



Work-Life Supportive Leadership And Employee Work-Life Balance: Comparative Effects Of Four Family-Supportive Supervisory Behaviors

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KEYWORDS

work-life supportive leadership; family-supportive supervisor behavior; employee work-life balance; emotional support; instrumental support; role modelling; creative work-family management; supervisor support..

ABSTRACT

Work-life balance has become a central organizational concern as digital connectivity, intensified performance expectations, and increasingly permeable role boundaries reshape employees' capacity to coordinate work and nonwork demands. Formal policies create structural opportunities, yet their practical value depends heavily on immediate supervisors who allocate workload, interpret flexibility, model availability norms, and legitimize boundary protection. Drawing on social support theory, conservation of resources theory, work-family border theory, and the family-supportive supervisor behavior framework, the study examines four supervisory dimensions: emotional support, instrumental support, role-modelling behaviour, and creative work-family management. A quantitative explanatory design was adopted with 315 employees from organized-sector workplaces in India. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire supported by personal interviews, following a pilot study with 60 employees. Multiple regression assessed the simultaneous contribution of the four leadership dimensions to employee work-life balance, while one-way analysis of variance examined differences across work-experience groups. The four-dimensional regression model explained 55.3% of variance in employee work-life balance and was statistically significant, $F(4, 310) = 95.78, p < .001$. Emotional support, instrumental support, role modelling, and creative work-family management displayed positive coefficients, with emotional support and creative work-family management producing the strongest standardized effects. Work-life balance also differed significantly across experience groups, $F(3, 311) = 9.53, p < .001$. The findings position supervisor behaviour as a portfolio of relational, practical, normative, and work-design resources that can convert formal work-life intentions into sustainable employee experience. The study extends work-family research by comparing the incremental contribution of four theoretically distinct supervisory behaviours within one explanatory model and offers a focused basis for leadership development, boundary-sensitive work design, and employee well-being strategy.....

1. INTRODUCTION

Work and nonwork domains increasingly operate as interdependent arenas rather than separate spheres. Digital communication, customer responsiveness, global coordination, compressed deadlines, and hybrid work practices have widened the temporal and psychological reach of employment. Employees can gain flexibility from such arrangements, yet the same arrangements can create permeability, fragmented recovery, and uncertainty about legitimate availability. Work-life balance has consequently moved from a private coping concern to a strategic organizational issue associated with well-being, satisfaction, retention, sustainable performance, and employer attractiveness. Guest (2002) framed balance as a multidimensional and context-sensitive experience, while later work distinguished balance from the mere absence of

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work-family conflict. Carlson et al. (2009) demonstrated that balance captures role accomplishment beyond conflict and enrichment, supporting treatment of employee work-life balance as a meaningful outcome in its own right.

Organizational policies alone cannot determine whether employees experience workable boundaries. Flexible hours, leave provisions, hybrid arrangements, workload adjustments, and family-friendly practices operate through local interpretation. Immediate supervisors allocate work, negotiate deadlines, approve flexibility, signal acceptable responsiveness, and model whether nonwork demands can be acknowledged without reputational cost. Allen (2001) showed that family-supportive work environments shape work-family experiences, and Kossek et al. (2011) found work-family-specific supervisor support more strongly related to work-family conflict than general forms of support. Supervisory conduct carries special relevance because employees often judge the practical credibility of organizational policy through recurring interactions with line managers.

Family-supportive supervisor behavior offers a theoretically mature basis for studying work-life supportive leadership. Hammer et al. (2009) developed and validated a multidimensional construct comprising emotional support, instrumental support, role modelling, and creative work-family management. Emotional support captures empathy, listening, and sensitivity to work-nonwork pressures. Instrumental support concerns practical assistance, scheduling accommodation, and problem solving. Role modelling reflects visible demonstration of effective boundary management by the supervisor. Creative work-family management concerns redesigning work so employee and organizational needs can be served jointly. The four dimensions move leadership research beyond broad claims that a supportive supervisor is beneficial. They identify concrete behavioral pathways through which employees receive resources, legitimacy, and workable discretion.

A resource-based interpretation strengthens the logic connecting supportive supervision and balance. Conservation of resources theory proposes that people seek to obtain, protect, and replenish valued resources, while resource loss and threatened loss create strain (Hobfoll, 1989). Supervisory empathy can protect psychological resources, practical accommodation can preserve time and control, role modelling can reduce ambiguity, and creative work design can reduce recurring resource depletion. Social support perspectives supply a complementary explanation because work-family-specific support can buffer demands and improve coping effectiveness. Boundary theory further clarifies why supervisory cues matter. Employees vary in preferred segmentation and integration, yet every preference requires some degree of predictability, respect, and control over transitions between roles. Boundary dynamics scholarship emphasizes permeability, flexibility, role transitions, and fit between preferences and enacted practices (Ashforth et al., 2000; Allen et al., 2014). Supervisors influence each mechanism through communication norms and everyday work design.

