



Role Salience and the Growth Intention of Women Entrepreneurs: Does Work-life Balance Make a Difference?

Brownhilder Ngek Neneh 

University of the Free State (South Africa)

Abstract. Work and family are two of the most competing and salient roles in the life of every individual. As such, individuals often make behavioral decisions based on the relative salience (work or family) they attach to these life roles. Given that growth intention is a vital behavioral choice in the life of an entrepreneur, this study examined how role salience influences the growth intentions of women entrepreneurs. Moreover, for most women entrepreneurs, their family domain is highly entwined with the business domain, and as such, having an adequate work-life balance is often a vital personal goal. Thus, this study also examined the influence of work-life balance on the growth intentions of the women entrepreneurs as well as its moderating effect of on the relationship between role salience and growth intentions. Based on self-reported data from women entrepreneurs ($N = 300$), the findings of this study using logistic regression analysis revealed that both work role salience ($b = .88, p < .001$) and work-life balance ($b = .73, p < .001$) have a positive effect on the growth intentions of women entrepreneurs. Additionally, work-life balance also moderated the relationship between work role salience and growth intention such that the positive association is strengthened at high levels of work-life balance ($b = .90, p < .001$). The study culminates with a discussion of the implications and suggestions for future research.

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Growth intention is an important characteristic of entrepreneurial behavior and a vital element in understanding actual business growth and development (Venugopal, 2016; Zampetakis et al., 2016). According to Dutta and Thornhill (2008), “an entrepreneur’s growth intention is regarded as being the entrepreneur’s goals or aspirations for the growth trajectory, he or she would like the venture to follow” (p. 318). Growth has been known to be a volitional entrepreneurial behavior whereby some entrepreneurs choose to grow while others intentionally refrain from growing (Levie & Autio, 2013; Neneh & Vanzyl, 2014). Prior research suggests extensive gender differences in the growth intentions of entrepreneurs (Ali, 2018; Manolova et al., 2012; Zampetakis et al., 2016). This is because the entrepreneur’s intention to grow their businesses is motivated by numerous desired outcomes which often vary substantially across men

and women (Zampetakis et al., 2016). For men, growth is mainly motivated by the desire to achieve financial success; however, growth for women entrepreneurs is motivated by a varied dimension of factors such as self-realization and recognition (Manolova et al., 2012). Growth-oriented firms, whether owned by men or women, are vital for fostering economic growth via job creation, innovation, productivity, and supporting communities (Hechavarria et al., 2019). However, the growth path is less understood for women entrepreneurs due to the multifaceted nature of their growth drivers and the fact that most women are often seen to deliberately refrain from growth (Mason & Brown, 2013). As such, isolating and studying women entrepreneurs’ growth-related behaviors can provide vital insights for supporting women’s entrepreneurship (Mari et al., 2016; Neneh, 2018; Poggesi et al., 2019).

For most women entrepreneurs, their businesses are often seen to be a mutually connected system with the family (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003) as their family and

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Brownhilder Ngek Neneh. University of the Free State. Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences Business Management. 9300 Bloemfontein (South Africa).

E-mail: brahilder@gmail.com

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businesses boundaries are highly entwined (Loscocco & Bird, 2012; Shelton, 2006). Both family and work domains play a central role in shaping the entrepreneurial identity of women entrepreneurs as this is vital for understanding their growth aspirations. Entrepreneurial behaviors are often known to be dependent upon a person's entrepreneurial identity (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011; Zampetakis et al., 2016) and gender identity (Eddleston & Powell, 2008). For example, Shepherd and Haynie (2009) found that an entrepreneur's choice about the growth of their business is closely entwined with their entrepreneurial identity. The entrepreneurial identity of women entrepreneurs is often embedded in the multiple role identities relating to work and family roles (Bagger et al., 2008). Also, although not confined to traditional gender-specific roles and venturing into the business world, women entrepreneurs still shoulder a greater portion of family responsibilities (Rehman & Roomi, 2012). Managing both family and work responsibilities pose a constant challenge to women entrepreneurs as the time they spend on one role makes it incompatible or reduces the time and efforts they can spend on the other role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Nonetheless, although women entrepreneurs juggle multiple roles at once, these roles differ in their level of importance as while some could be peripheral, others could be considered as prominent (salient) roles (Knežević et al., 2016). It follows then that while both work and family roles may be salient to some entrepreneurs, others may view only one of the roles as salient, and still, others may consider neither the work role nor the family role as salient (Erdogan et al., 2019). Bhowo (2013) found that salience of work and family roles has consequences on the level and type of work-family conflict individuals could potentially experience. This has significant implications for women entrepreneurs, especially with regards to growth intentions.

While there have been some efforts in understanding the growth aspirations of women-owned businesses (Ali, 2018; Neneh, 2017; Venugopal, 2016; Manolova et al., 2012; Zampetakis et al., 2016), efforts to integrate the effect of role salience on the growth intention of women-led businesses are surprisingly scarce. As such, this study draws from identity theory to understand the importance that women entrepreneurs place on their family and business roles and how it affects the growth intentions of their businesses. This is particularly important for women entrepreneurs as they way women will approach family salience and work salience will be different from men because they are motivated by different reasons to engage in entrepreneurship (Manolova et al., 2012; Patrick et al., 2016). Also, evidence shows that women face unique challenges such as reproductive labor (childbearing and household responsibilities) that might require them to take time off from their

businesses and thus might impact on their decision on whether or not to grow their business. Hence by simultaneously studying the role salience (work and family) of women entrepreneurs, this study will theoretically provide a full insight of the women entrepreneurs' role system from a developing country context to find out if the traditional gender roles and stereotypes segregated division of labor in the work and family domain is still applicable amongst women entrepreneurs. Additionally, due to these multiple roles, women entrepreneurs have been known to sacrifice growth to achieve work-life balance (Brush et al., 2006). This is because work-life balance has been proven to enhance the quality of life and has a positive financial outcome on a business (Jennings & Brush, 2013). Also, work-life balance has a positive association with firm performance (Welsh et al., 2017) and also act as an important enabler of business growth (Prasad et al., 2013). This suggests that by achieving the work-family balance, women entrepreneurs will be able to manage their family-work responsibilities, thereby enhancing their growth aspirations. However, many women entrepreneurs struggle to maintain a balance between work and family. This leads to work-family conflict which is often an impediment to the success and growth of women-owned businesses. This has implications for the growth intention of women entrepreneurs, given that the entrepreneur's decision to grow is an individual choice that is strongly immersed with the entrepreneurial identity. As such, this study also intends to unearth both the direct and moderating role of work-life balance on the role salience to growth intention nexus.

