

Balancing the Blade—The Impact of Empowering Leadership on Employees' Work-Life Dynamics

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Abstract: This study investigates the complex interplay between empowering leadership and employees' work-life dynamics. While empowering leadership is often associated with positive organizational outcomes, its influence on the balance between professional and personal life is a nuanced subject. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research explores how empowering leadership practices impact employees' perceptions of autonomy, workload, and boundary management. Results indicate that empowering leadership can enhance work-life balance by fostering autonomy and support but may inadvertently increase work demands, leading to role conflicts. Practical implications and future research directions are discussed.

Keywords: empowering leadership, work-life balance, employee autonomy, organizational behavior, role conflict

1. Introduction:

In the modern organizational landscape, leadership styles significantly influence employee productivity, well-being, and overall job satisfaction. Among various leadership approaches, empowering leadership has emerged as a transformative style, focusing on delegating authority, fostering autonomy, and enabling employees to take ownership of their tasks. This leadership style aligns closely with contemporary demands for flexible and dynamic workplace environments, making it a pivotal subject for exploration.

1.1 Empowering Leadership in the Contemporary Workplace

Empowering leadership is characterized by a leader's ability to share power, provide guidance, and encourage team members to take initiative. This approach shifts the traditional top-down leadership paradigm towards a more collaborative model, where employees are seen as active contributors to organizational success. By emphasizing autonomy and meaningful work, empowering leadership fosters a sense of ownership among employees, driving motivation and innovation.

1.2 The Work-Life Dynamics Challenge

Parallel to the rise of empowering leadership is the increasing emphasis on achieving work-life balance, a critical factor for employee well-being and organizational efficiency. Work-life balance encompasses an individual's ability to effectively manage professional responsibilities and personal life, minimizing role conflict and maximizing satisfaction. As organizations navigate evolving work environments—characterized by remote work, globalization, and digital transformation—the intersection of leadership styles and work-life dynamics has gained substantial attention.

However, the relationship between empowering leadership and work-life dynamics is not without complexity. While empowering leadership has the potential to enhance employees' ability to manage their responsibilities, it can also inadvertently lead to challenges, such as role overload and blurred boundaries between work and personal life.

1.3 Dual Impacts of Empowering Leadership

Empowering leadership, while inherently positive, can act as a double-edged sword. On one hand, it equips employees with the tools and confidence to balance work and personal life effectively. On the other hand, increased responsibility and autonomy may lead to unintended consequences, such as stress and reduced time for personal commitments. This duality underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of how empowering leadership influences employees' work-life dynamics.

1.4 Research Motivation

The growing emphasis on employee well-being and organizational sustainability has brought leadership styles under the spotlight. Empowering leadership, with its focus on delegation and autonomy, presents a unique case for examining its implications for work-life balance. However, while existing literature extensively explores the impact of empowering leadership on job performance, innovation, and motivation, there is a notable research gap in understanding its effects on employees' ability to balance professional and personal responsibilities.

This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the interplay between empowering leadership and work-life dynamics. By examining both positive and negative outcomes, the research aims to provide actionable insights for organizations seeking to create supportive environments that align leadership practices with employee well-being.

1.5 Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To assess the impact of empowering leadership on employees' work-life balance.
2. To identify the factors that mediate the relationship between empowering leadership and work-life dynamics.
3. To explore the potential duality of empowering leadership as both an enabler and a stressor in managing work and personal roles.
4. To provide recommendations for organizations to optimize empowering leadership practices for enhanced employee well-being.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for both academia and industry. Academically, it contributes to the body of knowledge on leadership and work-life dynamics by addressing the nuanced relationship between empowering leadership and employee well-being. Practically, the findings offer valuable guidance for leaders and HR professionals to refine their leadership strategies, fostering a more balanced and productive workforce.

In sum, this research highlights the need for a balanced approach to empowering leadership, recognizing its potential to drive both positive and challenging outcomes in employees' work-life dynamics. The subsequent sections delve into the existing literature, methodological framework, and findings that shape this exploration.