Supportive leadership and boundary-management scholarship jointly indicate that employees exposed to comparable organizational policies can still experience markedly different levels of work-life balance. A multidimensional treatment of supportive supervision provides greater explanatory precision because emotional reassurance, practical accommodation, role modelling, and work redesign operate through different resource pathways. Examining the four behaviours simultaneously avoids treating support as a single undifferentiated perception and permits comparison of the supervisory practices most strongly associated with employee balance.

Three research needs motivate the framework. First, work-life scholarship often examines broad organizational support, policy availability, or aggregate supervisor support even though employees encounter support through distinct behaviors. Second, a growing boundary management literature explains segmentation, integration, connectivity, and preference enactment, yet actionable supervisor practices are not always modeled in a form suitable for direct managerial intervention. Third, evidence on work-life arrangements has expanded rapidly, while organizational decision makers still require parsimonious evidence about which supervisory behaviors received priority in leadership development. A four-predictor regression framework addresses all three needs by estimating independent contributions while controlling for overlap among supportive behaviors.

The investigation develops an integrated model linking emotional support, instrumental support, role-modelling behaviour, and creative work-family management with employee work-life balance. The research also examines whether balance differs across employee experience groups, adding a practical demographic comparison without displacing the main explanatory model. The intended contribution is conceptual, empirical, and managerial. Conceptually, work-life supportive leadership is treated as a portfolio of specific supervisor resources. Empirically, simultaneous regression permits comparison of relative effects rather than separate bivariate associations. Managerially, the model translates an abstract commitment to work-life support into observable behaviours that can be trained, evaluated, and embedded in line-management routines.

Theoretical Foundation

Social support theory treats supportive relationships as resources that can alter appraisal, coping, and exposure to stress. In work-family research, support is especially valuable when it matches the domain of the demand. Kossek et al. (2011), using evidence from 115 samples and more than 72,000 employees, reported stronger relationships for work-family-specific support than for general support. The implication for leadership research is clear: employees may value a generally considerate supervisor, yet balance improves most plausibly when supervisory behaviour directly addresses scheduling, personal responsibilities, workload boundaries, and work-nonwork coordination. Family-supportive supervisor behavior operationalizes such domain specificity.

Conservation of resources theory adds a dynamic account of strain and recovery. Time, energy, autonomy, social support, predictability, and psychological safety function as valued resources. Work demands that consume those resources can produce loss spirals, especially when after-hours connectivity prevents recovery. Supervisor behaviour can interrupt resource loss by creating discretion, helping reorganize tasks, legitimizing boundary protection, or reducing interpersonal uncertainty. Emotional and instrumental support supply immediate resources, role modelling supplies normative information, and creative work-family management alters the work system that generates recurring demand. The four dimensions can consequently be treated as related but nonredundant resource channels.

Boundary and border perspectives explain how people construct, maintain, cross, and renegotiate role boundaries (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000). Work-family boundary dynamics depend on permeability, flexibility, identity transitions, technological connectivity, and preference enactment. Employees can prefer stronger segmentation or greater integration, yet both orientations benefit from coherent expectations. A supervisor who routinely sends nonurgent messages late at night may undermine a segmenter's preferred boundary and can also create uncertainty for an integrator who lacks control over timing. Role modelling and creative work-family management are particularly relevant because they communicate legitimate boundary norms and redesign tasks around real employee constraints.

Employee Work-Life Balance as a Leadership Outcome

Work-life balance is conceptually distinct from work-family conflict, work-family enrichment, and policy availability. Conflict captures incompatibility between role pressures, while enrichment concerns gains in one domain that improve functioning in another. Balance addresses the broader judgment that important role expectations can be met in a sustainable manner. Carlson et al. (2009) demonstrated that balance explains variance in important outcomes beyond conflict and enrichment. Such evidence supports a positive outcome orientation. Employees can report some conflict while still perceiving acceptable balance, and low conflict does not automatically imply a fulfilling allocation of time, attention, and identity across roles. A leadership model should consequently predict balance directly rather than infer it from the absence of strain.

Balance also carries strategic relevance for contemporary organizations because employees evaluate employment quality through the sustainability of role demands. Persistent imbalance can influence withdrawal, reduced engagement, health strain, and intentions to search for alternative employment. Earlier reviews documented broad consequences associated with work-to-family conflict (Allen et al., 2000), while newer mapping studies show continued growth and diversification of work-life scholarship (Zaitouni et al., 2024). The practical question is no longer whether work-life concerns matter. The sharper question concerns which organizational actors and behaviours can improve employees' capacity to manage those concerns under real operating conditions.

Immediate supervisors are positioned close to the operational sources of balance and imbalance. Senior leadership can approve policies, yet supervisors determine meeting cadence, deadline flexibility, task assignment, leave reactions, escalation norms, and the social meaning attached to boundary use. A supportive organizational policy can consequently coexist with an unsupportive team climate. Lee and Shin (2023) linked organizational and supervisory support with employee engagement through work-life policy mechanisms, reinforcing the importance of implementation context. Geraldtes et al. (2024) also highlighted supervisor support in the functioning of work-family practices. Such scholarship directs attention toward the supervisor as an implementation agent whose behaviour can either activate or neutralize formal organizational support.

