RESEARCH ARTICLE

Leadership styles and employee work-life balance: A systematic literature review

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ABSTRACT

This systematic literature review examines the relationship between leadership styles and employee work-life balance (WLB). Following the PRISMA protocol, data were collected from four academic databases (Publish or Perish/Google Scholar, Scopus, Emerald Insight) using the PICO framework. From an initial pool of 296 articles, 31 studies met the inclusion criteria for analysis. The findings consistently demonstrate that transformational leadership exerts a significant positive influence on WLB by fostering a supportive work environment, providing psychological resources, and promoting flexible work arrangements. Supportive and authentic leadership styles also show positive correlations, while authoritarian leadership is consistently detrimental. The review identifies perceived organizational support and flexible work policies as key mediating factors. The results underscore that effective, people-oriented leadership is crucial for cultivating organizational cultures that support employee well-being and sustainable work-life integration. Organizations are advised to develop leadership training programs that focus on empathy, flexibility, and empowerment. This study contributes to the literature by synthesizing evidence across diverse contexts and suggests that future research should explore causal relationships and the moderating role of cultural and organizational variables.

INTRODUCTION

The globalized business landscape has catalyzed the proliferation of companies offering a diverse range of goods and services, intensifying market competition and driving the demand for high productivity. To thrive in this environment, organizations require a superior, skilled, and highly engaged workforce capable of delivering strong performance. In the workplace, employees frequently encounter complex job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). To support employees in meeting these demands, organizations must attend to their workforce's capacity to manage assigned tasks, as failure to do so can prove counterproductive to organizational objectives (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

However, contemporary employee priorities extend beyond task completion and compensation. There is a growing emphasis on interpersonal relationships, skill development, and work-life balance

(WLB) issues, which have become central concerns in the era of globalization (Chawla & Sondhi, 2021). Furthermore, within the increasingly competitive modern work environment, employees face significant pressure from both professional and personal domains (Koch & Binnewies, 2015). An imbalance between these spheres can lead to serious consequences, including increased stress, emotional exhaustion, and diminished productivity (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Leadership style constitutes a critical factor influencing this balance (Koch & Binnewies, 2015). Leaders play a strategic role in cultivating a work environment that supports employee well-being, including providing flexibility, emotional support, and managing workloads equitably (Koch & Binnewies, 2015). Within this context, it is essential to examine how various leadership styles contribute to employees' achievement of WLB. WLB is defined as the extent to which an individual can satisfactorily meet the demands of both professional and personal life without feeling overwhelmed or neglecting either aspect (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Achieving this balance enables individuals to allocate time and energy proportionally between work and personal life. Employees often face dilemmas when navigating competing demands, which, if unaddressed, can lead to adverse outcomes in both domains (Maslach & Leiter, 2016), resulting in stress, burnout, job dissatisfaction, and significant performance declines.

With the growing participation of employees in dynamic sectors such as startups and technology, there is an emergent need to understand how organizational factors—especially leadership style—influence WLB (Sanjrani et al., 2025). The new generation of employees highly values flexibility, meaningful work, and organizations that fulfill their psychological and social needs (Twenge, 2010; Sanjrani et al., 2025). Companies that offer innovative opportunities and developmental spaces have become their preferred employers (Peticca-Harris et al., 2020). However, high-intensity work dynamics and substantial expectations also present significant challenges to maintaining WLB (Peticca-Harris et al., 2020).

In this context, leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping employees' work experiences. Effective leadership styles can create a work environment that prioritizes employee well-being. For instance, transformational leadership, which inspires and motivates employees towards a shared vision, has been consistently linked to lower work-family conflict and higher WLB (Haar et al., 2019). Similarly, authentic leadership, characterized by transparency and self-awareness, fosters trust and has been shown to provide employees with greater psychological resources to manage work and life demands (Banks et al., 2021). Conversely, authoritarian or unresponsive leadership styles may exacerbate existing imbalances (Kim & Beehr, 2020).