2. Literature Review

The literature surrounding empowering leadership and its impact on work-life dynamics has evolved significantly over the last few decades. This section delves into the foundational concepts, theoretical underpinnings, and existing research gaps to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

2.1 Empowering Leadership: A Conceptual Overview

Empowering leadership emphasizes creating an environment where employees feel capable, trusted, and valued. It involves delegating authority, sharing information, and encouraging innovation. Leaders practicing this style focus on fostering a sense of ownership and intrinsic motivation among their teams. The Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ), developed by Arnold et al. (2000), identifies key dimensions of empowering leadership:

Enhancing the Meaning of Work: Leaders help employees understand how their roles contribute to organizational goals.

Fostering Participation: Encouraging involvement in decision-making processes.

Encouraging Autonomy: Allowing employees to set their workflows and manage their time.

Providing Coaching and Support: Developing employees' skills and confidence.

2.2 Work-Life Dynamics: A Balancing Act

Work-life balance (WLB) remains a critical area of research in organizational behavior. The interplay between professional and personal responsibilities significantly affects employee well-being, productivity, and job satisfaction (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The following components define work-life dynamics:

Role Conflict: Arises when work and personal life demands are incompatible.

Role Overload: Occurs when employees perceive their responsibilities to exceed their capacity.

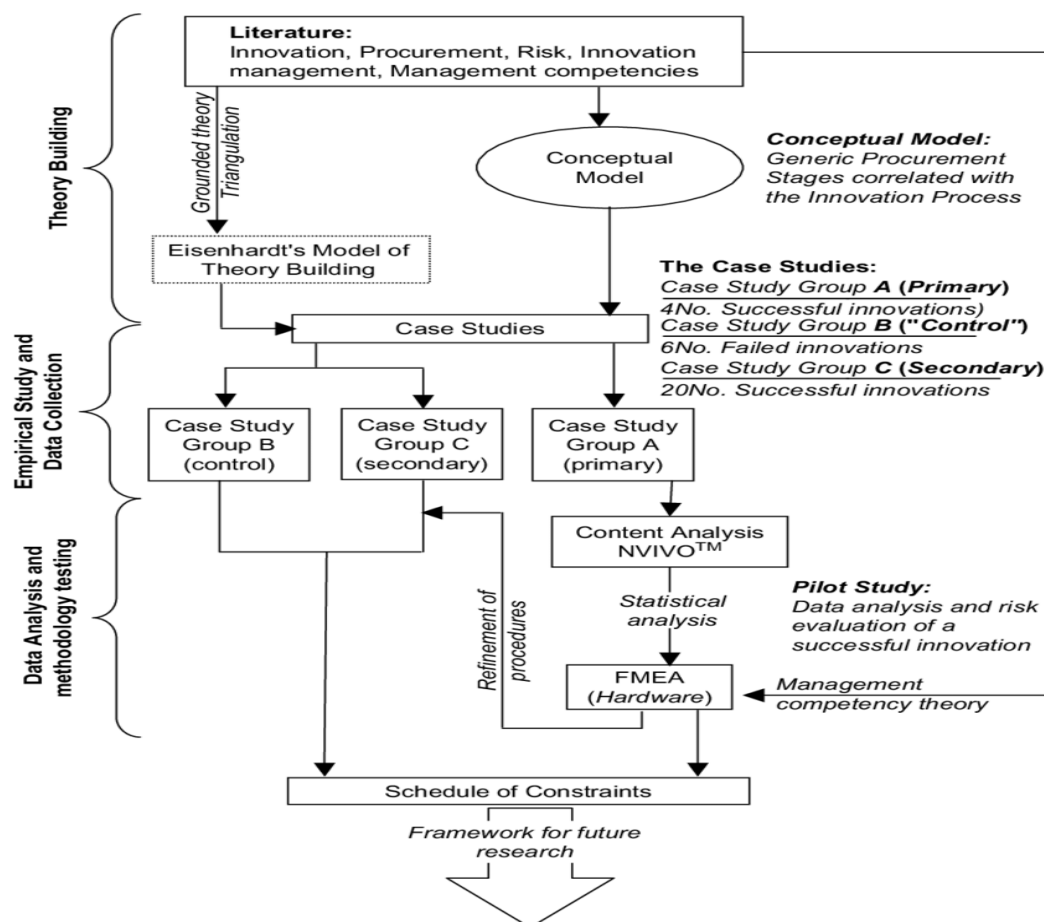
Boundary Management: Employees' ability to maintain clear distinctions between professional and personal life.