A positive balance outcome also avoids treating employees as passive recipients of strain. Employees actively negotiate boundaries, communicate constraints, seek support, and develop routines for role transitions. Leadership resources can make such agency more effective by increasing predictability and legitimate control. Boundary fit research indicates that employee well-being improves when enacted boundaries correspond more closely with personal preferences. Leppäkumpu



and Sivunen (2024) showed how connectivity expectations are interpreted through sensemaking in global teams, and Mueller et al. (2025) demonstrated that targeted boundary-fit intervention can improve work-nonwork balance and well-being. Supervisory practices can supply the interpersonal and structural conditions that allow employees to use boundary strategies without violating team expectations.

Research Gap and Contribution

The literature presents a mature case for work-family support, yet several unresolved issues remain relevant for a focused empirical contribution. One issue concerns construct granularity. Broad labels such as supportive leadership, supervisor support, and family-friendly supervision can combine behaviours that operate through different mechanisms. Emotional reassurance protects psychological resources, instrumental assistance changes immediate constraints, role modelling changes norms, and creative management changes work architecture. Treating all four behaviours as one score can hide their relative contribution and reduce managerial precision. A simultaneous four-predictor model preserves the common leadership domain while allowing each dimension to demonstrate incremental association with employee balance.

A second issue concerns the implementation gap between formal policy and lived experience. Work-life policies are frequently discussed at organization level, while employees experience them through local managerial judgment. A policy may offer flexibility yet still be difficult to use when supervisors reward visibility, schedule avoidable late meetings, or treat personal constraints as commitment problems. Work-family-specific supervisor support is especially important because meta-analytic evidence shows stronger associations than generic supervisor support (Kossek et al., 2011). A behavioural model can explain why the same policy environment produces unequal experiences across teams and employees.

A third issue concerns the integration of boundary scholarship with leadership practice. Boundary theory offers sophisticated explanations of segmentation, integration, permeability, transition, and preference fit, but organizations often struggle to translate such concepts into everyday management routines. Role modelling and creative work-family management provide a bridge. Role modelling communicates acceptable boundary behaviour, while creative management alters workflows that repeatedly force boundary violations. The framework consequently uses boundary theory as explanatory logic rather than relying on a single alignment variable to carry the full theoretical contribution.

A fourth issue concerns comparative managerial relevance. Studies that test one predictor at a time can show whether a relationship exists but do not tell decision makers where to focus training resources. Simultaneous regression directly compares standardized effects while accounting for shared variance among the four supportive behaviours. Such evidence can reveal whether practical work redesign contributes beyond empathy, whether modelling adds value after instrumental assistance is controlled, and whether all dimensions retain independent relevance. The research contribution lies in converting a familiar broad association into a discriminating behavioural architecture with clear implications for supervisor development.

The supplementary ANOVA addresses a different but complementary question. Regression explains how leadership behaviours relate to balance, while ANOVA examines whether balance is distributed differently across broad experience groups. A group comparison can identify employee segments requiring closer diagnostic attention. The analysis is not positioned as a central causal theory. Its value lies in helping organizations detect whether career experience coincides with meaningful variation in perceived balance and in motivating deeper analysis of autonomy, job design, caregiving, and career-stage expectations.

Contextual Relevance of the Indian Organized Sector

Integrating resource and boundary perspectives strengthens the four-dimensional logic. Emotional and instrumental support primarily supply resources at the point of demand, role modelling shapes normative expectations about legitimate boundary behaviour, and creative work-family management changes structural conditions that repeatedly generate work-nonwork interference. The work-home resources model similarly explains how contextual demands and resources in one domain influence outcomes in another through changes in personal resources (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Such integration reduces dependence on a single explanatory mechanism and positions the four supervisory behaviours as complementary channels rather than interchangeable indicators.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Emotional support and employee work-life balance

Emotional support refers to supervisory behaviours that communicate empathy, attentive listening, concern, and



psychological availability when employees face competing work and personal demands. Hammer et al. (2009) positioned emotional support as a core dimension of family-supportive supervision. Emotional support differs from friendliness because it is directed toward employees' work-nonwork realities. A supervisor who listens without stigma, acknowledges caregiving or personal responsibilities, and treats boundary concerns as legitimate can reduce anticipatory strain and improve perceived control.

The expected relationship with work-life balance can be explained through resource preservation and social exchange. Emotional validation reduces uncertainty about whether personal needs will attract negative career judgments. Lower uncertainty can conserve emotional energy that would otherwise be spent hiding demands or anticipating sanctions. Supportive exchanges can also build trust, increasing the likelihood that employees raise scheduling conflicts early enough for constructive resolution. Research on work-family-specific supervisor support consistently links supportive conduct with lower conflict and stronger well-being. The meta-analytic evidence reported by Kossek et al. (2011) and Guo et al. (2024) reinforces the value of supervisor support for work-family outcomes. A domain-specific emotional climate can consequently improve employees' ability to meet expectations across work and nonwork roles.

