results differed for women and men. Women's career goal progress was related to lower life satisfaction for men at T2 (B = -0.33, p = .04). This means that when women reported more progress on their career goals, their male partner reported less life satisfaction at T2. In addition, we found positive relationships between men's non-work goal progress and women's non-work satisfaction (B = 0.53, p = .02) as well as women's life satisfaction at T2 (B = 0.53, p = .01). Thus, when men progressed more on their non-work goals, their female partner experienced more satisfaction with the non-work domain and with life in general. The other crossover effects were not significant.

Table 2

Supplementary Analyses

To explore whether we would have drawn different conclusions without a whole-life perspective, we also tested a simpler model by excluding non-work goal progress and all partner variables (see Table 3). In this model, we found that the relationship between career goal

progress and life satisfaction at T2 was significant for men (vs. nonsignificant in the whole-life model, which included non-work goals, non-work goal progress, and crossover effects). This relationship in the simpler model is thus likely spurious and due to correlations between career and non-work goal progress of women and men. In addition, the fit of this simpler model was lower than the fit of the whole-life model (i.e., as shown by a higher -2 log-likelihood value), supporting the relevance of a whole-life perspective.

Table 3

Discussion

This study aimed to enhance our understanding of career self-management by studying the relationship between career goal progress and satisfaction from a whole-life perspective. Even though the career and nonwork domains are largely intertwined, research on career self-management has typically studied career goals in isolation of the broader life context, which may have limited our understanding of career self-management to date. In line with recommendations by Hirschi et al. (2022), we studied the combined impact of career and non-work goal progress on satisfaction in multiple life roles (i.e., on career, non-work, and life satisfaction). In addition, we considered individuals' broader life context by exploring how partners are affected by each other's career and non-work goal progress through crossover effects. The model with non-work goal progress and the partner variables yielded a better fit with the data than a model without these variables, highlighting the importance of a whole-life understanding of career goals.

The study results showed that career goal progress was not related to career, non-work, or life satisfaction– contrary to assumptions in several career self-management models (Hirschi et al., 2022; King, 2004; Lent & Brown, 2013), although in line with some other studies that have failed to find such relationships (Duffy & Lent, 2009; Pomaki et al., 2009). Because our study included the effects of partner goal pursuit, it is possible that links found in earlier studies

were due to correlations between career and non-work goal progress among partners. Alternatively, it is possible that we did not find this relationship because of the specific context or setting in which career goals are pursued. In past studies that have found positive links with well-being outcomes, career goal progress was typically examined at career transition points, particularly among career counseling clients (Verbruggen & Sels, 2010), teachers in training (Hülsheger & Maier, 2010), or organizational newcomers (Maier & Brunstein, 2001). In such settings, individuals are likely to be highly focused on their career development and may be more susceptible to reaping satisfaction from career goal progress. For instance, in the case of career counseling, people in need of counseling depart from lower levels of satisfaction (Verbruggen et al., 2010), which could offer more room for growth and improvement. Yet, the link between career goal progress and satisfaction was rarely tested amongst broader samples, as was the case in our study. Possibly, for people who are not at a career transition, satisfaction levels remain relatively stable and/or are affected more by other factors than career goal progress (e.g., organizational career support).

In contrast to career goals, we found positive relationships between non-work goal progress and satisfaction– at least for men. We found that men's non-work goal progress was positively related to career, non-work, and life satisfaction, although the former two relationships were only marginally significant. We did not find these results for women who might not perceive goals or goal progress as essential drivers of their well-being, and instead derive satisfaction from other sources. In line with this notion, Mainiero & Sullivan (2005) have argued that women shape their career and non-work domain from a relational perspective (e.g., by considering the impact of their actions on family members) rather than from a goal-orientation perspective.

Next, we found several crossover effects. Women experienced more non-work and life satisfaction when their partner progressed in the non-work domain, while men experienced less

life satisfaction when their partner progressed in the career domain. These differences may be linked to traditional gender norms, which persist in many countries, including Belgium (de Rock & Périlleux, 2021). Traditional gender norms describe men as being more involved in the work domain and women as taking up more family responsibilities (Meeussen et al., 2016). From this perspective, men who are more present in the non-work domain may be perceived as a "nice surprise" and judged more positively by women (Gaunt, 2013). In contrast, women who are more successful in their careers (e.g., more career goal progress, higher earnings) may be perceived more negatively by men (Navarro & Salverda, 2019).

Taken together, our findings illustrate the value of examining career goal progress from a whole-life perspective. While career goal progress did not show strong effects on satisfaction on an individual level, non-work goal progress and the partner context proved important for understanding satisfaction. This supports the idea that individuals strive for satisfaction in multiple life roles, under the consideration of their broader life context (Hirschi et al., 2022).