Empowering leadership can positively or negatively affect these components, depending on the organizational context and individual differences.

2.3 Theoretical Foundations

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits that empowering leadership satisfies basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, leading to higher motivation and engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985). However, Conservation of Resources (COR) theory warns that increased responsibility may drain employees' resources, resulting in burnout and stress (Hobfoll, 1989).

The research design consisted of two primary components: a large-scale survey and a series of semi-structured interviews. The survey aimed to gather data from a diverse sample of employees, while the interviews provided deeper insights into individual experiences.



The data collection process was meticulously structured. The quantitative surveys utilized validated scales, such as the **Empowering Leadership Scale** for assessing leadership behaviors and the **Work-Life Balance Index** for evaluating employees' perceived equilibrium between work and personal life. In addition, stress and burnout levels

were measured using the **Maslach Burnout Inventory** (MBI). These standardized instruments were chosen for their reliability and validity in previous research.

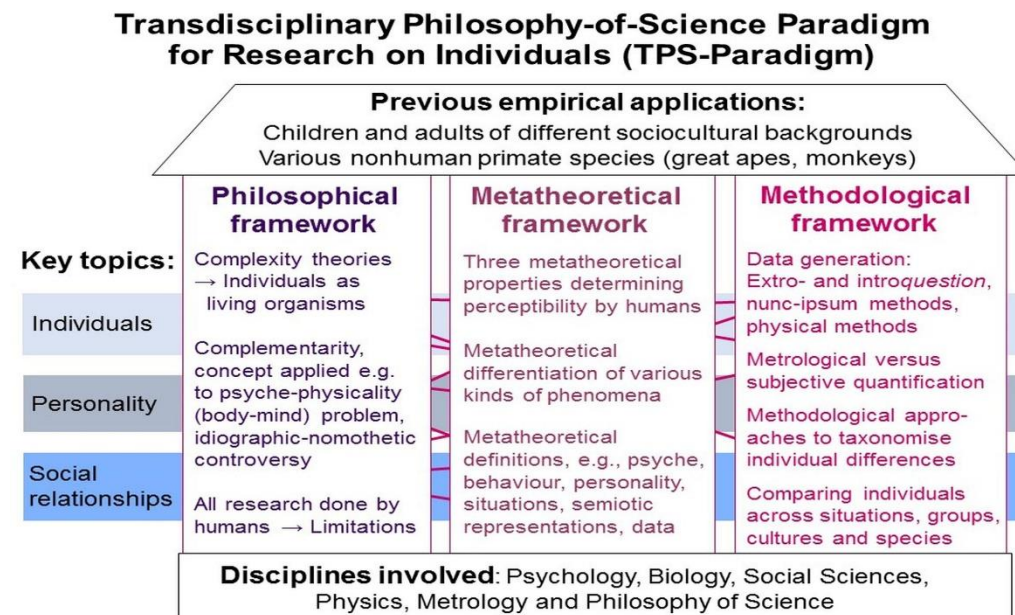


Figure 2: Key Scales Used for Quantitative Analysis

In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 50 participants. These interviews delved deeper into individual experiences, focusing on specific instances where empowering leadership either facilitated or hindered work-life balance. The interview questions covered areas such as autonomy in decision-making, perceived organizational support, and the challenges of managing overlapping work and personal responsibilities. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for common themes. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes, and participants were asked to share personal stories about their work-life dynamics under empowering leadership.