Based on the above-mentioned arguments, this study examines the following research question: How does family and work role salience affect the growth intentions of women entrepreneurs, and what role does work-life balance play in shaping these growth intentions? Role salience is widely known to shape the behavioral choices that people make, however little is known regarding how it shapes some vital choices of women entrepreneurs. Given the entwined nature of the family and work domains for women entrepreneurs, it is interesting to examine if the relative salience placed on either family or work might influence the entrepreneurs' desire to grow their businesses. Moreover, women entrepreneurs tend to place a lot of emphasis on work-life balance to properly navigate between their family and work roles. Consequently, it is imperative to understand if work-life balance can directly influence their growth intentions and whether it can moderate the influence of role salience on their growth intentions. In line with aforementioned discussion, this study adopts the identity theory (Stryker & Burke, 2000) and draws on both the boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000) and border theory (Clark, 2000), to discuss how an understanding of these relationships could extend and

advance theoretical thinking in the identity literature and give leads for entrepreneurial practice.

Theory and Development of Hypotheses

Role salience refers to the importance that a person assigns to multiple role identities in his/her work and family domain (Super et al., 1996). The identity theory provides a useful framework for understanding and explaining role salience. The identity theory originated from a framework underwriting the analyses of several sociological and social psychological issues put forth by George Herbert Mead (1934) (Stryker & Burke, 2000). According to this theory, one’s identity is defined as “parts of a self-composed of the meanings that persons attach to the multiple roles they typically play in highly differentiated contemporary societies” (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 284). The identity theory sought to answer this distinctive question: Why does a person chose a specific course of actions when in situations that have behavioral options associated with two (or more) sets of role demands linked to two(or more) positions in networks of social structure (Stryker 1968, 1980)?

The identity theory is built around the concept of roles and the process of multiple roles identities (role saliences), and assert that when a specific role is activated, individuals will act to achieve the expectations associated with the role (Stryker, 1968, 1980). Given that work and family are the most prominent roles in a person’s daily life, it is not unusual to find it difficult for a person to balance both roles simultaneously. Hence, a person will try to enact salient identities by behaving in ways that highlight their role within the related social structure and by exhibiting behaviors that are in line with the expectations that others have for someone occupying that specific role (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). Individuals turn to dedicate more time in the roles they consider most important (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) with the objective of fulfilling the expectations and responsibilities connected with the more salient role. Based on this theory, the salience, or importance,

a person will place on a specific role depends on (a) the degree to which a person is embedded in the identity and (b) the relative strength of the person’s identity tied to others who share the identity (Stryker & Serpe, 1994).

Work and family are two central domains in the life of a person that affect each other simultaneously and can sometimes result in conflicts or enrich each other. As such, managing the demands of both family and work possess a continuous challenge when one role turns to suffer some degree of inattention due to consideration being given to the other role (Duxbury & Higgins, 2008). With regards to women entrepreneurs, given that family and work are central to their lives as they view both roles as mutually exclusive, the overlapping nature of these roles may influence how they manage and grow their businesses based on salience they place on either their family and work roles. While role salience might be imperative for growth, it is widely established that women always thrive to have a balance between their work and family domains (Ahmad et al., 2014; Brush et al., 2006). As such, most of their decisions around growth might be centered on whether or not they have and can still maintain an adequate level of work-life balance. Consequently, this study posits that role salience (i.e., work and family) would have an influence on the growth intentions of women entrepreneurs, and this influence will be dependent on the level of work-life balance. The proposed model is shown in Figure 1.

Work Salience, Family Salience and Growth Intention

As mentioned above, women who have high family salience tend to highly value their family lives. These women see family as “a permanently executed practice centered on care obligations” (Jurczyk et al., 2019, p. 1737). Ahmad (2011) established that family plays a vital role in women’s entrepreneurial experiences, as they act both as a source of resources and support to them as well as a source of restraint, and responsibilities. This view is supported by Goffee and Scase (1985) who showed that family acts as a source of responsibility for