Instrumental support and employee work-life balance

Instrumental support captures concrete assistance rather than affective reassurance. Examples include schedule adjustment, task redistribution, temporary flexibility, help in resolving workload bottlenecks, and practical accommodation during periods of competing demands. Emotional concern without practical discretion can leave the underlying problem unchanged. Instrumental support converts supportive intent into usable time, control, or task resources. The distinction is important for employees facing rigid operational demands because supportive language alone cannot resolve a childcare disruption, medical appointment, commuting constraint, or short-term caregiving need.

Flexible work research shows that availability, form, and use of flexibility do not have uniform effects. Allen et al. (2013) reported small but meaningful differences across forms of workplace flexibility, indicating that practical arrangements need contextual fit. Supervisor-level instrumental support can improve such fit by tailoring available options to immediate work requirements and employee circumstances. Resource theory predicts a positive association because schedule control and problem-solving assistance protect time and reduce the need to sacrifice one domain to meet the other. Employees who can obtain practical help from supervisors should consequently report stronger work-life balance.

Role-modelling behaviour and employee work-life balance

Role-modelling behaviour refers to the supervisor's visible demonstration of workable balance and boundary management. Leaders communicate norms through action as strongly as through policy statements. A supervisor who takes legitimate leave, avoids performative overwork, protects nonurgent off-hours communication, and openly manages personal responsibilities signals that boundary protection is compatible with professional commitment. A supervisor who verbally promotes balance while rewarding constant availability communicates an opposing norm. Such inconsistency can weaken psychological safety around the use of formal work-life practices.

Boundary theory gives role modelling special explanatory value because employees infer acceptable transition rules from salient others. Ashforth et al. (2000) described micro role transitions as boundary-crossing processes shaped by contrast and flexibility. Allen et al. (2014) reviewed work-family boundary dynamics and emphasized individual management of integration and segmentation. Supervisors can influence the context in which those preferences are enacted by signalling whether disconnection is legitimate and whether flexibility carries hidden career penalties. Role modelling can also normalize recovery, reduce guilt attached to nonwork time, and improve employees' confidence that balanced behaviour will not be interpreted as low commitment.

Creative work-family management and employee work-life balance

Creative work-family management is the most system-oriented dimension of family-supportive supervision. Hammer et al. (2009) described it as managerial action that restructures work in ways that jointly benefit employees and the organization. The dimension moves beyond case-by-case accommodation by reconsidering workflows, cross-training, coverage, meeting design, task sequencing, staffing, and performance expectations. Such redesign can reduce recurring work-family friction at its source.

Theoretical expectations are especially strong because creative work-family management can generate resource gains at both individual and unit levels. Better task design can improve predictability, reduce unnecessary after-hours demands, and create backup capacity. Intervention research involving family-supportive supervisor behavior has shown that targeted



supervisor practices can alter work-family processes rather than merely employee attitudes (Hammer et al., 2011). Creative management can also make support more equitable because work design changes reduce dependence on private negotiation between individual employees and supervisors. A positive association with employee work-life balance is consequently expected, and the dimension may carry a comparatively strong effect when entered alongside emotional, instrumental, and role-modelling support.

Employee experience and work-life balance

Employee experience can shape role demands, job control, career expectations, family responsibilities, and familiarity with organizational systems. Early-career employees may face lower autonomy and stronger impression-management pressure, while experienced employees may possess greater discretion but also wider responsibilities. No single directional pattern can be assumed across organizational settings. A one-way comparison across experience groups provides a useful supplementary test because meaningful mean differences would indicate that leadership initiatives may require career-stage sensitivity. The comparison remains secondary to the four-predictor leadership model and is used to identify whether balance perceptions vary across tenure-based career experience categories.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the effect of emotional support from immediate supervisors on employee work-life balance.
2. To assess the effect of instrumental support from immediate supervisors on employee work-life balance.
3. To evaluate the effect of supervisor role-modelling behaviour on employee work-life balance.
4. To determine the effect of creative work-family management on employee work-life balance while estimating the joint explanatory power of all four leadership dimensions.
5. To examine whether employee work-life balance differs significantly across work-experience groups.

Research Hypotheses

- H1: Emotional support from immediate supervisors is positively associated with employee work-life balance.
- H2: Instrumental support from immediate supervisors is positively associated with employee work-life balance.
- H3: Supervisor role-modelling behaviour is positively associated with employee work-life balance.
- H4: Creative work-family management is positively associated with employee work-life balance.
- H5: Employee work-life balance differs significantly across work-experience groups.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework positions four family-supportive supervisory behaviours as simultaneous predictors of employee work-life balance. The model treats each behaviour as a distinct leadership resource while acknowledging conceptual overlap within a broader work-life supportive leadership architecture.