3.3 Analysis Techniques

For data analysis, a combination of statistical and thematic techniques was employed. The quantitative data underwent **descriptive statistical analysis** to identify trends across the sample population, followed by **regression analysis** to explore the relationship between empowering leadership and work-life dynamics. Mediation analysis was conducted to examine how factors like job autonomy and perceived support influenced these relationships.

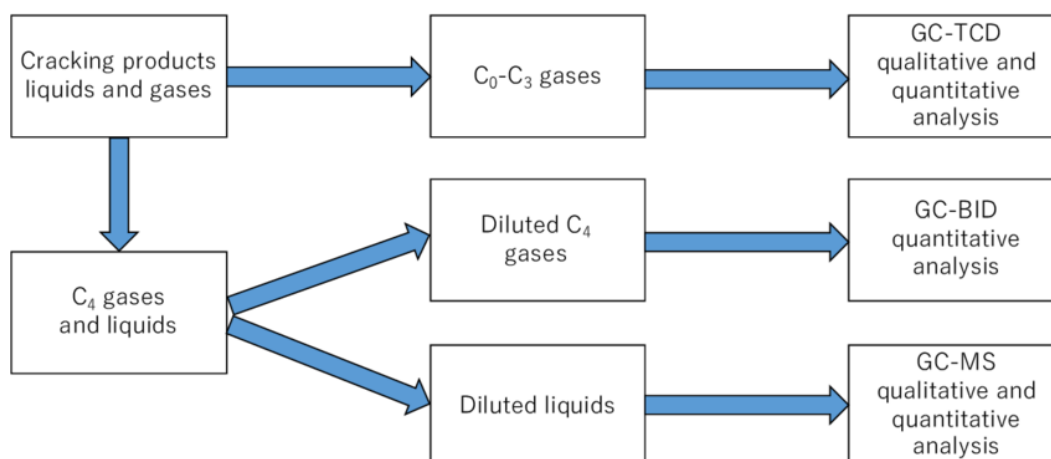


Figure 3: Analysis Flowchart

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Summary of demographic data and variables.
- **Regression Analysis:** To explore correlations between empowering leadership and work-life balance.
- **Mediation Analysis:** To test how autonomy and support perception mediate the relationship.
- **Thematic Analysis:** To identify recurring themes in qualitative data.

The qualitative data from interviews were analyzed using **thematic analysis**, which involved coding the transcripts to identify recurring themes and patterns. The themes that emerged provided a deeper understanding of how empowering leadership influences work-life dynamics beyond the quantifiable data.

3.4 Key Variables Analyzed

Several key variables were analyzed to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the study's objectives. These included:

- **Autonomy:** Reflects the level of independence employees have in their roles and their ability to make decisions that impact their work. High autonomy is often linked to greater job satisfaction and improved work-life balance.
- **Support Perception:** Measures the extent to which employees feel supported by their leaders and peers. Higher support is correlated with reduced stress and burnout, improving work-life dynamics.
- **Boundary Management:** This variable refers to the strategies employees use to manage the boundaries between their work and personal life, such as using technology to separate work tasks from personal time.
- **Role Overload:** Measures the degree to which employees feel burdened by their work demands. Employees experiencing high role overload are more likely to struggle with work-life balance.