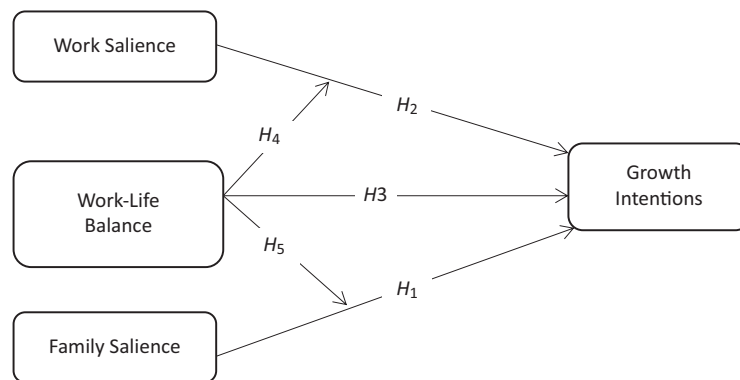


Figure 1. Proposed Model

women whose identity is centered on the roles of wife and mother (domestic profile) and these roles induce women to give priority to their family and secondary importance to their work roles. As such, women entrepreneurs who feel their primary responsibility lies with the family domain, will turn to assign more importance to their family roles as opposed to their work roles and will thus express less desire to grow or deliberately refrain from growth (Cliff, 1998; Shelton, 2006). Also, juggling multiple family and business demands is usually a difficult task for entrepreneurs and notably worse for women entrepreneurs as the time spent in child care and household responsibilities reduces the lifespan of their business (Shelton, 2006). These multiple demands which vary considerably amongst women entrepreneurs often create a conflict which could sometime threaten the pattern of family and connubial relationships (Brush et al., 2009; Welter et al., 2014). When family salient women place more emphasis on their family roles, this affects their behavioral choices regarding their business (Erdogan et al., 2019). For example, Maziku et al. (2014) established that women entrepreneurs in Tanzania often closed their businesses early to go home and attend to family matters and place less efforts on serving customers and attending to other business-related activities. Parker (2015) reported that women in the USA either reduced their work hours or took significant time off from work to care for their children or other family matters. Thus, given the conflicting demands between work and family life; the level of family salience that women entrepreneurs have will determine how much they forgo work for family responsibilities. This, in turn, will negatively affect their ability to pursue growth. Following this line of argument, this study hypothesizes that:

H₁: Family role salience will have a significant negative effect on the growth intentions of women entrepreneurs.

For individuals with high work salience, they are more eager to spend extra effort at work and to achieve career success (Lobel & St. Clair, 1992). These individuals are more committed to the work role, and the work role identity is also more likely to be visible across different situations. Also, because their work role is so important to them, they may experience the demand from this role less stressful (Dewe, 1992). Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) established that individuals who are predominantly work salient put a lot of personal investment in their work role and also aspire to advance in their career by getting a higher social standing and an increase in power. Johnston and Swanson (2006) found that in the past, although women were likely to change their work status to prioritize their family demands, more recently, women are also altering the construction of family demand to accommodate their work

demands. One way individuals construct their family demand to accommodate their work demands is by organizing roles in a hierarchy as it will assist in setting priorities in their work and family demands, as well as also putting in place job crafting processes to redefine and change the boundaries of their work and family demands (Sturges, 2012). This type of reconstruction usually occurs in women who have a predominant work salience (Erdogan et al., 2019). This is particularly true amongst women entrepreneurs who over the last decades have experienced a substantial rise in their work aspirations (Mari et al., 2016) and are increasingly finding ways to advance their careers and success of their businesses. Based on the arguments presented above, this study hypothesizes that:

H₂: Work role salience will have a significant positive effect on the growth intentions of women entrepreneurs.

The Role of Work-Life Balance

The term work-family balance is defined as “an individual’s ability to meet work and family commitments, as well as other non-work responsibilities and activities” (Parkes & Langford, 2008, p. 267). Work-life balance has been examined through the lens of the boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000) and border theory (Clark, 2000), as it provides a useful framework to develop the hypotheses of this study. The boundary theory focuses on the different boundary management styles, through which individuals use to establish, maintain or alter boundaries around a domain (such as work and family role) as a means to create order. The border theory seeks to understand how individuals manage and negotiate the work and family domain and the borders between them to achieve balance. This theory is built on the premise that individuals have different forms of boundaries surrounding work and non-work domains that are separated by temporary, physical, and psychological (behavioral) borders (Clark, 2000). Physical borders describe where role-domain behavior takes place. Temporal borders refer to the actual time within which the role-specific work takes place. Psychological borders depict the rules created by individuals when thinking patterns, behavior patterns, and emotions are suitable for one domain but not for the other. Also, while it is possible to cross borders between work and family domain, individuals, however, differ in the way in which they cross these borders, and the different types of border-crossers depend on the extent to which they are either peripheral or central participants in either domain (Sanz-Vergel et al., 2011).

The need for work-life balance has emerged as an important focus of research and workplace regulation resulting from the conflict individuals experience in their family and work-life (Edralin, 2012). Finding a

balance between work and the family domain is becoming more and more important to a lot of people and particularly for women entrepreneurs who consider their family and work domains as interwoven (Jennings & Brush, 2013). Work-life balance is required by women, given that they have closer ties with their family and also shoulder the family and household responsibilities. Consequently, although many women entrepreneurs are no longer bound by the gender-specific barrier, they are, nonetheless, still confronted with the burden of family and domestic responsibilities. Hence, over expansion of their businesses will mean they will have to struggle to find a balance in the multiple roles they shoulder in their family and business domain (Wambua, 2014). As such, having an adequate work-life balance is often a vital personal goal for most women entrepreneurs which often take precedence over the economic considerations for growing their businesses (Ahmad et al., 2014; Brush et al., 2006). The consequence is that where there is a low level of work-life balance, most women entrepreneurs will place most of their focus on trying to attain the balance instead of work considerations. However, if there is adequate work-life balance, women entrepreneurs will, therefore, have time for business growth. Thus, this study hypothesizes that:

H₃: Work-life balance will have a positive relationship with the growth intention of women entrepreneurs.

While the importance women entrepreneurs place on their work or family roles will influence their growth intentions; this study proposes that the relationships will be moderated by work-life balance. Given that women entrepreneurs who have high levels of work salience often devote more of their time and resources to achieve career success; they will be more willing to put in extra efforts at work in ensuring that their businesses succeed and grow. Also, they might be willing to cross border by bringing unfinished work from the business to the home domain which enables them to complete more work-related task (Allen et al., 2014) and ultimately enhances the growth of their businesses. However, this study argues that for women entrepreneurs who have a high work salience, their growth intention will be more pronounced if they have a work-life balance.