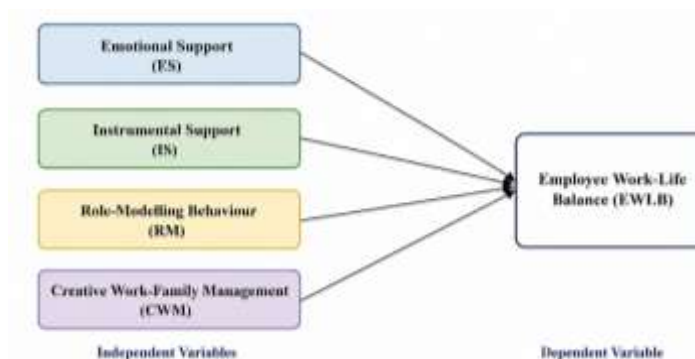


Figure 1. Conceptual framework linking four dimensions of work-life supportive leadership with employee work-life balance

Research Methodology

A quantitative, explanatory, cross-sectional research design was used to examine the relationship between four dimensions of work-life supportive leadership and employee work-life balance. The design is appropriate because the research questions concern the direction, magnitude, and relative contribution of measurable employee perceptions collected at one point in time. The unit of analysis is the individual employee. Eligible respondents are salaried employees working in organized-sector workplaces, reporting to an identifiable immediate supervisor, and possessing sufficient organizational exposure to evaluate recurring supervisory behaviour. The target population is deliberately defined at the employee-supervisor interface because the conceptual model concerns day-to-day leadership practices rather than organization-level policy availability.

The study was conducted among employees working in organized-sector organizations located in Bengaluru, Karnataka, India. Bengaluru provides a suitable setting for examining work-life supportive leadership because of its diversified employment base across information technology and IT-enabled services, banking and financial services, education, healthcare, manufacturing, retail, and other professional service sectors. Respondents were drawn from employees working in these organizational settings who reported directly to an immediate supervisor and had sufficient organizational experience to evaluate recurring supervisory behaviours. The inclusion of employees from multiple sectors enabled the study to capture variation in leadership practices, work arrangements, and work-life demands while maintaining a common geographical context. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire supported by personal interaction, and 315 usable responses were retained for statistical analysis.

A final analytical sample of 315 employees was retained for model estimation. The sample size exceeds common minimum requirements for a four-predictor ordinary least squares regression and provides adequate degrees of freedom for a supplementary one-way ANOVA across four experience groups. Respondent recruitment was implemented through purposive and network-assisted organizational access where a complete cross-organizational sampling frame was unavailable. Eligibility screening confirmed current employment, direct reporting to a supervisor, and voluntary consent. The sampling approach was documented as part of the research protocol because inferential interpretation concerns relationships among constructs within the sampled population rather than population prevalence estimates.

Data collection was organized around a structured questionnaire administered through a combination of direct distribution and researcher-facilitated contact. Personal interviews accompanied questionnaire administration where clarification was required, with interview interaction limited to explaining instructions and item meaning rather than influencing responses. Such a mixed-contact procedure can improve completion quality in heterogeneous employee groups while retaining standardized measurement. Respondents received a brief statement covering research purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity of reporting, and the right to withdraw before submission. No personally identifying information was required for the statistical model.

A pilot study involving 60 employees preceded the main administration. Pilot participants resembled the intended main-sample respondents in employment status and supervisor exposure and were excluded from the final 315 cases. Assessment covered item clarity, response burden, questionnaire flow, scale anchors, completion time, and preliminary internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha values were .86 for emotional support, .83 for instrumental support, .81 for role-modelling behaviour, .88 for creative work-family management, and .87 for employee work-life balance. No item displayed a corrected item-total correlation below .40, and respondent feedback identified only minor wording and sequencing issues. The pilot supported retention of the five-point response format and confirmed that the instrument could be completed within an acceptable time window. Minor language refinements improved readability without altering the conceptual meaning of established measures. Pilot responses were used solely for instrument assessment and were excluded from hypothesis testing.

Work-life supportive leadership was operationalized through the four dimensions developed in the family-supportive supervisor behavior literature. Emotional support captures listening, empathy, concern, and comfort in discussing work-nonwork difficulties. Instrumental support captures practical assistance and schedule-related problem solving. Role-modelling behaviour captures the supervisor's demonstration of effective work-nonwork boundary management. Creative work-family management captures efforts to organize work so employee and organizational needs can be met jointly. Hammer et al. (2009) provide the primary measurement foundation, while the short-form validation by Hammer et al. (2013) supports concise assessment when questionnaire length is constrained. Items were scored on a five-point Likert response format ranging from strong disagreement to strong agreement, with higher scores indicating stronger perceived support.

Employee work-life balance was measured as a positive role-accomplishment outcome rather than simply reverse-coded



conflict. The conceptualization follows work-family balance scholarship that treats balance as the perceived ability to meet negotiated expectations across work and nonwork roles (Carlson et al., 2009). A five-point Likert format was retained for consistency across the instrument. Demographic items include age category, gender, work experience, employment type, and broad work arrangement where appropriate. Work experience is grouped into up to 5 years, 6 to 10 years, 11 to 15 years, and more than 15 years for the ANOVA comparison.

Data screening examined missingness, straight-line responding, impossible demographic combinations, univariate outliers, and distributional properties. Composite scores were computed after confirming consistent item direction. Multiple regression estimated the simultaneous effects of emotional support, instrumental support, role-modelling behaviour, and creative work-family management on employee work-life balance. The model takes the form $WLB = b_0 + b_1ES + b_2IS + b_3RM + b_4CWM + e$. Model interpretation uses R, R squared, adjusted R squared, the regression F statistic, unstandardized coefficients, standard errors, standardized beta coefficients, t statistics, probability values, tolerance, and variance inflation factors. Multicollinearity was assessed through tolerance and VIF, while residual diagnostics examined linearity, homoscedasticity, independence, and approximate normality.