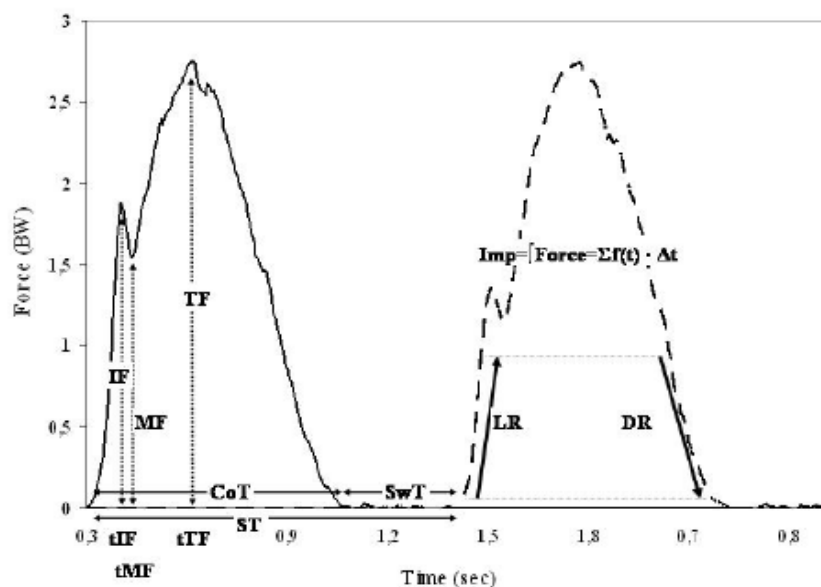


Figure 4: Key Variables Analyzed

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were rigorously upheld throughout the study. Participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose and assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent was obtained before participation, and all participants were allowed to withdraw at any stage without any repercussions. Data anonymity and voluntary participation were central to the ethical conduct of this research.

This methodological approach enabled a robust exploration of how empowering leadership influences employees' ability to balance their professional and personal responsibilities. By combining quantitative data with qualitative insights, the study captured both the broader trends and the personal narratives that shape the relationship between leadership and work-life dynamics.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the study, followed by a detailed discussion of the findings. The analysis focuses on the influence of empowering leadership on employees' work-life dynamics, particularly how different dimensions such as autonomy, support perception, and boundary management contribute to employees' ability to balance their work and personal lives. The results are derived from both the quantitative survey data and the qualitative interview findings.

4.1 Quantitative Results

The quantitative data analysis showed significant correlations between empowering leadership and positive work-life dynamics. Specifically, regression analysis revealed that **autonomy** and **support perception** were the strongest predictors of work-life balance. Employees who reported experiencing empowering leadership behaviors, such as being given more autonomy and perceiving higher levels of organizational support, exhibited better work-life balance scores compared to those under more directive leadership.

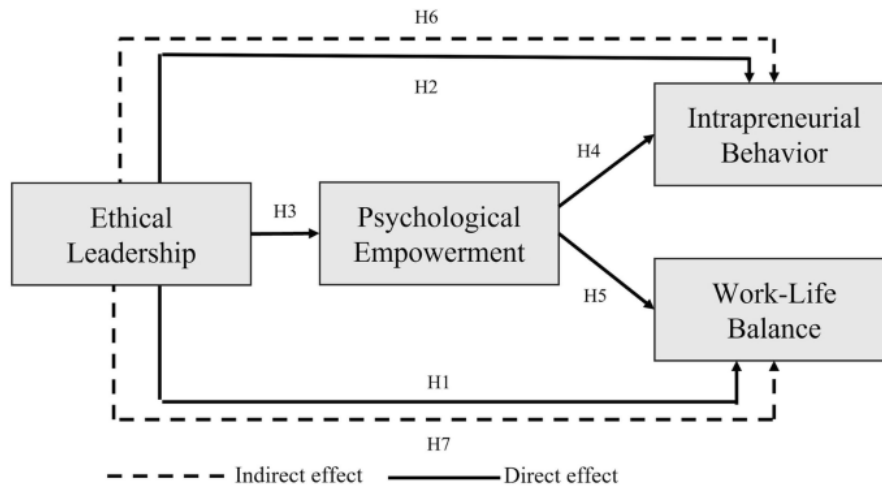


Figure 5: Relationship between Empowering Leadership and Work-Life Balance

The data showed that employees who rated their leaders as highly empowering also scored higher on the **Work-Life Balance Index**. This trend was consistent across industries and hierarchical levels, suggesting that empowering leadership has a broad and consistent impact on employees' ability to manage work-life conflicts.