With boundary-crossing, women entrepreneurs can always work both at home and at their business. This multiple overlapping roles can negatively affect work and family outcomes and thus lead to burn out (Rubab, 2017; ten Brummelhuis et al., 2008); strain (Greenhaus et al., 2006) and marital/life dissatisfaction (Amstad et al., 2011; bv, 2005; Yucel, 2017). When these negative outcomes abound, women can start making the deliberate choice to minimize the growth of their businesses

to a manageable size that they can fully control as a means to achieve balance. As previously indicated, women entrepreneurs will often thrive towards achieving work-life balance as a key goal. This is because work-life balance which plays an important role in the wellbeing of entrepreneurs has been linked to favorable mental health and a balanced life helps individuals to focus on their job, achieving better work results (Magnini, 2009). Furthermore, Charu and Gupta (2013) established that poor balance leads to lower morale and productivity, which in turn further leads to lower levels of contribution in the workplace. From the above, it is seen that too much emphasizes of work roles could come with several negative consequences (e.g., strain, burnout) and these negative consequences can be mitigated by having an adequate work-life balance (e.g., favorable mental health). Consequently, when work-life balance is high, women entrepreneurs with work role salience can continue to thrive towards growing their business because they can continue to maintain favorable mental health, high morale and productivity. However, once work-life balance starts to diminish, the negative outcomes might become unbearable, thus leading most women to deliberately reduce the size of their businesses to one that they can control and have work-life balance, which is an important goal for women entrepreneurs (Brush et al., 2006). Following from the above discussion, this study hypothesizes that:

H₄: The positive influence of work salience on the growth intentions of women entrepreneurs will be moderated by work-life balance such that the effect will be more pronounced for those with high work-life balance.

For individuals who have a high level of family salience, they will turn to assign more importance to their family roles as opposed to their work roles and thus will have a low growth intention. As previously stated above, women entrepreneurs who identify more with their family domain will be willing to scale back on their business to meet family demands (Maziku et al., 2014). These women turn to shoulder more household chores and childcare responsibilities (reproductive labor), which reduces the time and effort they spend on their business-related activities, and this will negatively impact on the growth intention of their businesses. However, this study argues that this low growth intention will be worse for women who do not have work-life balance. This is because, women who have a high family salience will prioritize their family role first and then their financial independence and career advancement as a secondary priority (Gilbert, 1993). These women will often allow their family domain to impinge on job domains as they bring family issues into their work domain which will affect how they meet their work demands and alternately affect the growth of their business. However, the family

domain will mostly impinge on the job domain for women entrepreneurs who lack work-family balance. This is because women entrepreneurs who have balance can be able to still meet necessary work demands while satisfactorily meeting family demands. These women entrepreneurs will most likely adopt boundary management styles that will be primarily linked to their family roles as opposed to their work roles. Kreiner et al., (2009) (p. 704) pointed out that to maintain work-life balance, individuals could use boundary management styles such as behavioral tactics which entails using other people (e.g., getting assistance from others). This assistance could be in the form of support (paid and unpaid financial support) from family members whereby family members assist in their domestic and household domain (Chan, 2009). By having this support, these women entrepreneur will be able to direct the extra time meant for her unending family responsibilities into their businesses domain. This will enable them to maintain a work-life balance as they will be able to perform their multiple responsibilities with minimal role conflict and still be able to attain harmony in their family lives (Neneh, 2019). This, in turn, will create time for them to focus on their work roles, and hence assist in buffering the negative effect of making tradeoffs in the work roles to focus on their family roles (Neneh, 2018). Following the above mention arguments, this study hypothesizes that:

H₅: The negative influence of family salience on the growth intentions of women entrepreneurs will be moderated by work-life balance such that the negative effect will be more pronounced for women who have low levels of work-life balance.

Context of the Study

In South Africa, women consist of more than half of the population and thus are recognized as powerful drivers of economic growth and are instrumental to the country realizing its full economic potential (McClure, 2019). Yet, women are experiencing a high level of unemployment as while the country's unemployment rate currently stands at 30.1%, when using the expanded definition of unemployment, women unemployment rate is estimated at 43.4% (Stats SA, 2020). Also, these women are still underrepresented when it comes to the entrepreneurial landscape as statistics by the Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs (MIWE) report revealed that in South Africa, women account for only 18% of business owners (SME Finance Forum, 2018). This shows that their progress in entrepreneurship is lagging significantly when compared to counterparts of a similar measure. The slow progress in entrepreneurship could be attributed to some of the common challenges these women entrepreneurs encounter which include amongst others, the lack of capital and assets, lower status in the

patriarchal society, higher levels of household responsibility, limited business-oriented networks and culturally-induced lack of confidence in their ability to succeed in business (Javan, 2019). This is a call for concern as the South African government through its National Development Plan of 2012 stated that by 2030, 90% of the estimated 11 million jobs need to be created by SMEs and also to curb the high rate of unemployment to 14% by 2020 and to 6% by 2030 (South African Government, 2012).

In an attempt to unlock the potential of women entrepreneurs and promote their economic empowerment, several programs have been put in place by the South African government through its government departments and public enterprises. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has created a range of initiatives and programs such as the South African Women's Empowerment Network (SAWEN), the Isivande Women's Fund (IWF), B'avumile Skills Development Initiative, Women Entrepreneurial Fund (WEF), Technology for Women in Business, to provide financial and non-financial support to enhance business growth in women-owned businesses. Also, the Mastercard partnered with the Junior Achievement South Africa to undertake a 20-week entrepreneurial development program, which aimed to empower women between the ages of 18 and 35 to start and operate their businesses (Jackson, 2018). In 2020, the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), partnered with the SA Innovation Summit, to create the Fem-In-Tech initiative which aims to empower women with the entrepreneurial and leadership skills to launch and grow their businesses (SA Innovation Summit, 2020).

While getting more women into entrepreneurship is vital, a more important focus on the initiatives by the South African government is to ensure that these women-owned businesses can thrive and grow. As such, it is imperative to understanding factors that could influence these women entrepreneurs desire to grow. Such a study will have an impact not only in South Africa but beyond its borders as the potential contribution of women entrepreneurs to the economies of their host countries is widely acknowledged (Ali, 2018; Manolova et al., 2012; Neneh, 2017; Venugopal, 2016). This is particularly vital in this study as the entwined nature of the family and work domain for women entrepreneurs is recognized in South Africa as well as in many countries around the globe (Neneh, 2017; Rehman & Roomi, 2012; Zampetakis et al., 2016).

