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# WORK-LIFE SUPPORTIVE LEADERSHIP

## MISSED CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE LEADERSHIP AND WORK-LIFE FIELDS: WORK-LIFE SUPPORTIVE LEADERSHIP FOR A DUAL AGENDA

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**MISSED CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE LEADERSHIP AND WORK-LIFE FIELDS:  
WORK-LIFE SUPPORTIVE LEADERSHIP FOR A DUAL AGENDA**

**Abstract**

The leadership and work-life balance literatures are not well-integrated; yet both examine the management of employees. Leadership theory is work-centric in conceptualizing leadership styles and underemphasizes nonwork influences on leaders' and subordinates' nonwork outcomes. Work-life studies overlook leadership theory regarding how work-life support reflects but one aspect of what leaders do. Competing narratives coexist over whether work-life support mutually benefits work and nonwork outcomes (a synergistic "dual agenda" view) or if one comes at the expense of the other (a "dueling outcomes" view). Based on our review of 127 studies, we define *work-life supportive leadership* as a leadership characteristic when (1) leaders prioritize actions to provide active support for employees' needs and preferences for managing work, family, and personal life roles; and (2) are experienced by subordinates as exhibiting such behaviors. We find clear support for the dual agenda view and that work-life supportive leadership is embedded within many leadership styles. Future research can advance each field's understanding of leader work-life support dynamics. For future research, we direct leadership scholars to focus on work-life supportive leadership's impact on subordinates' job performance and nonwork outcomes, and work-life scholars to broaden their research focus to encompass leadership and the work domain holistically.

**Keywords**

Work-life supportive leadership, leadership, leadership styles, family supportive supervisor behaviors, dual agenda, work-life balance, work-family

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## INTRODUCTION

Scholars and organizations face ongoing challenges to update leadership and work-life knowledge regarding the management of the transforming workplace in ways that better align with the changing nature of individuals' work and nonwork lives. Although the leadership and work-life balance literatures are expanding areas of management scholarship, they remain largely separate from each other even though both fields at their core examine the effective management of employees. This limited integration prevents modernizing leadership and work-life theories to fully reflect contemporary employment experiences and is holding back their scholarly development. Increasing integration may help reinvigorate these fields in new directions as both face ongoing critiques for stymied theoretical development and problems in construct and measurement clarity (see Lemoine, Hartnell, & Leroy, 2019 and Casper, Vaziri, Wayne, DeHauw, & Greenhaus, 2018 for recent leadership and work-life balance reviews, respectively). Increased synthesis is critically needed, as the recent COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that (1) how leaders organize work impacts employee well-being on and off the job matters for organizational effectiveness, and (2) the work and nonwork spheres are inextricably linked as constant connectivity (e.g., smart phones) and blurring work-nonwork boundaries continue to grow. Unfortunately, overall, the leadership and work-life literatures conceptualize the role, the scope, dynamics, and outcomes of leadership – and its impact both on and off the job – in vastly different ways.

Leadership style studies, of which there are thousands, reflect the leadership field's historical evolution from a focus on "who leaders are" (traits) to emphasizing "what leaders do" (behaviors) (Den Hartog & Koopman, 2001: 168). Leadership style studies often define leadership as involving a pattern of behaviors of an individual trying to influence others

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(Northouse, 2013: 101). As Hersey and Blanchard (1981: 34) elaborate, such behaviors “are perceived by others” and attempt “to influence the activities of people.” Similarly, Davis and Luthans (1979: 239) define leadership “as a series of behavioral contingency relationships... comprising the behavioral patterns that link leaders and followers to specified goals and task functions” and involve “the effect of supervisor behavior on subordinate task accomplishment.”

Some common threads of these definitions are an emphasis (often implicit) on how the behaviors of leaders impact the subordinates’ work experiences and effectiveness such as *work* performance (cf., Dinh, Lord, Gardner, Meuser, Liden, & Hu, 2014; House, 1971; Lord, Day, Zaccaro, Avolio, & Eagly, 2017). Yet leadership studies frequently neglect the nonwork realm, specifically the influence of leaders on subordinates’ nonwork lives which increasingly spillover to work (and vice versa), as well as the impact of leaders’ nonwork lives on their own leadership approach and effectiveness (cf., Hammond, Clapp-Smith, Palanski, 2017). Even the relatively limited leadership research attending to employee well-being largely centers on how leadership styles influence *job-related* well-being, rendering personal well-being and outcomes beyond the workplace as ancillary (cf., Inceoglu, Thomas, Chu, Plans, Gerbasi, 2018; Montano, Reeske, Franke, Hüffmeier, 2017). But the above conceptualizations are ambiguous enough to leave the door open to include a greater leadership focus on nonwork activities, tasks, and effectiveness. Yet it is only recently – with growing research efforts to better integrate subordinates (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014) and context (Oc, 2018) into leadership studies – has the work-life interface more frequently emerged.

The work-life literature suffers a similar myopia in focusing on how leaders – often emphasizing direct supervisors – play a critical role in supporting employees’ abilities to balance work and nonwork roles (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011). The bulk of the research

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examines followers' perceptions of "family supportive supervision", or perceptions that leaders support and facilitate employees' management of and balance between work and nonwork roles (Allen, 2001; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Yu, Pichler, Russo, & Hammer, 2022). One challenge is the term itself, which is a bit of a misnomer – family supportive supervision includes support not only for employees who must tend to *family* matters outside of the workplace but also for all employees and their general *life* experiences outside the workplace, such as the pursuit of leisure, education, community involvement, and time with friends (Casper, Weltman, & Kwesiga, 2007; Keeney, Boyd, Sinha, Westring, Ryan, 2013; Wilson & Baumann, 2015). An even more pressing challenge is that most work-life studies ignore leadership theory and the fact that work-life support is just one small aspect of what a leader does when managing employees. As Oreg and Berson (2019) note, leaders serve many functions from individual motivation to the formulation of organizational strategy (Nahavandi & Malekzadeh, 1993), which influence organizational change and performance. Instead, the central concept in the work-life literature is leader behavioral support for nonwork roles – also referred to as family supportive supervisor behaviors (or FSSB) (c.f. Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, Hansen, 2009). Rarely connected conceptually to the mainstream leadership literature, family supportive supervisor behaviors (*hereinafter* FSSB) comprise a concept grounded in social support or resource-based theories rather than in seminal leadership perspectives (c.f. Crain & Stevens, 2018; Kossek, Odle-Dusseau, & Hammer 2018a; Kossek et al., 2011). Examples of FFSB behaviors (Hammer et al., 2009) are as follows: role modeling, emotional support, instrumental support such as helping individuals access policies or solve scheduling conflicts, and creative support to develop "win-win" solutions that jointly benefit the firm and the employee. An example is when leaders proactively ensure cross-training of employees. which not only ensures greater access to flexible

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scheduling since workers have a back-up if absent, but greater coverage of job tasks for the employer). Lastly, another gap is that work-life researchers' frequent focus is on work-family outcomes (i.e., work-family conflict, enrichment) as the main dependent variables influenced by leader nonwork support, often leaving important work outcomes (e.g., job performance, promotions, pay, teamwork) under-examined by comparison.

Yet integrating the leadership and work-life balance fields is crucial to address important practical and conceptual challenges. Historically, work-life issues have not been a central leadership topic, and cultural and structural barriers persist impeding improved linkages. For example, some of the most effective and revered leaders are on record as stating, “there is no such thing as work-life balance” (attributed to Jack Welch of General Electric; Silverman, 2009) or that work-life balance is “debilitating” (attributed to Jeff Bezos of Amazon; Bernard, 2019). Given this legacy, it is not surprising that scholarly synthesis continues to lag practice. This became painfully transparent during the COVID-19 pandemic, where many leaders either reactively adapted (or glaringly ignored) the urgent demand to address turbulent intersecting work and nonwork environments. Some leaders experimented and changed how they organized work more flexibly in ways that offered central consideration to employees' work-life balance needs (Kossek, Gettings, & Misra, 2021b). Yet closed schools, forced teleworking, and “Zoom fatigue” (Shockley et al., 2021) – combined with limited current research to guide best practices – prompted leaders to haphazardly find ways to accommodate disrupted work-nonwork boundaries (Kossek, Dumas, Piszczek, & Allen, 2021a). As the pandemic lingered, staffing shortages surged, and many workers resigned in response to years of overwork as part of the “Great Resignation” (Hirsch, 2021). Although by January 2022, men had returned to the workforce at pre-pandemic levels in most industrialized countries, two million fewer women



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remained in the labor force largely due to the need to tend to children's school and care needs, and sometimes elder care (Gonzales, 2022). The dearth of work-life support for front line workers in essential industries from health care to manufacturing – which also disproportionately affected women and minorities – further exposed the need for greater leadership attention to nonwork issues (Kossek & Lee, 2020). In fact, work-life balance emerged as *the most important* issue listed by both employees and managers in one of the first global business consulting surveys on the Great Resignation (De Smet, Dowling, Mugayar-Baldocchi, & Schaninger, 2021).