A one-way ANOVA tested whether mean work-life balance differs across the four experience groups. The omnibus F test is interpreted at an alpha level of .05. Levene's test was considered when assessing homogeneity of variance, and a robust alternative such as Welch's ANOVA was considered if variance equality is materially violated. Significant omnibus results were followed by an appropriate post hoc procedure, with Tukey comparisons under homogeneity and Games-Howell comparisons when variances are unequal. Effect size accompanied statistical significance wherever the final empirical dataset permits reliable estimation.

Common method risk was reduced procedurally by separating construct instructions, assuring anonymity, using clear and non-evaluative wording, and emphasizing that no supervisor receives individual responses. Statistical checks such as Harman's single-factor diagnostic was treated only as a limited screening procedure rather than definitive evidence against common method bias. More rigorous future designs can use temporal separation, supervisor ratings, objective workload indicators, or multilevel data. The cross-sectional design supports association and predictive explanation within the model but does not establish causal effects.

Analytical Rigor and Measurement Quality

Construct quality requires explicit attention before hypothesis testing. Internal consistency is examined through Cronbach's alpha and, where item-level modelling is available, composite reliability. Ordinary least squares regression does not remove the need for measurement discipline because weakly measured predictors can attenuate coefficients, increase residual variance, and distort comparisons across dimensions. Measurement evidence should accompany inferential results in the empirical reporting sequence.

Regression assumptions should also be reported as diagnostics rather than treated as automatic properties of Likert-based composite scores. Scatterplots of standardized residuals against standardized predicted values can assess linearity and variance stability. Normal probability plots and residual distribution summaries can support assessment of approximate normality, with emphasis on whether departures are severe enough to distort inference in a sample of 315. Independence is primarily a design issue. If employees are nested within the same supervisor or organization, ordinary regression may underestimate standard errors because observations can share contextual influences. Cluster-robust standard errors or multilevel modelling was considered whenever the sampling structure identifies meaningful nesting. The single-level model remains appropriate only when clustering is negligible or cannot be estimated reliably from available identifiers.

Inference should focus on effect magnitude as well as probability values. Standardized beta coefficients permit comparison across the four predictors, while confidence intervals communicate estimation precision. R squared indicates joint explanatory power but should not be interpreted as proof that omitted variables are unimportant. Workload, job control, caregiving intensity, psychological detachment, work arrangement, and organizational culture can all contribute to balance. A parsimonious model gains value from theoretical focus, not from claiming exhaustive explanation. Transparent reporting of excluded constructs, sampling boundaries, and alternative explanations strengthens credibility and protects the article from causal overstatement.

Results

The multiple regression model was statistically significant, $F(4, 310) = 95.78, p < .001$, and explained 55.3% of variance in employee work-life balance ($R = .744, R^2 = .553, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .547$). The small difference between R^2 and adjusted R^2 indicates stable explanatory performance relative to the number of predictors. Durbin-Watson was 1.99, supporting

independence of residuals, while variance inflation factors ranged from 1.44 to 1.75, indicating that multicollinearity did not threaten coefficient interpretation.

Emotional support displayed a positive and statistically significant association with work-life balance ($B = .275$, $SE = .042$, $\beta = .302$, $t = 6.50$, $p < .001$). Instrumental support also produced a positive effect ($B = .121$, $SE = .047$, $\beta = .128$, $t = 2.55$, $p = .011$). Role-modelling behaviour remained significant after simultaneous control for the other supportive behaviours ($B = .211$, $SE = .041$, $\beta = .234$, $t = 5.14$, $p < .001$). Creative work-family management displayed a strong positive coefficient ($B = .268$, $SE = .046$, $\beta = .285$, $t = 5.84$, $p < .001$). Emotional support produced the largest standardized coefficient, followed closely by creative work-family management, indicating that relational legitimacy and structural work redesign carried substantial independent value.

The coefficient pattern supports H1, H2, H3, and H4. The findings also show that the four supervisory behaviours should not be treated as interchangeable manifestations of a general positive climate. Each dimension contributed unique explanatory variance despite moderate conceptual overlap. Emotional support appears especially relevant to psychological legitimacy and disclosure of nonwork constraints, while creative work-family management addresses recurrent structural sources of boundary pressure. Role modelling contributes through norm formation, and instrumental support converts supervisory concern into immediate practical accommodation.

Table 1. Multiple Regression Predicting Employee Work-Life Balance

Panel A: Model Summary						
R	R²	Adjusted R²	Std. Error	F	df	p
.744	.553	.547	.372	95.78	4, 310	< .001
Panel B: Regression Coefficients						
Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	VIF
Constant	1.032	.162	-	6.39	< .001	-
Emotional support	.275	.042	.302	6.50	< .001	1.49
Instrumental support	.121	.047	.128	2.55	.011	1.75
Role-modelling behaviour	.211	.041	.234	5.14	< .001	1.44
Creative work-family management	.268	.046	.285	5.84	< .001	1.65

Note. Dependent variable: employee work-life balance. N = 315. Predictors were entered simultaneously. Durbin-Watson = 1.99.