Implications for Practice

Our study provides practical implications for career counselors, HR managers and supervisors. Our findings suggest that it is important for practitioners to acknowledge individuals' goal pursuits across life domains and their broader life situations when guiding or supporting their careers (Hirschi, 2020). The intervention framework by Hirschi (2020) recommends that career counselors help clients in identifying the facilitative and inhibitory linkages between their career and non-work goals, and in mapping resources and barriers to goal attainment (including people's family situations and their partner's goal pursuit). Since career satisfaction may be dependent on the partner's non-work goal progress, career counselors could help clients in developing interpersonal communication skills oriented towards constructive couple conversations about goal pursuit (Chen, 2008), or ask to include the partner in assignments (e.g., feedback seeking or goal monitoring exercises with one's partner). In the

work context, our findings imply that investing in proactive career behaviors may not necessarily lead to happier employees, whereas their non-work roles may be particularly important to achieve satisfaction. HR managers and supervisors could thus be mindful and appreciative of employees' life outside of work, for instance by valuing skills or experiences acquired through non-work activities.

Limitations and Further Research

This study has several limitations. Firstly, we choose a one-year time frame because many career and non-work goals can be realized or progressed on in this time span (e.g., successful finalization of projects and tasks; improved health; Perdix et al., 2012). However, other goals (e.g., upward mobility) may be harder to progress on in one year time (Seibert et al., 2013). Therefore, future research could monitor goal progress using extended time lags or designs with several measurement points. Secondly, we operationalized goal progress using a nomothetic approach (i.e., through preset lists with the option of adding self-generated goals). Although the meta-analysis by Klug & Maier (2015) indicated that this approach is well suited to assess relationships with well-being, it could be interesting for future research to apply idiographic methods (i.e., asking people to self-generate goals). Thirdly, our sample size (i.e., 95 couples in our study) may have limited the power of our analysis (Button et al., 2013). Sample size requirements are a recurrent issue as dyadic data collection is often challenging and time-consuming (Lane & Hennes, 2018). Fourth, we focused on heterosexual dual-earner couples, which implies that not all genders (e.g., trans(wo)men) and not all partner configurations (e.g., same-sex couples; one-earner households) were represented in our study. Future research should use larger and more diverse samples. One option for future research in this respect could be to utilize nationally representative samples (e.g., German Socio-Economic Panel; Headey et al., 2010).

For future research, examining the partner's role in individuals' goal pursuit would be interesting because our knowledge of dynamic couple interactions throughout the pursuit of career and non-work goals remains limited. Because receiving and giving support for personal goals is positively linked to marital satisfaction (Brunstein et al., 1996), research could focus on the partners' support of each other's goal pursuit. Another research question relates to goal adaptation over time. Studies could test the effectiveness of couple-level strategies (e.g., switching career priorities over time; Becker & Moen, 1999) when partners have conflicting career goals or examine the distribution of couple resources when goal pursuit is disrupted by life events (Crawford et al., 2019).

Conclusion

This study illustrates the value of adopting a whole-life perspective on careers and career goal progress. In contrast with many career self-management models, we found no evidence for the idea that successful career goal pursuit promotes career satisfaction or other well-being outcomes. Progressing on non-work goals may be more effective in achieving happiness in life – although the benefits may be subject to gender differences.