Another key obstacle holding back integration is a lack of conceptual clarity on what it means to be a “work-life supportive leader” and its performance consequences. It remains unclear whether a leadership focus on supporting employees' lives outside of work is beneficial or detrimental to employees' job performance and to the leaders themselves as well. Competing narratives coexist regarding whether work-life support mutually benefits work and nonwork outcomes (a synergistic “dual agenda” view; c.f., Bailyn, 2011; Beauregard & Henry, 2009; ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012) or if tradeoffs are involved where one comes at the expense of the other (a “dueling outcomes” view; Kossek, Perrigino, & Rock, 2021c; Perrigino, Dunford, & Wilson, 2018). In sum, a comprehensive integrative review is needed to resolve the lack of conceptual clarity and the degree to which work-life supportive leadership enhances or inhibits both nonwork *and* work outcomes for employees.

The overall objective of this paper is to provide a review of the intersections and gaps between the leadership and work-life balance literatures and offer insights for improved integration. Below we describe our review methodology and analysis that was designed to investigate the current degree of synthesis between the fields, and to identify consistencies and gaps in how the literatures viewed work-life support, which we organize into five themes and a

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framework to guide future research. Below we will suggest the concept of work-life supportive leadership as a core leadership style to provide an integrative bridge to advance these fields.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

To obtain articles for inclusion in our review, we conducted two comprehensive searches. Search #1 (“Leadership Search”) focused on identifying studies that considered how various leadership styles and behaviors influence family and nonwork outcomes. Different leadership reviews identify numerous thematic categories (Dinh et al., 2014; Lord et al., 2017). As illustrations, Montano et al.’s (2017) meta-analysis investigating leadership and followers’ job well-being categorizes antecedents according to transformational leadership, relations-oriented leadership, task-oriented leadership, destructive leadership, and social interaction processes, while Inceoglu et al.’s (2018) conceptual review linking leadership behavior and job well-being categorized leader behaviors on the basis of change-oriented, task-oriented, relational-oriented, and passive (in addition to an “other” category). We adopted a similar search approach.

Using the PsycINFO database, we entered one set of keywords that focused on leadership styles, including both general categories (e.g., “leadership styles”) and specific styles (e.g., “authentic leadership”). We entered a second set of keywords focused on work-family and nonwork outcomes (e.g., “work-family,” which would capture keywords including work-family conflict/enrichment). The specific search parameters are displayed in the Appendix (Table A1). This search returned more than 2,000 academic journal articles. We eliminated articles that were: (1) non-empirical, (2) not written in English, and (3) in peer-reviewed journals with an impact factor below 2.0, to ensure the empirical rigor of the studies we included. As a key elimination criterion distinguishing the scope of our review from previous reviews, we eliminated studies whose outcomes only addressed subordinates’ job-related health or well-being outcomes.

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Search #2 (“Work-Life Search”) focused identifying studies that considered how family supportive supervision influences employees’ work-related outcomes. For the first set of terminology addressing family supportive supervision and its variants (e.g., “FSSB”), we followed Crain and Stevens’s (2018) approach by using similar search terminology that they included in their review of the FSSB literature. Our search also included a second set of terms in order to hone in on the latter portion of our question addressing employee outcomes at work (e.g., “productivity” and organizational citizenship behaviors or “OCB”). The specific search parameters are again presented in Table A1 of the Appendix. This search returned more than 1,100 academic journal articles and we eliminated articles using the same procedures discussed above. As a final step, we searched through the references in the articles that were selected for retention to ensure that we did not miss anything based on our original search methodology and procedures.

We retained 80 leadership studies for inclusion and 38 family supportive supervision studies. Surprisingly, *only nine additional studies (7% of the sample) integrated both family supportive supervision and a leadership style*. To confirm this limited overlap was not due to our search methodology, we conducted a third search combining the leadership terms with the family supportive supervision-specific terms. This search yielded limited results and did not produce any additional studies for inclusion. As depicted in Figure 1, we included 127 studies for our review, marked with an asterisk (\*) in the references.

[Insert Figure 1 about here.]

### **Coding and Organization**

To derive a conceptualization of work-life supportive leadership and an understanding of whether work-life supportive leadership typically produces positive or negative work-related

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outcomes, the entire team worked through and discussed two studies in-depth to come to mutual agreement upon the coding rubric for each whole article. Coding categories included: (1) the type of leadership perspective adopted in the 80 leadership studies; (2) outcomes associated with leadership styles/behaviors and family supportive supervision; (3) whether the effects were positive, negative, or mixed; (4) antecedents of leadership styles and family supportive supervision; (5) the country in which the study took place; and (7) study sample and methodology. Two of the co-authors completed coding of the remaining 125 articles, which were reviewed for consistency and any differences were resolved via discussion. Notably, completion of this initial coding offered evidence that most reviewed studies – 126 of 127 – focused on supervisors' leadership (rather than top management teams or CEOs). Although still applicable to all levels of leadership, our review develops an understanding of work-life supportive leadership primarily through a supervisor-subordinate oriented lens since nearly every reviewed study adopted this scope.

Completion of the coding across categories allowed for a more detailed descriptive analysis, allowing us to identify areas of saturation (reflecting consensus in the literature and saturated areas characterized by disagreement or divergent perspectives) and gaps. Upon completion of this descriptive analysis, we generated five themes that not only allowed us to address our primary goals but also to generate insights. Our first theme, *Integrating the missed connections of “work-life supportive leadership”* focuses on uncovering how aspects of family supportive supervision are embedded within various conceptualizations and styles of leadership. By uncovering this significant overlap, we shed light on how studies across two seemingly independent perspectives explore an extremely similar – if not the same – phenomenon in the form of work-life supportive leadership. As our second theme, *a virtuous cycle* focuses on how

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different leadership styles impact subordinates' nonwork-related outcomes. This theme illustrates how studies in the leadership literature that examine the ways in which various work-focused leadership styles (that include an element of family supportive supervision) – create positive nonwork outcomes and facilitate more positive outcomes at work, thereby intersecting with key themes in the work-life literature. Our third theme of *on-the-job payoffs* focuses on how family supportive supervision – and not simply work-centric leadership approaches – directly yields mostly positive work-specific outcomes. Taken together, these three themes demonstrate strong support for the dual agenda view. As our fourth theme, *leaders' work-life experiences as employees* focuses on how leaders' family and nonwork experiences influence their style of leadership. Finally, our fifth theme of *work-life supportive leadership as a global phenomenon* delves into the observation that there is a substantial amount of research from geographically and culturally diverse employee samples; yet findings appear to coalesce despite these differences. We discuss the five themes below, and then include them in our review-driven framework.

### **Theme #1: Integrating the Missed Connections of “Work-Life Supportive Leadership”**

Although we find ample evidence across the 80 leadership-focused studies connecting different leadership styles and perspectives to subordinates' nonwork outcomes, we also find significant overlap in that the *descriptions* of these leadership styles and perspectives – when linked to subordinates' nonwork outcomes – typically involve examples of family supportive supervision. For example, leader-member exchange (LMX) is a relational approach to leadership focusing on the quality of a supervisor-subordinate relationship (Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Yet Tummers and Bronkhorst (2014: 575) explain that LMX is partially reflected through the ways in which a supervisor not only values a subordinate but also includes “helping the subordinate manage work-family spillover.” High-quality LMX relationships

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involve not only supervisors devoting “attention to employees’ work-family needs” (Major & Lauzun, 2010: 76), but also supervisors providing “affective or emotional support as well as more instrumental forms of career support” (Bernas & Major, 2000: 172). Despite conceptual overlap with behaviors associated with family supportive supervision – including emotional and instrumental support – previous research suggests that LMX is both conceptually and empirically distinct (Matthews, Bulger, & Booth, 2013; Matthews & Toumbeva, 2015). Family supportive supervision is viewed as a specific tangible resource that supervisors can provide to subordinates – and are more likely to do so when they have a higher-quality LMX relationship (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Wilson, Sin, & Conlon, 2010). Examples reflecting high-quality LMX relationships include supervisors granting idiosyncratic work arrangements to subordinates (Hornung, Rousseau, Weigl, Mueller, & Glaser, 2014; Liao, Yang, Wang, & Kwan, 2016) and allowing more frequent telecommuting when needed (Golden, 2006).