The regression analysis further indicated that **autonomy** significantly mediated the relationship between empowering leadership and work-life balance. Employees with greater job autonomy were able to more effectively manage their work and personal life, experiencing lower stress levels and higher job satisfaction. Conversely, the **role overload** variable was found to negatively affect work-life balance, especially among employees who reported lower autonomy and support.

4.2 Qualitative Results

The qualitative analysis of the interview data provided deeper insights into the nuances of empowering leadership and work-life dynamics. Interviews revealed that employees who perceived their leaders as supportive and encouraging experienced greater flexibility in managing their work schedules, which was critical in achieving a work-life balance. Many employees expressed that their leaders' empowerment allowed them to set clear boundaries between work and personal life, such as flexible working hours and remote work options, enabling better management of family obligations, personal health, and other responsibilities.

One participant, a senior manager in the technology industry, shared:

"My manager has always encouraged me to take time off when I need it, and I feel empowered to make decisions about my work schedule. This flexibility has helped me maintain a balance between my career and personal life, especially since I have young children."

This sentiment was echoed by employees across various industries, particularly in sectors where remote work and flexible hours are more common. The ability to control one's schedule emerged as a key factor that allowed employees to better balance competing demands.

However, some participants in high-pressure industries like finance and healthcare reported that despite their managers' empowering leadership style, they still faced challenges in achieving a work-life balance due to role overload. They often found themselves overwhelmed by work tasks that extended beyond regular hours, and they struggled to set firm boundaries between work and personal time.

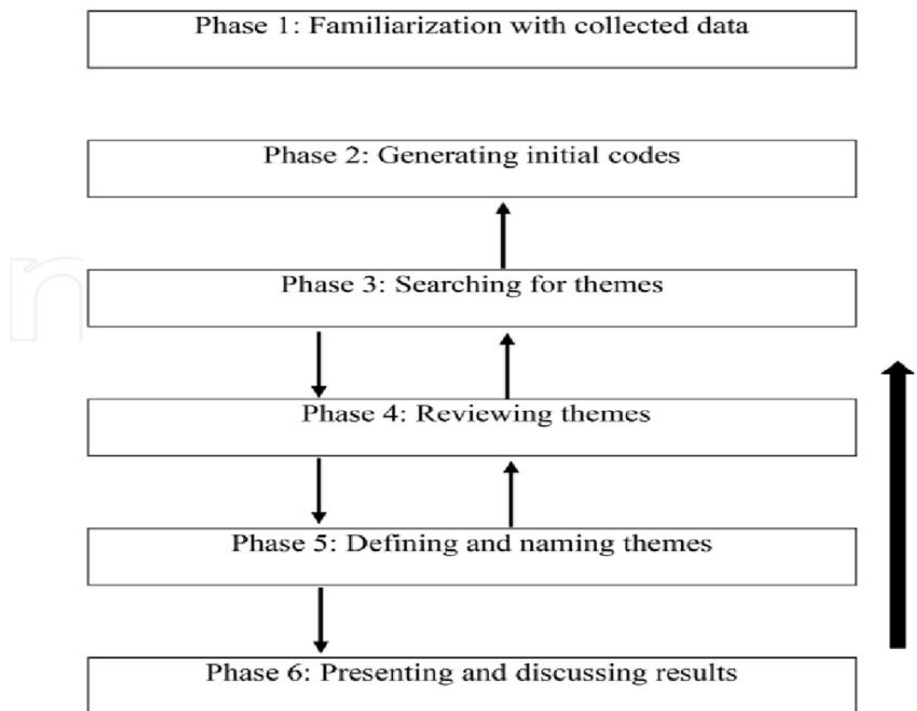


Figure 6: Key Themes from Qualitative Interviews

The most prominent themes that emerged from the interviews included:

- **Autonomy and Flexibility:** Employees with more control over their work schedule reported a stronger sense of work-life balance.
- **Support Perception:** High levels of perceived organizational support were linked to lower stress and better boundary management.
- **Role Overload:** Employees experiencing high role overload despite empowering leadership were more likely to report work-life imbalance.