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Figure 1. Research model

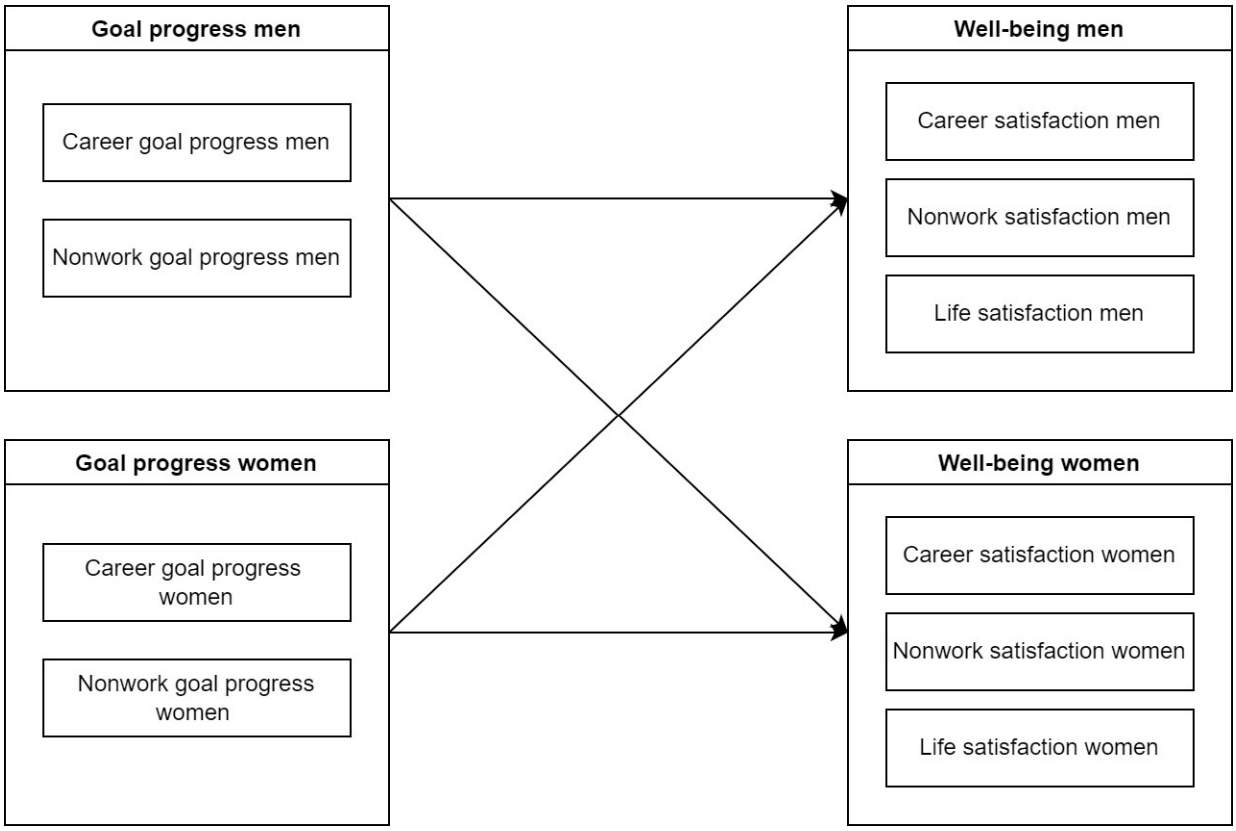

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations and Pearson's Correlations among the study's variables

Variable	*M)*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Age	38.4	8.9																	
2. Education level	0.5	0.5	-.19*																
3. Children	0.7	0.5	.40**	-.03															
4. Work role salience	25.9	11.7	.11	.17*	.02														
5. Number of career goals (T1)	3.6	1.7	-.19**	.11	-.04	-.04													
6. Number of partner career goals (T1)	3.6	1.7	-.21**	.07	-.02	-.13	.11												
7. Career goal progress	0.6	0.3	-.17*	.16*	-.08	-.08	.18*	.01											
8. Partner career goal progress	0.6	0.3	-.21**	.11	-.08	-.11	.01	.18*	-.20**										
9. Number of non-work goals (T1)	3.1	1.8	-.15*	.06	-.02	.00	.28**	.05	.12	.01									
10. Number of partner non-work goals (T1)	3.1	1.8	-.15*	.12	.00	.02	.05	.28**	.01	.12	.18*								
11. Non-work goal progress	0.5	0.3	-.12	-.03	.12	-.02	.12	.02	.14	.06	.34**	.05							
12. Partner non-work goal progress	0.5	0.3	-.13	.02	.10	-.03	.02	.12	.06	.14	.05	.34**	.22**						
13. Career satisfaction (T1)	3.9	0.7	.02	-.08	-.04	.03	.23**	.05	.13	-.13	.05	-.18*	-.05	-.15*					
14. Career satisfaction (T2)	4.0	0.7	-.02	-.04	.03	.07	.17*	-.06	.10	-.09	.05	-.18*	.05	-.03	.58**				
15. Non-work satisfaction (T1)	4.4	0.6	-.17*	-.02	-.08	-.24**	-.08	.05	.12	.01	-.18*	-.24**	.11	.05	.14	.19**			
16. Non-work satisfaction (T2)	4.3	0.6	-.07	.00	.03	-.13	-.08	-.07	.12	-.02	-.14*	-.17*	.11	.09	.10	.26**	.49**		
17. Life satisfaction (T1)	3.9	0.6	-.06	-.04	.00	-.06	.12	.02	.24**	-.09	.00	-.14*	.17*	.12	;42**	.49**	.48**	.40**	
18. Life satisfaction (T2)	4.1	0.7	-.13	.03	.00	-.13	.06	-.05	.22**	-.08	-.04	-.21**	.18*	.13	.23**	.40**	.51**	.74**	.64**