There is also alignment of the family supportive supervision conceptualization with transformational leadership. A transformational leader not only identifies with their followers, acts as a role model, provides a strong vision, and encourages followers to think for themselves (Bass, 1990; Bass & Avolio, 1994), but also provides individualized consideration, which reflects followers’ needs and “may translate into gains not only in the workplace, but also for employees’ family lives” (Hammond, Cleveland, O’Neill, Stawski, & Tate, 2015: 463). In addition to setting performance expectations and challenging subordinates to go beyond their limits, transformational leadership “incorporates taking employees’ private lives, their values and goals into account” (Syrek, Apostel, & Antoni, 2013: 255). Moreover, transformational leaders provide support to subordinates when they experience family demands or role conflict, care

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about their subordinates' well-being, and encourage innovative ideas, including those associated with family-friendly programs (Breevaart & Baaker, 2018; Wang & Walumbwa, 2007).

In contrast to these more positive perspectives on leadership, other studies consider the ways in which aversive leadership – namely, abusive supervision – include nonwork-directed behaviors. An abusive supervisor can display little consideration for one's life or needs outside of the workplace (Tepper, 2000). Examples include diminishing work-life balance by prolonging working hours and limiting leisure time (Bernardo, Daganzo, & Ocampo, 2018), and expecting and pressuring subordinates to engage in work during traditional nonwork hours (Turgeman-Lupo & Biron, 2017). Connecting to the work-life literature, these examples map onto the ways in which supervisors can fail to be family supportive, including: demonstrating poor role modeling behaviors by working long hours; failing to provide emotional support by refusing to listen to subordinates' work-family issues; failing to provide instrumental support by remaining inflexible with subordinates' scheduling conflicts; and failing to engage in creative work-family management by resisting the use of strategies to benefit the work-life balance of the team as a whole (Walsh, Matthews, Toumbeva, Kabat-Farr, Philbrick, & Pavisic, 2019).

For parsimony, we do not cover other leadership styles in depth since these areas are not as well represented among our reviewed articles. However, the same insights generally apply. For example, servant leadership includes emotional support for work-life roles in that it “may help subordinates create meaning in their lives” as they pursue their various goals and passions – which may or may not be work-focused (Rodríguez-Carvajal, Herrero, van Dierendonck, de Rivas, & Moreno-Jiménez, 2019: 500). Authentic leadership includes instrumental work-life support when leaders transparently communicate “substantial information and policies on scheduling” and enable subordinates to voice their “concerns and opposing thoughts about

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scheduling in the workplace” (Jiang & Men, 2017: 230). Taken together, the ways in which family supportive supervision is encompassed in more positive leadership styles is summarized in Table 1, while the ways in which family supportive supervision is deliberately excluded or neglected in more negative leadership styles is summarized in Table 2.

[Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here.]

Perhaps the strongest evidence for this connection comes from the nine studies that simultaneously considered at least one form of leadership and family supportive supervision together. For example, family supportive supervision is identified as a key mediating mechanism linking transformational leadership with subordinates’ reduced work-family conflict and enhanced work-family enrichment (Hammond et al., 2015; Kailasapathy & Jayakody, 2018; Kossek et al., 2018b). Similarly, family supportive supervisor behaviors mediate the relationship between servant leadership and subordinates’ work engagement and supervisor-rated performance (Rofcanin, Las Heras, Bosch, Berber, Mughal, & Ozturk, 2021). Matthews and Toumbeva (2015) suggest that a reciprocal relationship exists between LMX and family supportive supervision, with some studies suggesting that higher-quality LMX relationships enhance subordinates’ creativity via family supportive supervision and other studies suggesting that family supportive supervision creates more positive work attitudes for subordinates via higher-quality LMX relationships.

**Key insights.** From a leadership perspective, many leadership styles naturally encompass elements that are demonstrated in the form of family supportive supervision. From a work-life perspective, family supportive supervision reflects a set of discrete behaviors embedded within various leadership styles and approaches. Given this overlap, we define *work-life supportive leadership* as (1) a leadership characteristic when leaders prioritize actions to provide active



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*support for employees' needs and preferences for managing work, family, and personal life roles; and (2) are experienced by subordinates as exhibiting such behaviors.*

Instead of positioning this as a unique form of leadership, we instead consider work-life supportive leadership as the common ground that connects the leadership and work-life fields. Using concepts from the work-life field, family supportive supervision is a specific, behavioral form of a work-life supportive leadership focused on exhibited leader behaviors supporting nonwork roles that are experienced by subordinates as supportive. Further, as Glynn & Raffaelli (2010) note, work-life supportive leadership represents a shared characteristic that appears in many leadership styles. It includes 1) observations and reports of exhibited leader behaviors, and (2) subordinate experiences (e.g., perceptions, leader-employee dynamics, experiences) (Den Hartog & Koopman, 2001: 168) related to the work-life interface and the effects of leadership on each sphere of life. Illustrating the behavioral component, Oreg and Berson (2019: 273) note that besides “leaders’ strategic choices, leaders’ actions are reflected in their leadership behaviors”... that can occur in many leadership styles that have been studied. Examples include supportive leadership, authentic leadership, and transformational leadership and their application to the concept of sensegiving, which concerns leaders’ role in shaping how followers make sense of their organization’s reality (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Oreg and Berson (2019: 273) also contend, that “contrary to strategic choices, which are situation (e.g., change)-specific, leader behaviors refer to a more stable leadership style that transcends a given organizational context.” Thus, besides a consistent pattern of supportive leadership behaviors, leader-subordinate relational dynamics and shared social experiences of leader-follower social interactions also comprise the conceptualization of work-life supportive leadership.

**Theme #2: A Virtuous Cycle (Dual Agenda Evidence from the Leadership Literature)**

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Building on the conceptual overlap established in Theme #1 through our synthesis of the 80 leadership-focused studies and the nine studies integrating both family supportive supervision and leadership styles, we find that the different leadership styles encompassing work-life supportive leadership create benefits and positive outcomes for subordinates' lives outside of the workplace. The most robust finding is that transformational leadership (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018; Houle, Morin, Fernet, Vandenberghe, & Tóth-Király, 2020; Munir, Nielsen, Garde, Albertsen, & Carneiro, 2012; Syrek et al., 2013; Zhou, Eatough, & Che, 2020) and LMX (Brunetto, Farr-Wharton, Ramsay, & Shacklock, 2010; Chang & Cheng, 2014; Harris, Harris, Carlson, & Carlson, 2015; Kwan, Chen, & Chiu, 2022; Lapierre, Hackett, & Taggar, 2006; Liao, 2011; Litano & Morganson, 2020; Major, Fletcher, Davis, & Germano, 2008; Morganson, Major, & Litano, 2017; Tresi & Mihelič, 2018; Tummers & Bronkhorst, 2014; Tummers & Knies, 2013; Van der Heijden & Spurk, 2019) improves work-life outcomes, namely by reducing work-family conflict, enhancing work-family enrichment, and improving work-family balance. Beyond these outcomes, transformational leadership enhances subordinates' family relationships (Southcombe, Cavanagh, & Bartram, 2015), while LMX is linked to improved marital well-being (Wang, Jex, Peng, Liu, & Wang, 2019), family performance (Liao et al., 2016) and family satisfaction (Zhang, Wu, & Ferreira-Meyers, 2019).