Method

Procedure and Sample

The study used self-administered questionnaires to collect data from women small business owners operating in

the Mangaung metropolitan municipality in the Free State province of South Africa. The eligibility criterion for participation in this study was that the respondents (i.e., women entrepreneurs) needed to be the owner of the business or hold at least 50 + 1% stake in the business. In total, 450 questionnaires were distributed through field visits to businesses over six months and 300 useable questionnaires were returned, for a 66.7% response rate. With respect to the age group of the respondents, 65 were between 18–33 years (21.7%), 118 were between 34–43 years (39.3%), 70 between 44–53 years (23.3%) and 47 above 53 years (15.7%). Concerning the size of the business, none had no employees besides the owners, 161 had 1–5 employees (53.7%), 119 had 6–10 employees (39.7%), while 20 had more than 10 employees (6.7%). The level of education was rated on a seven-point scale as follows: “1” no formal education, “2” high school diploma, “3” College diploma, “4” university degree, “5” Honours degree, “6” Master’s degree, and “7” Doctorate. Concerning education, there was no respondent without any formal education, 48 had a high school diploma (16%), 132 had a college diploma (44%), 89 had a university degree (29.7%) while the 31 had a postgraduate qualification (10.3%). With respect to the age of the business, 13 were less than 2 years old (4.3%), 129 were between two to five years old (43%), 102 had been in business for about 6 to 10 years (34%), while 56 were above 10 years (18.7%). Also, 139 of the respondents were married (46.3%) and 27 were copreneurs (9%). Lastly, only 11 of the respondents have an intention to grow their business (37%). Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS (descriptive and inferential statistics) and SMARTPLS Software (reliability and validity evaluation).

Measures

Role salience. Work and family role salience each was measured using three items adapted from prior studies (Amatea et al., 1986; Sanz-Vergel et al., 2011; Ten Brummelhuis & Lautsch, 2016). The responses were anchored on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 *strongly disagree* to 5 *strongly agree*. A sample item for work salience is “I expect my job to give me more real satisfaction than anything else I do”. A sample item for family salience is “I expect the major satisfactions in my life to come from my family”.

Work-family balance perceptions. The work-family balance was measured with a 3-item scale adapted from prior studies (Allen et al., 2010; Allen et al., 2012). Sample items from the scale include; “I am able to balance the demands of my work and the demands of my family,” and “I am satisfied with the balance I have achieved between my work-life and my family life”. All the responses were anchored on a five-point rating scale ranging from 1 *strongly disagree* to 5 *strongly agree*.

Growth intention. A self-reported dichotomous single-item measure adopted from Manolova et al. (2012) was used to measure growth intention. The measure uses two items that best describe the women entrepreneurs’ preferences in terms of the future size of their businesses. The respondents were then required to select one of the items. These items were as follows: (1) I want my business to be as large as possible (coded as 1) and (2) I want a size I can manage myself or with a few key employees (coded as 0).

Control Variables. This study made use of six control variables, namely, the age of the entrepreneur (Hsu et al., 2019; Neneh, 2020); business age (Hsu et al., 2016), number of children below 18 years (Neneh, 2017; Mari et al., 2016) marital status (Mari et al., 2016; Neneh, 2020), education (Hsu et al., 2019; Neneh, 2019; Neneh, 2017) and copreneurs (Kuschel & Lepeley, 2016; Neneh, 2020) and firm size (Neneh, 2019). These variables have been shown to affect entrepreneurial outcomes and thus could produce more insights into observed behaviors in this study.

Data Analyses and Results

Common Method Variance Assessment

In this study given that data was collected from a single source, common method variance (CMV) was identified as a potential concern (Podsakoff et al., 2003). As such, to account for CMV, several steps were undertaken. First, the dependent and independent variables were put at different sections of the questionnaire. Second, Harman’s one-factor test was performed. Following the guidelines from Podsakoff et al. (2003), all the latent variables were entered into a factor analysis and the unrotated solution extracted. The results revealed that all the extracted factors had Eigenvalues greater than 1 and explained 73.3% of the variance, with the first factor ($\lambda = 4.801$) explaining only 38.01% of the variance. Hence CMV was not a concern for this study, given all the items did not load on a single factor and the first factor explained less than 50% variance. Third a full collinearity test proposed by Kock and Lynn (2012) was performed. With this approach, constructs in a model are directed to a randomly generated construct. The model is then run using PLS-SEM. The variance inflation factors (VIF) from the analyses are then analyzed to determine the existence of CMV whereby VIF values below 3.3 suggests that CMV is not a problem. Using the full collinearity test, the following VIF values were obtained for the core variables in the study: 1.29 for family salience, 1.33 for work salience and 1.34 for work-life balance and 1.38 for growth intention. Given that none of the VIF values was above 3.3, the model can be considered to be free of CMV.

Table 1. Descriptive Data, Reliability and Convergent Validity

Constructs	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α	CR	AVE
Multi-item Constructs					
Family Salience ¹	2.57	1.42	.856	.912	.720
Work Salience ¹	3.71	1.33	.864	.916	.732
Work-life Balance ¹	3.19	1.23	.798	.840	.652
Single-item Constructs					
Growth Intentions ⁴	.37	.48			
Age ²	4.96	2.04			
Education ³	3.36	.93			
Marital Status ⁴	.46	.49			
Young Children ⁵	.61	.67			
Business Age ⁶	6.78	4.97			
Copreneur ⁴	.09	.28			
Size ⁷	1.53	0.62			

Note. Reliability and convergent validity measures are only provided for multi-item constructs.

1. Work salience, family salience and work-life balance measured on a five-point Likert scale
2. Age: Scale value ranging from 1(18-23 years) to 10 (65 or more years)
3. Education: Scale ranging from 1 to 9 as follows: (no formal education) to 7 (Doctorate).
4. Marital status, copreneur, and growth intentions were dummy variables. 46% were married, 9% were copreneurs and 37% had growth intentions
5. Young children: number of children 18 and below
6. Business age was measured in years since inception
7. Size: number of employees excluding the owners on a scale: none (0), 1-5 (1), 6-10 (2), above 10(3)

Descriptive Data, Reliability and Convergent Validity

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations of the control and main study variables. As shown in Table 1, it is observed that the women entrepreneurs have a low to moderate family salience ($M = 2.57$) moderate to high work salience ($M = 3.71$) and moderate to high work-life balance ($M = 3.19$). Besides these descriptive data, several quality criteria were also used to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs in the study. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (CR). For all the multi-item constructs, the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values were all above the .7 threshold widely recommended in the literature (Hair et al., 2017), thus confirming the reliability of the measures. Convergent validity was assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE). The general recommendation is that AVE values should be above 0.5 to ensure that a construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators (Verkijika, 2020). As seen in Table 1, all the AVE values were above 0.5,

thus confirming the convergent validity of the multi-item constructs.