Nevertheless, there remains a scarcity of studies that systematically examine and compare the efficacy of these leadership styles on WLB, particularly within dynamic sectors such as startups and creative industries. Most prior research has focused on older generations or conventional corporate settings (Jasmine & Utomo, 2024). This is a significant gap, given that these modern sectors demand leadership styles that are more adaptive to emerging values. As Rudolph et al. (2023) note, generational differences are a critical factor in shaping work values and expectations, yet leadership studies often fail to account for this evolution.

Addressing this need, this paper aims to conduct a systematic literature review (SLR) to identify and analyze the influence of various leadership styles on employee work-life balance. The findings of this review are expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of leadership's role in supporting the well-being of the contemporary workforce in dynamic environments, thereby contributing to the development of more adaptive and responsive leadership practices suited to the needs of the current generation..

METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology to analyze the relationship between leadership styles and employee work-life balance. The review was conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to ensure a comprehensive and transparent process.

The data collection process utilized the PICO (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome) framework to formulate the research focus and guide the search strategy. Literature was systematically retrieved from four primary academic databases: Publish or Perish (harnessing Google Scholar), Scopus, and Emerald Insight. The selection of these databases was based on their reputation and comprehensive coverage of scholarly literature relevant to the research topic. The search keywords included English and Indonesian terms such as "leadership," "work-life balance," and "employee."

Table 1. PICO *(Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome)*

PICO	Informasi
Population	Karyawan yang bekerja di perusahaan
Intervention	Gaya yang mendukung keseimbangan kehidupan kerja
Comparison	Tidak ada intervensi (kelompok kontrol yang tidak menerima gaya kepemimpinan yang mendukung keseimbangan kehidupan kerja)
Outcome	Keseimbangan kehidupan kerja (*work-life balance*) dan kepuasan kerja (*job satisfaction*)

The study established the following inclusion criteria for article selection: 1) the article must be a full-text publication presenting empirical data; 2) it must employ a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods research design; 3) the publication date must fall within the 2016–2025 range; 4) the article must be written in English or Indonesian; 5) the study's subject population must consist of employees within corporate or organizational settings; and 6) the title or abstract must contain the keywords "Leadership," "Work-Life Balance," "employee," or combinations such as "employee leadership" and "employee Work-Life Balance."

Table 2. Data inclusion criteria

Indicator	Criterion
Type of document	Research article
Year of article	2016- 2025
Lamguage	English dan Indonesian
Subject	Employee
Research method	Correlational
Title and abstract	Contains the word of "l*eadership*", "w*ork-life balance*" and "employee"
Country	All countries

Following the initial search, the retrieved articles were screened against the predetermined eligibility criteria. This screening process was conducted to narrow down the results, ensuring the final selection of literature was pertinent to the study's objectives and met all specified quality and relevance standards. Data were subsequently extracted from the finalized pool of included studies for analysis.

RESULT

The systematic review of 31 journal articles reveals that research on work-life balance (WLB) encompasses diverse aspects and has been conducted across various national contexts. The most

prevalent research methodology employed in these studies was quantitative, with a subset utilizing mixed-methods approaches.

The findings consistently identified a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and enhanced employee work-life balance. Transformational leaders were found to contribute to this balance by providing psychological support, facilitating personal development, and cultivating a flexible work environment. Similarly, authentic and supportive leadership styles were also positively correlated with improved WLB, primarily through mechanisms such as increased employee engagement and reduced role conflict. Conversely, authoritarian and transactional leadership styles demonstrated a consistent negative relationship with work-life balance.

This synthesis of literature strengthens the understanding of the critical role that leadership and organizational practices play in shaping employee work-life balance. Effective leadership, particularly the transformational style, appears instrumental in building an organizational culture that supports work-life integration. Furthermore, the review highlights that perceived organizational support, flexible work arrangements, and the effective management of job insecurity are pivotal factors in achieving favorable work-life balance outcomes.

Geographically, the analyzed studies were conducted in a diverse range of countries, including Indonesia, Nigeria, India, Colombia, Brazil, Malaysia, Turkey, the United States, Australia, and the Netherlands. The publication years of the included journals spanned from 2016 to 2025. Methodologically, these studies employed a variety of advanced data analysis techniques, including regression analysis, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), and path analysis to examine the relationships between the studied variables.