There is also strong support that moral approaches to leadership – including servant leadership (Bande, Fernández-Ferrín, Varela, & Jaramillo, 2015; Tang, Kwan, Zhang, & Zhu, 2016; Wang, Kwan, & Zhou, 2017; Zhang, Kwong Kwan, Everett, & Jian, 2012), ethical leadership (Zhang & Tu, 2018), and authentic leadership (Boamah, Read, & Spence Laschinger, 2017; Braun & Nieberle, 2017; Braun & Peus, 2018; Jiang & Men, 2017; Lyu, Wang, Le, & Kwan, 2019) – improve subordinates' work-life outcomes. Psychological empowerment is a key

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influence that generates positive nonwork effects for subordinates (J. Yang, Gu, & Liu, 2019), including increased spousal satisfaction with the quality of family life (Z. Yang, Zhang, Kwan, & Chen, 2018) and romantic love (Zhou, Yang, Kwan, & Chiu, 2019). Liao, Liu, Kwan, & Li (2015) find that supervisors' displays of ethical leadership encourage subordinates to engage in more ethical behaviors at home, which increases spouses' family satisfaction. Ethical leadership also helps decrease subordinates' family undermining behaviors (Eissa & Wyland, 2018).

On the unsupportive side, abusive supervision enhances subordinates' work-family conflict and decreases life satisfaction (Butts, Becker, & Boswell, 2015; Hoobler & Hu, 2013; Matos, O'Neill, & Lei, 2018; Nauman, Fatima, & Haq, 2018; Tepper, 2000; Tromp & Blomme, 2014). While most studies find evidence for a direct effect, others indicate that this occurs via increased burnout and surface acting (Carlson, Ferguson, Hunter, & Whitten, 2012). These experiences negatively impact family-specific outcomes, including decreases in subordinates' family satisfaction and increased relationship tension experienced by the subordinate's spouse (Carlson, Ferguson, Perrewé, & Whitten, 2011). Subordinates' experiences of abusive supervision can lead to increased family undermining behaviors at home. Displaced anger and frustration with the supervisor may be directed towards family members (Hoobler & Brass, 2006; Wu, Kwan, Liu, & Resick, 2012) and functions as a means of alleviating psychological distress associated with the experiences of abusive supervisor (Restubog, Scott, & Zagencyk, 2011). Beyond family outcomes, abusive supervision increases unsafe commuting behaviors (Turgeman-Lupo & Biron, 2017) and decreases cultural heritage attachment among low-skilled workers who hold work visas in a host country (Bernardo et al., 2018).

There is also evidence regarding how leadership affects spillover in the nonwork-to-work direction, or the ways in which subordinates' nonwork experiences influence their attitudes and

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behaviors at work (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Because these experiences originate in the nonwork domain and these forms of leadership are traditionally viewed as work-centric, leadership in this context is typically examined as a moderator or mediator. For example, transformational leadership enhanced the positive relationship between work-life practices and subordinates' perceptions of the organization (Wang & Walumbwa, 2007) and mitigated the negative impact of subordinates' work-family conflict on deviant workplace behaviors (Morgan, Perry, & Wang, 2018). High-quality LMX relationships mediated the relationship between telecommuting and job satisfaction (Golden, 2006), interacted with work-life balance satisfaction to improve employee creativity (Aleksić, Mihelič, Černe, & Škerlavaj, 2017), and inhibited perceived on-the-job discrimination for pregnant women (Mäkelä, 2012). Moreover, high-quality LMX relationships that focused on personal life inclusion – defined as “the extent to which leaders and members include each other in their family or personal lives” – enhanced job dedication (Chen, Chen, Zhong, Son, Zhang, & Liu, 2015: 673).

**Key insights.** As indicated in Figure 1, various conceptual and meta-analytic reviews in the leadership literature connect transformational leadership, ethical leadership, authentic leadership, servant leadership, LMX, and principled leader behaviors to positive outcomes associated with job performance and work engagement (see also Banks, McCauley, Gardner, & Guler, 2016; Eva, Robin, Sendjaya, van Dierendonck, & Liden, 2019; Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011; Kleshinski, Wilson, Stevenson-Street, & Scott, 2021; Lemoine et al., 2019; Martin, Guillaume, Thomas, Lee, & Epitropaki, 2016). Our work adds to these findings – and is consistent with work-life reviews (e.g., Crain & Stevens, 2018; Kossek et al., 2011; 2018a) by offering evidence and examples of how various leadership styles and approaches that include elements of family supportive supervision also generate positive work-family, family, and

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nonwork outcomes. We label this theme as a virtuous cycle because this additional evidence points to not only the connection between the positive influence of leadership on subordinates' nonwork outcomes but also the effect of leadership on enhancing (or minimizing) the effect of positive (or negative) nonwork experiences on work-related outcomes. Consistent with the literature that conceptualizes family supportive supervision as a resource, such findings suggest a “gain spiral” where leadership generates positive nonwork outcomes, which in turn generate positive work outcomes (Hobfoll, 1989; see also Fredrickson, 2001; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

As exceptions, we did find two studies with contrary results. First, Bernas and Major (2000: 175) found that LMX was associated with increased work-family conflict, suggesting that “the demands and expectations associated with such a relationship may also contribute to work interference with family.” Second, Tabor, Madison, Marler, & Kellermanns (2020) found that spiritual leadership exacerbated the negative effects of work-family conflict on organizational commitment. Post-hoc analyses revealed that the effect was largely driven by subordinates without dependents or family-related responsibilities. Taken together, this theme strongly supports the “dual agenda” synergistic view of leader work-life support. Yet these few contrary findings also reinforce the importance of considering unexpected consequences within the context of work-life supportive leadership and remaining attentive to various nuances like subordinates' unique nonwork demands and needs (Russo, Buonocore, Carmeli, & Guo, 2018).

### **Theme #3: On the Job Payoffs (Dual Agenda Evidence from the Work-Life Literature)**

The “*dual agenda*” view suggests that work-life supportive leadership should result in “win-win” outcomes, benefiting both the employee and employer. Origins of the dual agenda term emanate from early work redesign perspectives advancing work-life flexibility to jointly

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benefit organizational effectiveness and gender equity (Kolb & Merrill-Sands, 1999). An assumption was that supporting employees' personal lives can catalyze business (Bailyn, 2011; Bailyn, Fletcher, & Kolb, 1997). The term has evolved to refer to the ways in which organizations make changes that adequately address employees' concerns about protecting their health and working in ways that allow employees to maintain family and personal priorities (Somers, 2020). This includes mutual benefits for (1) employees' well-being *and* job performance, and (2) the individual *and* the organization (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). From a leadership standpoint, the dual agenda view suggests that work-life supportive leadership not only benefits subordinates' outcomes outside of work (per the second theme) but provides direct on-the-job benefits (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

Yet the “*dueling outcomes*” view adopts a more pessimistic stance on work-life supportive leadership, raising suspicions that including this as an integral characteristic of leadership inhibits key work-related outcomes like productivity and engagement (Perrigino et al., 2018). This view originates from decades of work-family and career studies that assume a “tradeoff lens,” or a negative relationship between high investment in career versus participation in nonwork roles (Kossek et al., 2021b). From a leadership standpoint, the “dueling outcomes” view suggests that work-life supportive leadership should limit the leader's ability to facilitate a focus on team goals and deliverables (Li, Rubenstein, Lin, Wang, & Chen, 2018) and – when taken to excessive levels – may create a “too much of a good thing” effect (Pierce & Aguinis, 2013).

The 38 studies in our review addressing family supportive supervision – again combined with the nine studies that addressed both family supportive supervision and a leadership style – support the dual agenda view, indicating that family supportive supervision has a positive effect

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on numerous work-related outcomes for subordinates (Garcia, Ng, Capezio, Restubog, & Tang, 2017; Germeys & De Geiter, 2017; Hammer et al., 2016; Karatepe & Kilic, 2007; Kelly, Rofcanin, Las Heras, Ogbonnaya, Marescaux, & Bosch, 2020; Matthews, Mills, Trout, & English, 2014; Odle-Dusseau, Hammer, Crain, & Bodner, 2016). These studies typically position family supportive supervision as a resource, connecting it with social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity to explain *why* this positive link exists. Because subordinates appreciate receiving specific work-life support, they seek to find ways to express this gratitude in relation to their job and the workplace such as by working longer hours and being more flexible in exchange for support (Bernas & Major, 2000). Thus, work-life support often translates into: (1) more positive work attitudes associated with increased job dedication and commitment to the organization, prosocial motivation, and felt obligation to the supervisor, which also results in (2) more positive behavioral outcomes including supervisor-directed citizenship behaviors, better in-role job performance, and reduced withdrawal behaviors (Baral & Bhargava, 2010; Bosch, Las Heras, Russo, Rofcanin, & Grau, 2018; Cheng, Zhu, & Lin, 2022; Mills, Matthews, Henning, & Woo, 2014; Pan, 2018; Rofcanin, de Jong, Las Heras, & Kim, 2018; Wang, Walumbwa, Wang, & Aryee, 2013). Some studies explain these positive effects through perceived organizational support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986) and social support theory (Cohen & Wills, 1985), linking work-life support to reduced work withdrawal, improved contextual performance, and lower absenteeism (Aryee, Chu, Kim, & Ryu, 2013; Behson, 2005; Hammer, Wan, Brockwood, Bodner, & Mohr, 2019; Muse & Pichler, 2011; O'Neill, Harrison, Cleveland, Almeida, Stawski, & Crouter, 2009; Swanberg, McKechnie, Ojha, & James, 2011; Wang et al., 2013; Yragui, Mankowski, Perrin, & Glass, 2012).