Discriminant validity was assessed the Fornell-Larcker criterion. With this criterion, discriminant validity is confirmed when the square root of the AVE values is greater than its highest correlation with any other construct (Hair et al., 2017). Looking at Table 2, the square root of AVE (i.e., diagonal values in bold) are greater than all the correlation coefficients, this confirming the discriminant validity of the constructs. Concerning the correlations, it is seen that copreneurs (women who jointly own and operate their businesses with their spouse), size, work role salience and work-life balance have a positive correlation with growth intention. Also observed is that marital status, young children, and family salience are negatively correlated with growth intention.

Hypothesis Testing

Binary logistic regression analysis was used to test the hypothesized association as the dependent variable was a dichotomous factor. The results from the logistic regression are presented in Table 3. The table presents three models. The first model (Model 1) focuses only on the effect of the selected control variables on the growth intention of women entrepreneurs. The second model (Model 2) in addition to the control variables also examines the direct effects of role salience (work and family) and work-life balance on growth intentions. The third model (Model 3) extends Model 2 by adding the moderating effect of work-life balance on the relationship between role salience and growth intentions.

In Table 3, the results from Model 1 show that the age of the entrepreneur, the level of education, being a copreneur and size were positive and significantly associated with the growth intention of women entrepreneurs. On the other hand, the number of children younger than 18 years and marital status were negative and significantly associated with the growth intention. Kuschel and Lepeley (2016) found that copreneurial women benefit from the mutual skills and strengths they receive from their copreneurs partners which in turn enhance their drive to grow their businesses. Researchers (Byrne et al., 2016; Manolova et al., 2012; Neneh, 2017) found that being married has a statistically significant negative association with the growth intentions, which is consistent with the findings of this study. Neneh (2017) reported that women entrepreneurs who were married with young children had a low growth intention. Karadeniz and Özçam (2010) established that education had a significant and positive effect on growth intentions of entrepreneurs which is consistent with this study but contradicts studies by Manolova

Table 2. Correlations and Discriminant Validity

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	1									
2. Education	-.59**	1								
3. Marital Status	.47**	-.22**	1							
4. Young Children	-.33**	.07	0.20**	1						
5. Business Age	.54**	-.33**	.34**	-.21**	1					
6. Copreneur	-.01	-.08	.05	.15*	-.05	1				
7. Size	.17**	-.18**	.26**	-.01	.20**	.02	1			
8. Family Salience	-.14*	.03	-.01	.05	.02	-.14*	-.08	.849^a		
9. Work Salience	.03	.10	.01	-.23**	.03	-.08	.01	-.40**	.856^a	
10. Work-life Balance	.29**	-.05	.24**	-.12*	.11	.07	.21**	-.32**	.43**	.807^a
11. Growth Intentions	.06	.01	-.12*	-.15*	-.07	.31**	.16**	-.31**	.21**	.36**

Note. ^aDiagonal values in bold are the square root of the AVE values (see Table 1).

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

Table 3. Logistic Regression with Growth Intentions as the Dependent Variable

Constructs	Model A			Model B			Model C		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Control variables									
Age	.85	.22	< .001	.78	.21	.001	.76	.21	.001
Education	.43	.23	.001	.38	.21	.079	.38	.21	.079
Marital Status	-.66	.16	< .001	-.86	.23	< .001	-.82	.22	.001
Young Children	-.33	.14	.028	-.36	.17	.002	-.44	.18	.001
Business Age	-.28	.16	.135	-.32	.19	.015	-.36	.20	.040
Copreneur	.83	.18	< .001	.92	.20	< .001	.96	.20	< .001
Size	.53	.15	< .001	.32	.19	.096	.18	.22	.712
Main Factors									
<i>H</i> ₁ : Family role salience (FS)				-.22	.15	.129	-.21	.19	.106
<i>H</i> ₂ : Work role salience (WS)				.88	.24	< .001	.78	.23	< .001
<i>H</i> ₃ : Work-life Balance (WLB)				.73	.18	< .001	.72	.20	< .001
Moderating Factors									
<i>H</i> ₄ : WS*WLB							.90	.20	< .001
<i>H</i> ₅ : FS*WLB							-.16	.18	.512
Model parameters									
Cox & Snell <i>R</i> ²	.23			.47			.50		

Note. *b* = Unstandardized coefficients; *SE* = Standard error; *p* = level of statistical significance; *N* = 300.

et al. (2012) which revealed that highly educated women had lower growth intentions.

Model 2 presents the outcome of the first three hypothesized relationships associations (i.e., *H*₁-*H*₃). Model 2 extends Model 1 (i.e., the control variable-only model) by adding the core constructs (i.e., Work salience, family salience and work-life balance). The addition of these factors improved the explained variance by 24% (i.e., from 0.23 to 0.47). Hypothesis *H*₁ suggested that family role salience will have a significant negative relationship with growth intention. The results showed that

the association was negative; although it was, however, not significant. As such, hypothesis *H*₁ was not supported. Hypothesis *H*₂ proposed that work role salience will have a significant positive relationship with growth intention, while hypothesis *H*₃ suggested the same effect for work-life balance. The results showed that both work salience and work-life balance were positive and significantly associated with growth intention. Thus, *H*₂ and *H*₃ were supported.