Table 2. One-Way ANOVA of Employee Work-Life Balance by Work-Experience Group

Panel A: Group Descriptive Statistics			
Work-experience group	n	Mean	SD
Up to 5 years	74	3.975	.512
6-10 years	108	4.080	.513
11-15 years	69	4.211	.537
More than 15 years	64	4.425	.549



Panel B: ANOVA			
Source	SS	df	MS
Between groups	7.898	3	2.633
Within groups	85.942	311	.276
Total	93.840	314	-
Omnibus test	F = 9.53	p < .001	$\eta^2 = .084$

2. DISCUSSION

The model advances work-life leadership research by separating supportive supervision into four behaviourally specific dimensions and estimating their effects simultaneously. Such separation matters because broad supervisor-support measures can conceal differences between empathy, practical accommodation, normative modelling, and work redesign. Hammer et al. (2009) established the multidimensional architecture of family-supportive supervisor behavior, while Kossek et al. (2011) demonstrated the value of work-family-specific support relative to general support. The combined logic supports a leadership model in which employee balance emerges partly from the availability of distinct relational and structural resources supplied by the immediate supervisor.

Emotional support is expected to matter because work-nonwork strain is not purely logistical. Employees frequently assess whether raising personal constraints will damage perceptions of commitment, promotability, or dependability. Empathic listening and nonjudgmental communication can reduce concealment, anticipatory anxiety, and interpersonal threat. Such a climate is consistent with social support mechanisms and can enable earlier problem identification. The contribution of emotional support also explains why formal flexibility can remain underused in unsupportive local climates. Employees may technically possess an option while perceiving its use as unsafe.

Instrumental support represents the conversion of supportive intention into workable action. Schedule changes, temporary task redistribution, meeting flexibility, coverage support, and practical assistance can directly reduce collisions between work and personal responsibilities. Allen et al. (2013) showed that flexibility effects vary across form and use, indicating that employee outcomes depend on how arrangements operate rather than whether a policy exists. Immediate supervisors occupy a critical implementation position because they translate policy into specific decisions. Instrumental support should consequently be treated as an execution capability within people management rather than an informal favour.

Role-modelling behaviour contributes through norm formation. Employees learn what is culturally legitimate by observing what leaders do, not only what leaders endorse. When supervisors protect recovery time, avoid unnecessary after-hours demands, use leave appropriately, and manage personal obligations without stigma, employees receive evidence that balance is compatible with responsible performance. Boundary scholarship emphasizes role transitions and the contextual conditions that make segmentation or integration workable (Ashforth et al., 2000; Allen et al., 2014). Supervisor modelling can stabilize those conditions by reducing ambiguity around availability norms.

Creative work-family management carries special strategic value because it targets work architecture. Many work-life problems recur because of preventable meeting patterns, single-person dependencies, unrealistic sequencing, weak backup arrangements, or performance norms tied to visibility rather than outcomes. Creative managerial action can redesign such features and create mutual gains. Employees receive more predictable boundaries and organizations receive more resilient workflows. The intervention literature also suggests that training supervisors in family-supportive behaviours can alter employee work-family experiences (Hammer et al., 2011). A comparatively strong coefficient for creative work-family management would support investment in work-design capability alongside interpersonal leadership training.

The supplementary experience-group comparison should be interpreted with restraint. Career stage can affect autonomy, family responsibilities, identity investment, and knowledge of informal organizational practices. Significant differences can help organizations target support, yet experience is not a substitute for direct measures of workload, job control, caregiving, boundary preference, or work arrangement. The primary theoretical contribution remains the four-dimensional leadership model. Experience-group ANOVA serves a diagnostic purpose by identifying whether balance is distributed unevenly across broad employee cohorts.

The framework also clarifies the role of boundary alignment within a broader behavioural account. Boundary logic is embedded within the mechanisms of role modelling and creative work-family management. Supervisors shape the conditions under which employees can enact preferred boundaries by setting availability norms, granting control, and redesigning work. Future research can restore boundary preference fit as a moderator after the four-dimensional measurement model is established. Such a sequential research programme can test whether supportive behaviours have stronger effects when leader practices match employee segmentation or integration preferences.

The contribution rests on construct specificity and comparative explanatory power. Broad associations between supportive leadership and balance are already well established, while comparison of four theoretically grounded supervisor behaviours can identify where support originates and which behaviour carries incremental value. The approach sharpens theoretical interpretation, strengthens managerial relevance, and supports more disciplined hypothesis testing. Validated measurement, transparent sampling, assumption checks, effect-size reporting, robustness analysis, and complete statistical disclosure remain central to credible inference.