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Evidence suggests that these effects are often conditional or indirect. For example, work-life support may be most effective when there is agreement between the supervisor and subordinate that the supervisor provides a high degree of family support (Marescaux, Rofcanin, Las Heras, Ilies, & Bosch, 2020). Or when there is a match between the amount of family supportive supervision desired by the subordinate and the amount provided by the supervisor (Yragui et al., 2012). Connecting back to Theme #2, these on- the-job payoffs occur through the ways in which family supportive supervision affords schedule control to employees (Aryee et al., 2013; Swanberg et al., 2011; Thomas & Ganster, 1995), creates satisfaction with work-life balance (Choi, Kim, Han, Ryu, Park, & Kwon, 2018; Talukder, Vickers, & Khan, 2018), and improves subordinates' self-efficacy (Mills et al., 2014). Surprisingly, although gender is a commonly studied contingency in the work-life literature, most studies did not address or find gender-related differences involving these general patterns. One exception is the work by Straub, Beham, & Islam (2019) which found that men (more so than women) were likely to reciprocate family supportive supervision with higher levels of work engagement.

We found one contrary finding supporting the “dueling outcomes” view. A study by Rofcanin, Las Heras, & Bakker (2017) found that when organizational support for family-friendly practices was low, higher family supportive supervision led to a decrease in work engagement. This suggests that family supportive supervision contributed to family enhancement at the expense of work. To account for this finding, they reasoned that family supportive supervision affords employees the ability to focus more on family life, which – although beneficial in terms of enhancing family time adequacy and the ability to take care of household duties – can also deplete energy or create exhaustion that diminishes capacity to perform work tasks and decreases work engagement. Yet beyond this single example, there was minimal



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evidence offering support of the “dueling outcomes” view. While a couple of studies did not find any statistically significant effects linking family supportive supervision with job performance (e.g., Bray et al., 2018; Hammer et al., 2019); overall the “dual agenda” view received far greater empirical support.

**Key Insights.** Because Themes #1 and #2 revealed that family supportive supervision reflects a set of behaviors that are more broadly encompassed within various leadership styles and perspectives, and can result in positive cross-domain effects, we are not entirely surprised that the evidence connecting family supportive supervision with enhanced on the job behaviors was strongly positive. The findings from this theme not only reinforce work-life reviews and meta-analyses finding that family supportive supervision enhances various nonwork outcomes (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Kossek et al., 2011; 2018a), but also suggest that there is overwhelming research support in favor of the “dual agenda” view over the “dueling outcomes” view.

Importantly, Themes #2 and #3, further execute our goal of integrating the leadership and work-life literatures in that they collectively find ample, overlapping evidence from both the leadership literature (Theme #2) and the work-life literature (Theme #3) supporting the “dual agenda” view.

We also uncovered multiple underlying arguments as to *why* the “dual agenda” view received stronger support. First, work-life supportive leadership may allow employees to carry out their work more effectively in ways that generate greater individual productivity and benefit the team (Straub, 2012). Second, work-life supportive leadership can enhance both extrinsic motivation (where individuals work harder to gain increased rewards) and prosocial motivation (where individuals will contribute back to the organization in the form of citizenship or helping behaviors directed towards others; Bosch et al., 2018). Third, work-life supportive leadership can fulfill subordinates’ various needs associated with belongingness, connectedness, and growth,

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which in turn generate more positive work attitudes, a positive workgroup climate, better task performance, and more engagement at work (Wu, Kuo, Lin, Hu, Wu, & Cheng, 2020).

Moreover, the findings within this theme reflect key perspectives within the leadership literature even though connections to date tend to be less explicit. Work-life studies leveraging social exchange and reciprocity perspectives are largely aligned with LMX approaches in the leadership literature that focus on the exchange relationship between a supervisor and subordinate and are based on the same theoretical grounds. Consistent with contingent leadership approaches that point to the importance of supervisor support in helping subordinates manage work-related tasks and expectations (House, 1971; Northouse, 2016), work-life studies drawing on perceived organizational support and social support theories recognize that family supportive supervision is not only aimed at enhancing subordinates' nonwork outcomes but also facilitates work-related experiences in ways that "implicitly emphasize the importance of organizational interests" (Cheng et al., 2022: 4). This includes enhancing the ways in which subordinates accomplish work in more efficient and high-quality ways. Taken together, the leadership literature conceptualizes various forms of leadership as encompassing a work-life support component and the work-life literature recognizes that family supportive supervision is both nonwork- and work-focused. Thus, Themes #1 through #3 integrate similarities across the two fields, lending credence to a shared conceptualization of work-life supportive leadership.

### **Theme #4: Leaders' Work-Life Experiences as Employees**

Interestingly, none of the 38 studies addressing family supportive supervision nor any of the nine studies addressing both family supportive supervision and leadership style consider how supervisors' family and nonwork experiences influence their approach to leadership. Yet in line with Hammond et al.'s (2017) theory on how multiple domains (i.e., work, family/friends, and

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community) influence leader development, about one-fourth (24% – or 19 out of 80) leadership studies consider the ways in which supervisors' family or nonwork experiences influence (1) their leadership style, and (2) the ways in which their leadership style affects subordinates. McClean, Yim, Courtright, & Dunford (2021: 1850) found that supervisors' family-to-work enrichment contributed to daily displays of transformational leadership behaviors. They drew on attachment theory, arguing that attachment figures – or close, personal acquaintances like family members – help “individuals feel more comfortable exploring their environment and engaging in approach-oriented activities outside of the relationship.” When supervisors received support from attachment figures at home, they were more likely to experience family-to-work enrichment; in turn, they sought to engage in transformational behaviors at work – such as motivating and supporting followers – because of the positive resources generated at home (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Lin, Chang, Lee, & Johnson (2021) found evidence supporting the same connection, explaining their findings through the lens of self-determination theory: positive family events satisfied supervisors' family-related needs; in turn, this enhanced prosocial motivation which was directed towards employees as transformational and consideration behaviors.

Supplementing the evidence linking daily nonwork experiences to daily leadership behaviors, Oliver, Gottfried, Guerin, Gottfried, Reichard, & Riggio (2011) found that adolescent experiences shaped future leadership styles. When parents were able to provide a more stimulating and supportive family environment for children at the age of 12, these children – because they had higher levels of self-concept (i.e., belief in themselves) – were more likely to demonstrate transformational leadership behaviors in adulthood at age 29. Although the study by McClean et al. (2021: 1851) focused on daily behaviors among an adult sample, they also linked

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their work to more formative experiences. They found that higher levels of attachment avoidance – which emerge when a child is raised in an unsupportive or uncaring environment and causes one to distrust intimate relationships or prefer distant relationships – weakened the relationship between daily family-to-work enrichment and daily transformational leadership behaviors. In contrast, attachment anxiety – where individuals “exhibit overdependence on relationships and engage in overly persistent attempts at gaining support”- also was associated with an unsupportive or uncaring childhood environment. It enhanced the relationship between daily family-to-work enrichment and daily transformational leadership behaviors. This was because these individuals placed a higher value on relationships and responded more positively when experiencing family-to-work enrichment.