Model 3 presents the outcome of the last two hypothesized relationships (i.e., *H*₄ and *H*₅). The model extends

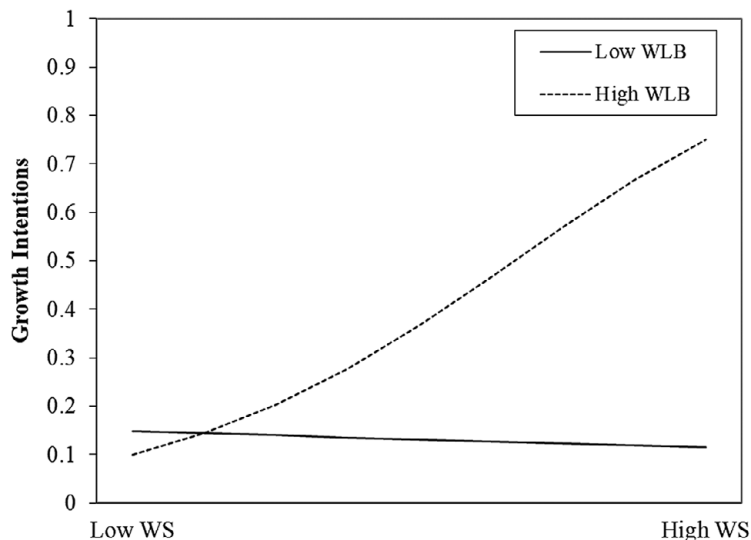


Figure 2. Moderating Effect of WLB of the WS-Growth Intentions Relationship.
Note. This is a plot of a binary logistic regression, the slope is not linear which is why the line is not a straight? As explained by Edgar and Manz (2017), a probability curve on a binary scale should be sigmoid shaped (s-shaped) and mathematically constrained between 0 and 1, which the logistic regression model provides.

Model 2 by adding the moderating factors. The addition of these moderating factors improved the variance explained by 3% (i.e., from 0.47 to 0.50). Hypothesis H_4 and H_5 suggested that work-life balance will moderate the effects of both work role salience and family role salience on growth intentions, respectively. The results showed that work-life balance significantly moderated the relationship between work role salience and growth intentions. However, the association between family role salience and growth intentions was not significantly moderated. As such, hypothesis H_4 was supported, while hypothesis H_5 was not supported. To better understand the nature of moderation in H_4 , the interaction plot is presented in Figure 2.

From Figure 2, it is observed that the probability of having an intention to grow a business by women entrepreneurs tends to increase with an increase in work role salience. Nevertheless, this increase is only visible for women who have a high level of work-life balance. This provides full support for hypothesis H_4 which suggested that the influence of work role salience on growth intentions will be more pronounced for those with high work-life balance.

Discussion

This study examined the direct effects of role salience (work and family) and work-life balance on the growth intentions of women entrepreneurs. Additionally, the moderating effect of work-life balance on the relationship between role salience and growth intentions was examined. The findings from this study suggest that the

number of children younger than 18 years and marital status has a negative association with growth intention. This could be attributed to the fact that younger children below the age of 18 often need more care and attention than older children (Mari et al., 2016; Neneh, 2017). As a result, women entrepreneurs who have young children often have to split their time between their domestic and child care responsibilities (reproductive labor) and business demands which in turn hampers the growth of their businesses. Also, Patrick et al. (2016) found that household responsibilities associated with children push married women into self-employment. As such when these women start a business based on this premise, they will often use growth-constraining strategies (Cliff, 1998; Shelton, 2006) to limit the size of their business to maintain an adequate balance between the work and family domains (Collins-Dodd et al., 2004). Women entrepreneurs who were copreneurs were also found to have a high growth intention. This finding is not surprising as copreneurial women have been known to be growth-oriented as oppose to merely starting and operating a business that can only cater for their basic lifestyle needs (Kuschel & Lepeley, 2016). Hence, the drive to grow coupled with the support that copreneurs provide and complement each other, (Dahl et al., 2015), often creates value for both the business and the family and thus will enhance their growth intention.

Also established is the fact that women entrepreneurs have low to moderate family role salience ($M = 2.57$) and a moderate to high work role salience ($M = 3.71$). These results align with the study by Chang et al., (2014) which reported that women employees in China significantly

had a higher work role salience ($M = 3.12$) than their male counterparts. Moreover, the results from this study showed that work role salience and work-life balance have a positive relationship with growth intention, which supports hypothesis H_2 and H_3 . While growth intentions have been recognized as a vital predictor of actual business growth, the entrepreneur's decision to grow is an individual choice which is usually closely entwined with the entrepreneurial identity. Given that individuals have multiple role identities, they usually assign importance to the role most salient to them. As such, the results demonstrate that women entrepreneurs with high work salience will have a high intention to grow their businesses. This suggests that women entrepreneurs who have a high work salience lay more emphasis on work and are more willing to adjust the construction of their family demands to accommodate their work demands as well as also create permeable boundaries between their work and family roles as they hold a collectivist belief of work as complementary rather than competing with family life (Spector et al., 2007). This corroborates studies by Capitano et al. (2017) which found that individuals that have a high salience of a specific role usually create permeable boundaries around their other multiple roles so that the highly salient role can be enacted in these other domains.

Additionally, the study established that work-life balance moderates the relationship between work role salience and growth intention and the effect is more pronounced for women entrepreneurs with high work-life balance, as proposed in hypothesis H_4 . Work-life balance has been identified to play a vital role in the success of women entrepreneurs as a balanced life can help women entrepreneurs to focus on their job and achieve better work results. As such, while women entrepreneurs who have a high work salience will have a high inclination to grow their businesses, however, the extent of the growth will be dependent on the type of work balance strategies they put in place while taking into consideration the family context. This is particularly important for women entrepreneurs who besides having children younger than 18 years, often have to split their attention between the reproductive labor in the home and productive labor in the business and as well as also deal with the external societal pressures to perform well in their family roles. This is evident in some families in the developing world, where the traditional gender roles and stereotypes belief of men being given the primary role as the breadwinners and women as the nurturance of children and the housemakers and hence has resulted to productive and reproductive labor being unevenly distributed, with unproductive labor being assigned mostly to women (Sullivan & Meek, 2012).