DISCUSSION

This systematic review highlights the crucial role of leadership and organizational practices in influencing employee work-life balance (WLB). The synthesized evidence strongly indicates that effective leadership, particularly transformational leadership, serves as a cornerstone for fostering a supportive work environment. Mamgain (2023) posits that effective leaders are instrumental in building an organizational culture that actively supports work-life integration. The significant positive impact of transformational leadership on WLB is consistently demonstrated across multiple studies (e.g., Fransiska et al., 2021; Hayati, 2022; Oladele et al., 2016; Saring et al., 2022). This leadership style not only inspires and motivates employees toward organizational goals but also proactively supports them in cultivating an environment conducive to a healthy life balance. Furthermore, relationship-oriented leadership behaviors are identified as pivotal in supporting this equilibrium (Laela & Muhammad, 2016). Empowering leadership, which grants employees flexibility and support in managing their time and responsibilities, is also recognized as a significant positive factor (Fubian & Emilisa, 2024).

The construct of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) emerges as another crucial element. Andra et al. (2022) found that employees who feel supported by their organization report better WLB. This is reinforced by the findings of Wan Rashid et al. (2023), who underscore the importance of overarching organizational policies and support in creating work-life balance.

Moreover, research by Mattarelli et al. (2022) indicates that flexible work arrangements can significantly contribute to enhanced WLB. However, organizations must also mitigate factors that disrupt this balance. Begum et al. (2022) emphasize the necessity of managing job insecurity, as it can profoundly negatively impact employees' WLB. Employee engagement is closely intertwined with WLB. Transformational leadership has been shown to enhance both engagement and WLB

simultaneously (Fransiska & Hayati, 2021; Hayati, 2022). Conversely, other research suggests that a positive WLB can itself drive higher work engagement (Haar et al., 2017; Vanesa et al., 2022), indicating a potentially reciprocal relationship.

The effective management of work-related stress and work-family conflict is also paramount. Several studies highlight the detrimental effects of work stress (Aruldoss et al., 2021; Mahmudah et al., 2022) and work-family conflict (Talukder, 2019) on WLB. Conversely, employee resilience functions as a protective factor, with social support bolstering resilience, which in turn enhances WLB (Köse et al., 2021). Finally, effective time management strategies (Mamgain, 2023) and the creation of a supportive work environment, including collegial support from coworkers (Mahmudah et al., 2022), are identified as significant contributors to employee WLB.

In conclusion, this discussion affirms that leaders play a central role in creating and sustaining employee WLB through a multifaceted approach. This encompasses the adoption of effective, supportive leadership styles, the cultivation of perceived organizational support, the implementation of flexible policies, the proactive management of stress and job insecurity, and the fostering of a collectively supportive workplace climate..

CONCLUSION

This systematic review of 31 articles substantiates that leadership, particularly the transformational style, is a critical determinant of employee work-life balance. Transformational leadership not only inspires high performance but also proactively cultivates a supportive work environment, thereby enhancing job satisfaction, well-being, and organizational commitment while reducing turnover intent. The findings confirm that people-oriented leadership approaches are crucial, positioning modern leaders as facilitators of employee well-being who can foster inclusive and sustainable organizational cultures. Consequently, organizations should prioritize leadership development programs that instill empathy, flexibility, and empowerment as core competencies. For future research, a critical direction involves investigating the causal mechanisms underlying these relationships and examining the moderating effects of contextual factors such as organizational culture and job characteristics. An adaptive leadership approach, sensitive to diverse employee needs and situational variables, is therefore paramount for advancing both theoretical understanding and practical application in this domain..

DECLARATION

Author contribution statement

Rizkinta Amelia Batubara assumed primary responsibility for the manuscript's development, conducting the investigation, formal analysis, and drafting the complete article, including the introduction, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion. Abdul Mujib provided strategic guidance and supervisory oversight throughout the research and writing process, contributing to the project's conceptual development and critical revision of the intellectual content.

Data access statement

The data described in this article can be accessed by contacting the first author.

Declaration of interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Additional information

No additional information is available for this paper.

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