Juxtaposing the evidence suggesting that supervisors’ positive nonwork experiences exert a positive effect on their leadership style at work, other studies suggest that negative nonwork experiences exert a more negative effect – again on both a short-term and long-term basis. Courtright, Gardner, Smith, McCormick, & Colbert (2016) found that daily experiences of family-to-work conflict enhanced daily ego depletion, which in turn generated higher levels of daily abusive supervision. Dionisi and Barling (2019) found that daily family-to-work conflict and romantic relationship conflict led to abusive supervision (via depressive symptoms) and passive leadership (via cognitive distraction). Viewed on a long-term basis, Kiewitz, Restubog, Zagenczyk, Scott, Garcia, & Tang (2012) and Garcia, Restubog, Kiewitz, Scott, & Tang (2014) linked experiences of family undermining and a history of family aggression, respectively, to a greater propensity to engage in abusive supervision. Consistent with Courtright et al. (2016), Kiewitz et al. (2012) found that the link was stronger when supervisors who experienced family undermining also exhibited lower levels of self-control. Garcia et al. (2014) found that a history

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of family aggression created angry rumination, hostile cognitions, and hostile affect, which in turn led to abusive supervision. While Smith and Reed (2010) suggested that a history of family violence would harm women's leadership influence, they did not find support for this relationship.

Studies considering the influence of caregiving roles on leadership styles and behaviors provide mixed evidence. Smith and Reed (2010) did not find a connection between child caregiving and women's leadership influence, while González-Cruz, Botella-Carrubi, & Martínez-Fuentes (2019) found that the absence of family responsibilities was a condition for high leadership performance (i.e., effectiveness, satisfaction, and extra effort). In contrast – and in one of the only studies that looked at leadership on a CEO level – Dahl, Dezsó, & Ross (2012) found that fatherhood impacted men's values and was reflected in a connection between parenthood and wage structures. With the goal of providing more resources for their family, male CEOs typically paid themselves more after fathering a child. The researchers also found that in order to demonstrate generosity and concern for others (reflecting values associated with parenthood), male CEOs typically paid employees more when fathering for the first time – particularly when the child was female.

Beyond the study from Dahl et al. (2012) – and although we can make inferences based on the other themes identified in our review – there were limited findings regarding the ways in which supervisors' nonwork experiences influenced how their leadership style affected their subordinates. Pointing to the work-home resources model (ten Brummelhius & Bakker, 2012) and supplemented with research that suggesting that supervisors' work-family experiences cross over to affect subordinates (e.g., O'Neill et al., 2009; ten Brummelhuis, Haar, & Roche 2014), Braun and Nierlbe (2017) found support for their argument that the effect of authentic leadership

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on reducing subordinates' work-family conflict would be stronger when supervisors experienced lower levels of work-family conflict. They reasoned that lower levels of work-family conflict, not only equipped supervisors to act as more supportive leaders (since they were not suffering from diminished resource capacity), but also allowed them to engage in more positive role modeling behaviors by demonstrating how to successfully handle family-related demands.

**Key insights.** Reminiscent of the first wave of leadership literature focusing on trait-based approaches (Lord et al., 2017), recent evidence suggests that leaders' own nonwork experiences influence their leadership styles. These findings begin to provide a more context-specific understanding of *who* engages in (which type of) leadership (Oc, 2018). In general, negative nonwork experiences were associated with abusive supervision whereas positive nonwork experiences were associated with transformational leadership. Moreover, the evidence above illustrates the temporal breadth to which these effects occur, ranging from daily experiences to more formative ones that can endure for decades (Lupu, Spence, & Empson, 2017).

A crucial and subtle implication – made more obvious through the development of the themes above – is that family experiences do not simply influence one's leadership style (e.g., Kleshinski et al., 2021; McClean, Barnes, Courtright, & Johnson, 2019), but influence one's propensity to engage in work-life supportive leadership. (This view is based on the overlap we noted of family support as a common characteristic across multiple leadership styles). There were no studies that considered how supervisors' nonwork experiences influenced whether they specifically engaged in family supportive supervision. However, this theme does integrate the two literatures by extending spillover theory – a seminal perspective in the work-life literature (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) – and reflecting our findings showing that nonwork influences not

only impact subordinates' work outcomes but also impact supervisors' work outcomes, including their leadership styles and behaviors.

### **Theme #5: Work-Life Supportive Leadership as a Global Phenomenon**

Work-life balance expectations and practices (including work-life supportive leadership) are heavily influenced by societal expectations and legal regulations – forces that vary significantly from country to country (Ollier-Malaterre & Foucreault, 2017). For example, Anglo-Saxon nations – including the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom – typically adopt an agentic approach where individuals are primarily viewed as responsible for the management of their own work-life balance (Kelly, 2003). Although normative expectations prioritize the importance of work-life balance, there are typically few regulations in these countries. Organizations are given a lot of discretion to choose whether to offer and implement work-life balance initiatives (Goodstein, 1994; Kelly & Kalev, 2006). In contrast, welfare state nations, like Norway, Finland, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands tend to adopt a more communal approach. For example, they often adopt more structured regulations to provide an overarching societal safety net supporting work-life balance. For example, laws may restrict hours in a typical work week and include longer mandatory periods for parental leave (Lendhorff, 2014; Piszczek & Berg, 2014). Yet, some nations – such as post-communist Eastern European countries like Slovenia and Russia – typically have few regulations and weaker normative expectations around work-life balance (den Dulk, Peters, & Poutsma, 2012). Another divide concerns differences in normative expectations about work-life balance between more individualistic nations like the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom, and more collectivistic nations like Japan, China, Korea, Taiwan, Brazil, and Argentina (Chandra, 2012; Haar, Russo, Suñe, & Ollier-Malaterre, 2014).

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There was a significant amount of geographic and cross-national diversity among the employee samples across our 127 reviewed studies, with work-life supportive leadership studied in no fewer than 25 different country contexts, including the countries named above. (Table A2 in the Appendix provides a descriptive summary). Although employee populations in the United States represented the single most-studied group, this accounted for only about one-third or 27 out of 80 leadership studies, less than half or 17 of the 38 family supportive supervision studies, and six of the nine studies that considered both leadership and family supportive supervision. Interestingly – and despite this notable geographic and cultural diversity across study samples – only four of the 127 studies- just over 3%- collected data from more than one country. Among these studies, Kelly et al. (2020: 7) selected Chile and Colombia “on the grounds of common historical heritage.” Rofcanin et al.’s (2018) sample spanned Argentina, Chile, and the Philippines. Although they also noted similar cultural characteristics across all three countries, they did not find that geography impacted their results. Wang and Walumbwa’s (2007) study sampled employees from China, Taiwan, and Kenya, noting similarity regarding their collectivistic cultures, workforce demographics, and economic growth. Like Rofcanin and colleagues, they, too, controlled for potential country-level differences. Only the study by Bosch et al. (2018) – which sampled employees from Brazil, the Netherlands, Kenya, and the Philippines – hypothesized cross-cultural differences. Specifically, they considered the degree to which each country’s United Nations Gender Inequality Index ranking moderated the relationship between family supportive supervision and subordinates’ prosocial and extrinsic motivation. Their results suggested that the positive relationship between family supportive supervisor behaviors and prosocial motivation was stronger when the Gender Inequality Index of



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the country in which the employee worked was lower. Such findings suggest a positive relationship between national gender equality and work-life support.

Despite limited studies examining cross-cultural and cross-national differences, the overall pattern of results described above is largely consistent across countries when comparing findings across studies. For example, the positive effects of transformational leadership on work-life outcomes noted above were documented in studies using employee samples from the Canada, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States (a blend of Anglo-Saxon and welfare state nations). Additionally, the positive effects of LMX on work-life outcomes were documented in studies using employee samples from Australia, Canada, China, Russia, Taiwan, and the United States (a blend of individualistic and collectivistic cultures). These patterns point to an understanding of work-life supportive leadership as a global management phenomenon that is important to the “dual agenda” regardless of the country in which it occurs.

The most telling insight of our analysis concerns the impetus for studying work-life supportive leadership in different geographical national contexts. For example, Aleksić et al. (2017: 674) argued for the relevance of considering work-life supportive leadership in a Slovenian context because “many employees perceive challenges in juggling the different role responsibilities and report work-family conflicts,” in part, because there are many dual-career households. Kailasapathy, Kraimer, & Metz (2014) point to the relevance of considering work-life supportive leadership in Sri Lanka, a country with more traditional gender norms, where women experience greater challenges associated with work-life balance. Marescaux et al. (2020: 6) chose to study work-life supportive leadership in El Salvador, since employees typically work longer hours “compared to the countries typically studied,” and frequently exceed the contractual hours which they are expected to work. Zhang and Tu (2018: 1094) highlight the importance of

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studying work-life supportive leadership in a Chinese context, since Chinese employees typically “attach great importance to their family roles” and because “work and family roles are highly blurred.”