Note: N = 190

** p < .05. ** p < .01*

Table 2. Fixed effects regression analysis for career. non-work and life satisfaction

	Career satisfaction				Non-work satisfaction				Life satisfaction			
	Women		Men		Women		Men		Women		Men	
	B	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*
Intercept	2.01**	0.58	1.98**	0.55	2.58**	0.72	2.22**	0.74	2.28**	0.51	1.73**	0.48
Age	0.00	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	-0.01*	0.01
Career satisfaction T1	0.50**	0.09	0.66**	0.09	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-work satisfaction T1	-	-	-	-	0.42**	0.11	0.51**	0.12	-	-	-	-
Life satisfaction T1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.58**	0.09	0.74**	0.09
Career goals actor	0.06	0.04	-0.05	0.04	0.02	0.04	-0.05	0.04	0.03	0.03	-0.05(*)	0.03
Non-work goals actor	-0.05	0.04	0.05	0.04	-0.06	0.04	0.00	0.03	-0.06	0.04	0.03	0.03
Career goals partner	-0.03	0.04	-0.03	0.04	-0.04	0.04	0.00	0.03	-0.06	0.03	0.04	0.03
Non-work goals partner	0.01	0.04	-0.08(*)	0.04	-0.03	0.04	-0.02	0.04	-0.05	0.03	-0.07*	0.03
Career goal progress actor	0.18	0.20	-0.34	0.23	0.08	0.22	0.15	0.20	-0.07	0.20	0.18	0.17
Non-work goal progress actor	0.10	0.22	0.41(*)	0.24	-0.04	0.23	0.37(*)	0.21	-0.21	0.21	0.64**	0.17
Career goal progress partner	-0.22	0.22	0.11	0.22	0.00	0.22	-0.10	0.19	0.08	0.20	-0.33*	0.16
Non-work goal progress partner	0.22	0.23	0.31	0.24	0.53*	0.23	-0.08	0.21	0.53**	0.20	-0.08	0.17
-2 Log-likelihood	387.81				366.18				314.21			

Note: N = 95

*(*) p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01*

Table 3. Fixed effects regression analysis for career, non-work and life satisfaction without whole-life perspective (n = 95)

	Career satisfaction				Non-work satisfaction				Life satisfaction			
	Women		Men		Women		Men		Women		Men	
	B	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*
Intercept	1.53**	0.42	2.06**	0.46	1.39*	0.56	1.84**	0.63	1.38**	0.43	1.28**	0.44
Age	0.00	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	-0.01(*)	0.01
Career satisfaction T1	0.49**	0.09	0.65**	0.08	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-work satisfaction T1	-	-	-	-	0.61**	0.10	0.56**	0.10	-	-	-	-
Life satisfaction T1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.68**	0.09	0.78**	0.09
Career goals	0.04	0.03	-0.04	0.04	0.01	0.04	-0.04	0.03	0.00	0.03	-0.03	0.03
Career goal progress	0.30	0.18	-0.19	0.22	0.00	0.21	0.28	0.19	-0.05	0.20	0.39*	0.16
-2 Log-likelihood	385.90				381.07				340.95			

Note: N = 95

*(*) p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01*

Appendix

Table A1. Descriptive statistics (means. standard deviations and confidence intervals) for women and men

	Women (n = 95)				Men (n = 95)			
	M	*SD*	*Lower CI*	*Upper CI*	*M*	*SD*	*Lower CI*	*Upper CI*
Age	37.8	8.9	36.0	39.6	39.1	8.9	37.3	40.9
Education level	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.7
Children	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.8
Work role salience	24.7	10.9	22.4	26.9	27.1	12.3	24.6	29.7
Number of career goals (T1)	3.4	1.7	3.1	3.8	3.8	1.7	3.4	4.1
Career goal progress	0.6	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.3	0.6	0.7
Number of non-work goals (T1)	3.2	1.7	2.8	3.5	3.1	1.8	2.8	3.5
Non-work goal progress	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.6
Career satisfaction (T1)	4.0	0.7	3.8	4.1	3.9	0.8	3.7	4.0
Career satisfaction (T2)	4.0	0.6	3.8	4.1	4.0	0.8	3.8	4.2
Non-work satisfaction (T1)	4.5	0.6	4.3	4.6	4.3	0.5	4.2	4.5
Non-work satisfaction (T2)	4.3	0.7	4.2	4.4	4.3	0.6	4.2	4.4
Life satisfaction (T1)	3.9	0.7	3.8	4.1	3.8	0.6	3.7	4.0
Life satisfaction (T2)	4.1	0.7	4.0	4.2	4.0	0.7	3.9	4.2

Note:Independent-samples T-tests did not reveal any significant differences between women and men for all variables.