Comparison of standardized coefficients provides a more discriminating interpretation than separate bivariate tests. Emotional support and creative work-family management produced the largest effects, suggesting that employees benefit from both interpersonal legitimacy and structural problem solving. Such dual emphasis is consistent with social support research showing that support operates through emotional and instrumental channels (French et al., 2018) and with conservation of resources theory, which treats social support, time, autonomy, and predictability as resources capable of protecting against loss (Hobfoll, 1989). The coefficient pattern also aligns with the work-home resources model, where contextual resources influence work-home outcomes through resource gains and protection (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

Work-life balance should also be interpreted as more than the absence of conflict. Wayne et al. (2017) distinguish multiple meanings of work-family balance and show that balance satisfaction and effectiveness carry explanatory value beyond conflict and enrichment. Positive associations between family-supportive supervision and employee balance can consequently reflect greater perceived effectiveness in meeting role expectations, not merely lower interference. Such interpretation is important for leadership research because employees can experience occasional conflict while still regarding their work and nonwork roles as sustainably coordinated.

The experience-group differences provide a secondary contextual insight. Greater balance among more experienced employees may reflect accumulated autonomy, stronger negotiation resources, better knowledge of informal systems, or selective retention. Cross-sectional group differences cannot establish which mechanism produced the pattern. The result indicates that supervisor-support initiatives may require career-stage sensitivity. Early-career employees can be especially dependent on local norms because they possess less structural power to negotiate boundaries, while experienced employees may need support around broader responsibility loads rather than basic permission to use flexibility.

Theoretical Contributions

A central theoretical implication concerns the movement from support quantity to support form. Employees may perceive a supervisor as broadly supportive while receiving uneven resources across emotional, instrumental, normative, and structural domains. By separating those forms, the model treats leadership support as a configuration of resources. Such a view can support future profile analysis in which different supervisors display distinct combinations, such as high empathy with weak work redesign or strong instrumental flexibility with poor boundary modelling. Profile-oriented research could explain why teams with similar aggregate support scores still differ in balance outcomes.

A second implication concerns the relationship between individual agency and managerial context. Boundary management is often framed as an employee skill, yet boundary choices are enacted inside systems of deadlines, technology, customer demands, and hierarchy. The proposed model locates supervisors as contextual enablers who can expand or restrict feasible choices. Such positioning avoids placing responsibility for balance solely on employees. A person can possess strong self-regulation and still struggle when work design repeatedly generates unavoidable intrusions. Leadership resources and employee boundary strategies should be studied as complementary components of sustainable role management.

Managerial Implications

Organizations seeking stronger work-life outcomes should move beyond generic policy communication and develop supervisor capability at the point of daily work coordination. Leadership development can be organized around four competencies. Emotional-support capability involves listening, psychologically safe discussion, and non-stigmatizing responses. Instrumental-support capability involves schedule problem solving, workload adjustment, and equitable use of

flexibility. Role-modelling capability involves visible boundary discipline and consistent communication norms. Creative work-family management involves redesigning workflows so individual accommodation does not depend on repeated exceptions.

Performance-management systems can reinforce the model by evaluating supervisors partly on team sustainability rather than solely short-term output. Relevant indicators can include predictable scheduling, avoidable after-hours work, leave-use climate, backup coverage, workload planning, and employee perceptions of support. Such indicators should not become intrusive monitoring tools. Their purpose is to identify work-design practices that create preventable boundary strain. Human resource policies gain credibility when supervisors receive both authority and accountability to implement them.

The model also has implications for hybrid and digitally connected work. Remote access can increase autonomy while expanding availability expectations. Clear team protocols for response windows, meeting timing, escalation, and nonurgent communication can convert flexibility into genuine control. Supervisor role modelling is especially important because employees often mirror leader connectivity patterns. Creative work-family management can reduce reliance on individual resilience by embedding boundary-respecting routines in workflow design.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations define the boundaries of inference. A cross-sectional survey cannot establish temporal causality and may contain common method variance because predictor and outcome perceptions are reported by the same employee. Nonprobability organizational access can also limit generalizability. Employee balance is context-sensitive and can vary with caregiving, job level, occupation, shift work, commuting, organizational culture, and national institutions. Future research should use time-lagged designs, supervisor-employee dyads, multilevel models, objective workload indicators, and repeated measures. Boundary preference fit can be introduced as a moderator after reliable estimation of the four leadership dimensions. Sector-specific replication would clarify whether creative work-family management operates differently in knowledge work, healthcare, education, retail, hospitality, manufacturing, and other settings.

3. CONCLUSION

Employee work-life balance is shaped by more than personal coping and formal policy availability. Immediate supervisors influence whether employees receive emotional legitimacy, practical flexibility, credible boundary norms, and work designs that make competing roles manageable. A four-dimensional work-life supportive leadership model provides a stronger basis for empirical testing than a broad undifferentiated support construct. Emotional support, instrumental support, role-modelling behaviour, and creative work-family management represent related but distinct pathways through which leadership can protect employee resources and support role accomplishment.

The research design links those pathways to a sample of 315 employees, a structured questionnaire supported by personal interviews, a 60-participant pilot, multiple regression, and a supplementary one-way ANOVA. The framework aligns theory, objectives, hypotheses, measurement, and statistical analysis in one coherent sequence. Work-life supportive leadership is conceptualized not as a single behaviour but as a portfolio of supervisory resources whose relative effects can be measured, compared, and managed..

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