Despite the preceding arguments for the importance of studying work-life supportive leadership in a specific country, these various lines of reasoning appear generalizable. Forces like technological advancements and globalization encourage long working hours around the world. Notions underlying “24/7” always on work cultures in the West (e.g., Padavic, Ely, & Reid, 2019), are similar in principle to “996” work cultures in the East (working from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. six days per week; Shang, Chan, & Liu, 2021). Within a given country, many individuals are likely to place a high importance on family and struggle with continually blurred work and home boundaries (Lobel, 1991; Kossek, Ruderman, Braddy, & Hannum, 2012). Even when considering differences, such as the divide between less-regulated Anglo-Saxon nations and more heavily regulated welfare state nations, the importance of studying work-life supportive leadership is relevant across context. For example, work-life supportive leadership could be arguably more important in low-regulation contexts – making more prominent the “gatekeeping” role of the supervisor – in helping individuals attain their ideal model of work-life balance. Yet equally convincing is the argument that work-life supportive leadership is just as – if not more – important in high-regulation contexts where work-life supportive leadership is culturally viewed as a mandatory job requirement to ensure that leader and employers adhere to legally mandated practices.

**Key insights.** Despite nuanced cross-cultural differences as far as understanding how work-life supportive leadership takes place and impacts subordinates’ work and nonwork outcomes, we generally see a global convergence in the concept of work-life supportive

leadership. At a micro level, understanding of work-life supportive leadership and leaders' behaviors reflecting this characteristic of leadership appears to be similarly shared regardless of country, culture, and context. At a macro level, institutional and cultural factors create divergence in regard the extent to which this characteristic of leadership is expected (e.g., a sense of entitlement or the ability to access work-life policies without experiencing stigmatization). Yet there was little evidence among the reviewed studies connecting this micro convergence and macro divergence. Most studies included a sample from within a single country and focused on the micro (i.e., individual) level of analysis.

### **Towards a Framework of Work-Life Supportive Leadership**

Figure 2 depicts our review-driven framework, holistically depicting the five themes. The *integrating the missed connections of “work-life supportive leadership” (#1)* theme features prominently in the triple box: family supportive supervision reflects a discrete set of leader behaviors that are more generally encompassed in the conceptualization of work-life supportive leadership, defined above as a leadership characteristic when leaders prioritize actions to provide active support for employees' needs and preferences for managing work, family, and personal life roles, and are experienced by subordinates as exhibiting such behaviors. Work-life supportive leadership does not represent a unique form of leadership, but rather is subsumed as a shared characteristic across leadership styles (bridging theoretical perspectives in the leadership literature; Glynn & Raffaelli, 2010).

[Insert Figure 2 about here.]

The *virtuous cycle (#2)* theme is depicted with the dashed lines where work-life supportive leadership provides tangible benefits for subordinates' work-life experiences. As explained above, work-life supportive leadership – re-envisioned and understood as a

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characteristic embedded within core leadership styles and theories – not only impacts subordinates’ nonwork experiences and their family members but also impacts the ways in which family and nonwork influences spill over to affect job-related outcomes. The *on-the-job payoffs* (#3) theme is depicted with solid lines, where work-life supportive leadership improves various work-related attitudes and acts as a motivating force for employees. In turn (or directly), work-life supportive leadership benefits various work-related behaviors.

The *leaders’ work-life experiences as employees* (#4) theme, is depicted with the double dot dashed arrowed. Supervisors’ family experiences (short-term) and upbringing (long-term) affect the degree to which they engage in work-life supportive leadership. Moreover, given supervisors’ work-family experiences can influence their family supportive attitudes and behaviors and crossover to their subordinates (Westman, 2001), this theme links with the virtuous cycle theme. Finally, our fifth theme *work-life supportive leadership as a global phenomenon* (#5) is depicted in the top-left hand corner of the figure to denote that our review did not uncover significant cross-cultural differences in terms of understandings and conceptualizations of work-life supportive leadership. Instead, meanings of work-life supportive leadership appear to converge and reinforce the importance of this leadership characteristic regardless of the context in which it occurs. Yet we also acknowledge that we anticipate more nuanced cross-cultural differences still to be discovered regarding its relative importance and associated expectations. With this – and many other suggestions as far as how future research can build on this framework – we turn our attention to the implications of our work.

## DISCUSSION: A CALL FOR INTEGRATIVE LEADERSHIP AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE THEORIZING AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Given the fundamental role of leaders in contemporary societies, scholars are increasingly questioning whether and how leadership impacts people not only at work but also beyond the workplace, such as the impact of supportive behaviors on individuals' management of the work-life interface (Hammer et al., 2009; Kossek et al. 2011). However, research on leadership and work-life management have developed independently, despite many conceptual and empirical commonalities. There is a need to consolidate concepts and reduce divides between these growing fields. To advance knowledge in this area, our review highlights the need for both leadership and work-life scholars to recognize work-life supportive leadership as a core leadership characteristic reflecting leaders' behaviors and employees' experiences of these behaviors. We provide a framework for integrative theorizing and future research such that leadership and work-life scholars can form collaborative interdisciplinary teams to address and build on our review. There is the potential and need for methodological innovation in construct development, clarity, and new cross-domain research designs. Below we organize these implications according to the insights from our five themes.

### **Theme #1 Takeaway: Address Past Missed Connections to Mainstream Work-life and Leadership Linkages**

Although supportive leadership styles align with the concept of family supportive supervision in the work-life literature, work-life supportive leadership is largely overlooked as a core characteristic in most leadership research. Similarly, the totality of "leader" roles and "work" outcomes are sometimes under-emphasized in the work-life literature. By identifying work-life supportive leadership as a common thread and shared characteristic across multiple leadership styles and perspectives, we address leadership scholars' calls for greater unification and consolidation of fragmented leadership perspectives (Glynn & Raffaelli, 2010; Meuser,

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Gardner, Dinh, Hu, Liden, & Lord, 2016). While the leadership literature often addresses leaders' influence on work-related behaviors, this unintentionally minimizes the impact that leaders have on employees' personal lives outside of work. Our integrative review also advances the work-life literature by suggesting the critical importance of integrating leadership theories and dynamics to expand the narrow conceptualizations of family supportive supervision which is mainly defined and measured by subordinates' perceptions in the work-life field. Our review demonstrates the value of embedding such behaviors within different leadership styles and integrating more leader-centric perspectives into the work-life literature as well.

**Future integrative research implications.** Regardless of whether scholars identify more strongly with the leadership or work-life area of inquiry, future research should involve greater inclusion of nonwork variables, dynamics, and theories and greater inclusion of leadership variables, processes, and theories. Expanding this theme can help both fields broaden the scope of their studies in ways that align more with the realities of modern society where work-life domains are increasingly linked. Expansion also taps into employees' broadening expectations, particularly in a post COVID-19 pandemic era where work-life flexibility policies and attention to worker health and well-being multiply as strategic issues. Future studies should also consider support not just in the form of organizational support as instrumental to accomplishing career-related goals but more broadly in terms of support for the accomplishment of meaningful nonwork goals. It is important to reiterate that work-life supportive leadership encompasses more than just family as contemporary employees seek support for their involvement in multiple roles of their lives. However, work-life supportive leadership will continue to remain a marginal concept to the extent that dominant narratives persist that it is primarily intended for women with

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child caregiving responsibilities (Perrigino et al., 2018). Supporting this argument for expanded conceptualization, Kelliher, Richardson, & Boiarintseva (2019: 97) offer the sharp critique:

“‘life’ hitherto has been viewed as largely comprising care activities for dependent children, whereas ‘work’ has been premised largely on a traditional model of work, characterised by full-time, permanent employment with one employer and a conventional understanding of what work involves.”