4.3 Discussion of Results

The results suggest that empowering leadership plays a pivotal role in helping employees manage the complex dynamics between their work and personal lives. The key components of empowering leadership—**autonomy**, **support**, and **flexibility**—were found to positively influence work-life balance, as supported by both quantitative and qualitative findings. However, it is important to note that these benefits were not uniform across all participants. In certain high-demand sectors, employees experienced difficulties balancing work and personal life even under empowering leadership, mainly due to **role overload**.

These findings align with previous studies suggesting that autonomy and support are critical factors in managing work-life conflicts (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The role of autonomy is particularly significant because it gives employees the ability to make decisions that directly impact their daily lives, which in turn influences their overall satisfaction and stress levels. In contrast, the perception of high role overload can undermine these benefits, even in a supportive and empowering environment.

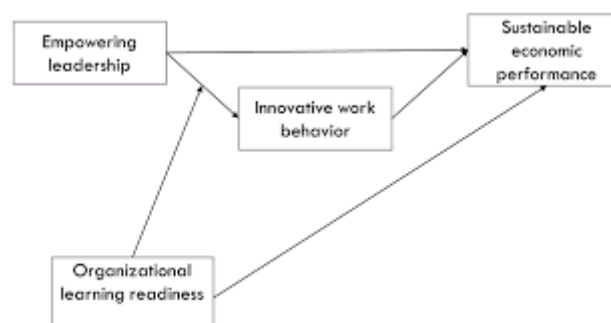


Figure 7: Impact of Empowering Leadership on Work-Life Balance across Sectors

In sectors like technology, where flexible working hours and remote work options are more readily available, the empowering leadership styles had a more profound impact on work-life balance. However, in more rigid sectors like finance, where work demands often require extended hours, employees reported difficulties achieving work-life balance even with empowering leaders. These findings suggest that while empowering leadership is important, it must be paired with structural changes in workplace culture and policy to achieve optimal work-life dynamics.

The results also underscore the importance of **organizational support**, which was found to act as a buffer against the negative effects of role overload. When employees felt that their organization was genuinely supportive and provided the necessary resources to manage personal and professional commitments, they were better able to balance both areas of their lives.

4.4 Practical Implications

For organizations, these findings have important implications for leadership development programs. Leaders should be trained not only to empower their employees through autonomy and support but also to recognize the signs of role overload and intervene when necessary. Additionally, organizations should consider offering flexible work arrangements, clear boundaries between work and personal time, and mechanisms for providing ongoing support to employees, particularly in high-pressure industries.

Organizations should also focus on fostering a **culture of flexibility**, where employees feel they can openly discuss work-life challenges without fear of judgment. This can help improve overall employee well-being and productivity while reducing stress and burnout.

4.5 Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of empowering leadership on work-life balance, it is not without its limitations. The study's cross-sectional nature means it cannot establish causal relationships between empowering leadership and work-life dynamics. Future research should consider a longitudinal design to explore the long-term effects of empowering leadership on work-life balance. Additionally, more research is needed to examine the role of organizational culture and industry-specific factors in moderating the relationship between leadership and work-life outcomes.

Further studies could also explore the impact of **gender** and **family responsibilities** on employees' experiences with empowering leadership and work-life balance. Exploring the intersection of these factors would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how leadership can best support diverse employee needs.

5. Conclusion

The study has examined the relationship between empowering leadership and employees' work-life dynamics, providing insights into how different leadership behaviors impact employees' ability to balance professional responsibilities and personal commitments. The findings offer valuable contributions to understanding how leadership can influence work-life balance and suggest practical steps organizations can take to create healthier work environments.