The lack of support for hypothesis H_1 and H_5 could be attributed to the view that most women might generally consider the family role to be relatively important even when they focus their energy in the work domain (ten Brummelhuis & Lautsch, 2016). As such, some do not necessarily feel exhausted from family-related chores to the extent that it might start influencing negatively on their growth aspirations. Generally, most women enter into entrepreneurship aiming to strike a balance between work and family. Also, they often see the family domain as an integral part of their lives. In this regard, these women entrepreneurs generally try to shoulder both family and business responsibilities. Thus, even women entrepreneurs who are more family salient might want to continue growing their business as that might be the main source of income that can help to take care of the family they love so much. Consequently, despite their family salience, they might rather employ various strategies to foster the growth of the businesses (e.g., using unpaid labor from family and friends to mitigate any conflict between the work and family domains and possibly grow their businesses).

The findings from this study have both theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, this study showed that work role salience played an important role in determining the growth intentions of women entrepreneurs. The classical entrepreneurship literature has often used the family embeddedness perspective to classify women entrepreneurs as homemakers who are most likely to sacrifice business goals for family needs (Moya et al., 2000; Neneh, 2017). In this regard, gender-related family problems have often been at the center of why women chose to deliberately refrain from growth. This has often led to the question of whether or not a woman-owned business will grow. However, Manolova et al. (2012) highlighted that in order to better understand the growth orientation of women entrepreneurs, it was vital to understand why they want to grow as opposed to focusing on the gender-related problems that limit their expectancy to succeed. The present study responds to the call by Manolova et al. (2012), by showing that work role salience is one of the fundamental factors that drive women entrepreneurs to aspire to grow their business. As such, the identity theory provides a useful framework for understanding the importance of how the salience of one's identity may influence their growth intention. Besides being a new finding, this study further extends an understanding of the boundary conditions of the association by showing that the relationship between work role salience and the growth intentions of women entrepreneurs is only visible for those with a high level of work-life balance. This provides a nuanced understanding of the application of identity theory in the context of women entrepreneurship by showing that

while an identity that is more salient towards work is a source of growth motivation for women entrepreneurs, women still need that fundamental work-life balance goal which they are not willing to sacrifice to achieve growth (Ahmad et al., 2014; Brush et al., 2006).

From a practical perspective, the importance of work-life balance for the growth of women-owned businesses cannot be overemphasized. From a personal and individual perspective, given that some women entrepreneurs who have a high work role salience are still bound by traditional gender role barriers where cultures play a greater role in the career advancement of women, these women need to craft their understanding of work-life balance. This will entail adopting a hybrid approach that takes into consideration a differential permeability (e.g., choosing the specific aspects of work-home life that will/will not be permeable) to help craft their ideal level of and style of work and family segmentation or integration strategy. This view is supported by Li et al., (2013) who established that actual segmentation of work and family roles was associated with more work-family balance. Likewise, Kreiner et al., (2009, p. 704) pointed out that individuals could use the behavioral tactics such as invoking triage (e.g., prioritizing), and having differential permeability (e.g., choosing the specific aspects of work-home life that will/will not be permeable); setting expectations (e.g., notifying people in advance of boundary violations), temporal tactics which focus on controlling the work period (e.g., blocking off segments of time) and change the physical space (e.g., creating or reducing physical distance between work and home domains), in order to help create their ideal level of and style of work-life balance. Additionally, given that businesses run by copreneurs have a high growth orientation; women with partners are encouraged to engage in copreneurship. Such partnerships are known to provide parents with a flexible form of economic activity as it allows them to manage their child care responsibilities with their partners and then jointly thrive for growth.

This study has some limitations that need to be outlined to better interpret the findings of the study and highlight opportunities for future research. First given that this study was conducted in the South African context, which is a developing country, women entrepreneurs in other developing countries may experience unique and varied contextual peculiarities that call for additional insights, and hence this makes it difficult to assess the replicability of this study. For example, this study did not investigate the possible ways in which a country's cultural factors could act as important determinants of growth intention, as it may have explained observed variations in

growth intention. Hence, future research should explore the influence of such cultural factors as it could provide more nuanced insights into the key drivers of growth intention. Also, while this study found that family salience had no relationship with growth intention, given that no distinction was made between the profiles of the women who identified themselves as either work salience or family salience, future research could explore this gap. To further understand how role salience shapes the behavior of women entrepreneurs, future studies should look at role salience at different stages of the business life cycle to see how these shape entrepreneurial behaviors. Furthermore, studies can try to shed more light on the strategies or combination of different strategies that would have the greatest positive effect on work-life balance for women entrepreneurs. Secondly, this study is limited by the use of self-administered questionnaires and as such, it was not possible to examine the extent to which work and family salience influences growth intention over time as well as whether the type and level of work-life balance vary over time. Future studies could use longitudinal data to investigate if the women's growth intention increases with an increase in work role salience over time as well as whether the level and type of work-life balance also vary over time.

Third, the measure for work-life balance used is not the only measures available. For example, Welsh et al. (2017) measure work-life balance by using moral support obtained from family moral supporters (spouse, parents, children or relative) and non-family moral supporters (friend, mentor, and government or private agency). Hence there is room for further studies to consider using these other measures when assessing the associations hypothesized in this study. Lastly, future studies can conduct comparative studies using a different theoretical lens as it might offer additional insights into role salience growth intention nexus.

In conclusion, this study showed that work role salience could be used to understand why some women entrepreneurs aspire to grow their businesses. Work-life balance was also found to moderate the relationship between work role salience and growth intention such that the effect was more pronounced for women entrepreneurs with high work-life balance. This study also highlights the importance of work-life balance as a predisposition for growth amongst women entrepreneurs. These results emphasize the importance of understanding role salience from the developing country context and how women entrepreneurs are altering their traditional gender roles by putting in place job crafting processes to redefine and possibly changing the permeability of their boundaries to accommodate their work roles to enhance the growth of their businesses.

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