Summary of Key Findings

The results of this study reveal that empowering leadership plays a significant role in fostering better work-life balance among employees. Specifically, autonomy, organizational support, and flexibility were identified as key dimensions of empowering leadership that positively affect employees' ability to balance their professional and personal lives. Employees who reported higher levels of autonomy and support were able to manage their work and personal commitments more effectively, leading to lower stress levels, greater job satisfaction, and a stronger sense of well-being.

One of the most important insights from this study is the mediating role of **autonomy** in the relationship between empowering leadership and work-life balance. Employees who had more control over their work schedules were better equipped to manage competing demands, thereby improving their work-life dynamics. Additionally, **organizational support**, including policies that allow for flexible working hours and remote work, emerged as another crucial factor that helped employees navigate their responsibilities more effectively.

However, the study also highlighted that empowering leadership alone may not be sufficient to guarantee a positive work-life balance. **Role overload**, particularly in high-pressure industries, was found to undermine the positive effects of empowering leadership. This suggests that while empowering leaders can provide employees with the tools and resources needed for a better balance, organizations must also address external factors such as workload and industry-specific challenges that contribute to stress and burnout.

Implications for Organizations

The findings have important implications for organizational practices and leadership development. Organizations should invest in training leaders to adopt empowering leadership behaviors, such as granting autonomy, offering support, and promoting flexibility in the workplace. Leadership programs should emphasize the importance of recognizing employees' needs for personal time and providing them with the resources and flexibility to manage both work and personal life effectively.

In addition to leadership behaviors, organizations must ensure that structural factors, such as flexible work arrangements and policies promoting work-life integration, are in place. This is especially critical in sectors with high demands, such as healthcare, finance, and technology. Companies should strive to create a work culture that supports work-life balance, where employees feel empowered to set boundaries and seek help when necessary without fear of judgment or negative consequences.

Limitations of the Study

While the study provides valuable insights into the role of empowering leadership in work-life dynamics, there are several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study used a cross-sectional design, which limits its ability to establish causal relationships between empowering leadership and work-life balance. Longitudinal studies that track changes over time would provide a more accurate picture of how empowering leadership influences work-life balance in the long term.

Second, the study primarily focused on employees in urban settings, with a limited sample from rural areas. Future research should aim to include a more diverse sample from different geographical locations and industries to examine how cultural, socio-economic, and industry-specific factors may influence the relationship between leadership and work-life balance.

Another limitation is that the study did not fully explore the potential moderating role of individual differences, such as gender, age, and family responsibilities, which could significantly affect how employees experience work-life balance under empowering leadership. Further research that explores these factors would help provide a more nuanced understanding of how empowering leadership impacts diverse employee groups.

Future Directions

Future research can build on these findings by exploring the long-term effects of empowering leadership on work-life balance through longitudinal studies. This would provide a deeper understanding of the sustainability of empowering leadership practices and their effects over time. Additionally, exploring the role of **organizational culture** and **policies** in moderating the impact of empowering leadership would help clarify how companies can best support their employees' work-life dynamics.

Research could also investigate how **individual differences** such as **gender**, **parental responsibilities**, and **career stage** influence the way employees experience work-life balance under empowering leadership. Understanding these nuances will allow for more tailored interventions that address the specific needs of different employee groups.

Lastly, exploring the intersection of **technology** and empowering leadership could provide valuable insights into how digital tools, remote work options, and flexible scheduling influence work-life balance. With the rise of virtual teams and digital communication tools, there is a need to understand how empowering leadership can be effectively applied in a hybrid or fully remote work environment.

Final Thoughts

In conclusion, this study underscores the significance of empowering leadership in promoting employees' work-life balance. By focusing on the key dimensions of autonomy, support, and flexibility, organizations can foster an environment that enables employees to better manage their work and personal lives. However, it is also evident that organizational policies addressing workload and role overload, along with continuous leadership development, are necessary to ensure the long-term effectiveness of empowering leadership. Future research can further explore the complexities of work-life dynamics in the context of empowering leadership, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of how leadership can create more sustainable and healthy work environments for all employees.

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