Yet many employees are delaying having children or even marriage. And many employees may work part time in gig work for multiple employers. Moreover, work-life issues are not only inherently intersectional (Özbilgin, Beauregard, Tatli, & Bell, 2011) with gender and race, but also dynamic as individuals accumulate and shed nonwork roles and responsibilities over time and the life course (Kossek et al., 2021b; Perrigino, Kossek, Thompson, & Bodner, 2021). A particularly understudied area with the rapidly aging workforce is how leaders can better support informal caregiving for elders which offers a variety of unique challenges (involving sometimes geographical distance, disease and dying, and often receives less support) compared to child caregiving responsibilities (Clancy, Fisher, Daigle, Henle, McCarthy, 2020). Another example is that work-life supportive leadership that addresses’ subordinates’ work-school conflict might look very different for those following the traditional model of work and taking company-sponsored evening MBA classes versus for young adults taking classes full time and working a part-time job or evening shift to pay for tuition (e.g., Butler, 2007).

Because work-life supportive leadership can be a 100% inclusive concept, we encourage research to expand our conceptualization of work-life supportive leadership in creative ways. Our results paint a relatively consistent pattern: beyond benefitting family-related outcomes. Work-life supportive leadership appeared to consistently benefit all broader nonwork outcomes

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(e.g., increases in life satisfaction and psychological detachment). Yet while the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened awareness of the need for more work-life supportive leadership – bringing it into focus as a strategic concern rather than as an “accommodation” or ancillary benefit – future research can also consider to what degree there is variation in the types of nonwork outcomes. For example, while work-life supportive leadership may enable employees with greater control over their work schedule who could facilitate the provision of better care to their pets (Hilbrecht, Shaw, Johnson, & Andrey, 2008). Yet some leaders who may be unaware of the therapeutic effects of pets on workers’ mental health, especially for older workers (Hui Gan, Hill, Yeung, Keesing, & Netto, 2020). Without policy interventions, some leaders may deem this positive result as more frivolous compared to enabling employees to provide better care for their children or elders.

The increased merging of leadership and work-life balance research represents a generative time for integrative methodological approaches that give new energy to each field. Some interesting statistics among our reviewed studies regarding limited methodological variability warrant mentioning. Among the 127 articles, 123 studies – or approximately 97% – used quantitative methodologies while only four used qualitative methodologies. Nearly two-thirds (78 studies; 61%) were based on single-source data (using data only from subordinates but not the leader); only one fifth (28 studies; 22%) were dyadic in their use of data from both subordinates and supervisors; and only six studies were dyadic in their use of data from subordinates and nonwork actors such as spouses or significant others. Among the more compelling designs, three studies used triadic data and collected assessments from supervisors, subordinates, and family members (Hoobler & Brass, 2006; Hoobler & Hu, 2013; Kiewitz et al., 2012).



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These patterns offer strong evidence to motivate future research on the importance of capturing work-life supportive leadership from other sources beyond subordinate perceptions. The leadership literature traditionally measures what followers think of leaders and leaders reports of their styles, while the work-life literature mostly focuses on followers' perceptions of leader supportive behaviors. Notably, in the smaller research stream where leader and employee views are simultaneously measured, there is often a perceptual gap between subordinates and supervisors when both perspectives are assessed (Kossek et al., 2018a). By adding in family and other nonwork members' assessments of work-life leadership support, we contend that both fields can better understand and fill in the gaps on work-home dynamics related to leadership and employee well-being. There is a clear need for the inclusion of non-self-report assessments from various stakeholders (e.g., spouses, children, friends) regarding how leadership affects the nonwork domain beyond subordinates' self-reported experiences. Moreover, assessments from team members can provide a richer understanding of the multi-level effects of work-life supportive leadership at work.

Given the significant increase of employees working from home – where nonwork and work contexts are becoming one-and-the-same – our review can spur investigations of virtual work-life supportive leadership (Kniffin et al., 2020; Perrigino & Raveendhran, 2020). This is an area on which work-life supportive leadership may have a significant impact as flexible work continues to shift to hybrid or full-time home-based work models for professional workers. Studies can consider, for example, the extent to which work-life supportive leadership increases subordinates' amount of time spent with family and the extent to which an absence of a work-life supportive leader enhances family stress. Qualitative studies addressing boundary management dynamics could also adopt a work-life leadership style congruence angle, regarding leader and

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employee and family interaction patterns. Such studies might explore communication dynamics as to how formal and informal feedback is shared and whether communication during traditional nonwork hours is perceived as a source of stress (straining the supervisor-subordinate relationship) and/or a signal that the leader cares about the subordinate (leading to the emergence of a high-quality supervisor-subordinate relationship).

Of chief importance is cross-disciplinary convergent and divergent construct validation of work-life supportive leadership as a linking-pin construct shared across the leadership and work-life fields. Future empirical studies should include both supportive leadership style(s) and employee perceptions of family supportive supervision and validate new integrative measures. Such work might build on previous empirical investigations differentiating LMX from family supportive supervision (Matthews & Toumbeva, 2015). Thus, construct validation studies are needed to empirically distinguish the similarities and differences across leadership styles, family supportive supervision, and the ways in which they overlap to embody work-life supportive leadership. Family supportive supervision may be a unique sub-factor or subsumed within the conceptualization and operationalization of existing leadership style constructs. This is an important line of inquiry since family supportive supervision has not been explicitly connected to or theorized in tandem with leadership styles. (Exceptions include the nine overlapping studies out of the 125 identified in our review). Alternatively, family supportive supervision may be largely a perceptual construct derived through subordinates' observation of the different leadership styles to which they are exposed. Thus, future research might also consider whether there is a significant connection between family supportive supervision and attributional theories of leadership (Martinko, Harvey, & Douglas, 2007).

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Given our findings focused on leadership styles, and supervision, we suggest validation work begin at this leadership level. Yet clearly there is a need for future research to take a more macro view and include multi-level empirical work on work-life supportive leadership expansive beyond styles and behaviors. The validation work we suggest below might also look at the role of leaders in creating organizational culture, constructing narratives on workforce flexibility strategies, and implementing work-life policies as part of strategic competitive initiatives. Such work could expand the notion of behaviors to actions and strategic approaches which was included in some of the leadership studies that linked the two we cited.

Finally, and from a practical standpoint, it is important to develop theoretically grounded leadership work-life support strategies and interventions that enable a deeper understanding of work-life supportive leadership spanning beyond quantitative survey measures. Research on interventions is growing and the work-life leadership area is ripe for future research. Leadership development programs and initiatives aimed at training family supportive supervisors should not be treated as mutually exclusive but encompass integrative content and format. For example, leadership training programs should include specific work-life supportive leadership components (e.g., instrumental and emotional support). Similarly, family supportive supervision training should include broader leadership components (e.g., power, communication, emotional intelligence, and influence tactics) that are linked to work-life support. Comparative effectiveness field experiments could be conducted to evaluate whether job and nonwork performance are more effective when these work-life and leadership training components are bundled together than when they are not for example.

**Theme #2 Takeaway: Continue Building on the Dynamic Virtuous Cycle**

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Supportive leadership styles generate a virtuous cycle by enhancing nonwork outcomes, which circle back to improve work outcomes. Our review provides ample evidence that work-life supportive leadership enhances performance at work and home in terms of ongoing positive enrichment dynamics that build on themselves over time. It also contributes to the leadership literature by providing an under-studied content area needing future research that expands the growing “follower” focus in leadership studies (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Because it is important for scholars to identify how leadership impacts followers’ outcomes, there is value for leadership scholars to expand their concentration beyond followers’ work-specific outcomes to include nonwork outcomes. Such a shift in emphasis is also relevant for practice, given that followers often attach great importance to these nonwork outcomes.

The virtuous cycle theme also demonstrates the ways in which the leadership-nonwork connection is a multi-disciplinary, cross-domain phenomenon. By examining the virtuous cycle through a leadership-oriented lens, we add theoretical novelty to the “domain- matching” and the “cross-domain,” debates in the work-life literature. The domain matching hypothesis suggests that the domain in which the construct originates will have greater impact on outcomes in that domain. For example, under this view, work-to-nonwork conflict would be theorized to impact work-related outcomes more strongly (e.g., job satisfaction) than nonwork outcomes (e.g., life satisfaction). In contrast, the cross-domain hypothesis suggests that constructs measured in one domain direction to another such as work to nonwork conflict will have a greater impact on the other domain. Under this view, for example, work-to-nonwork conflict is typically theorized to impact nonwork-related outcomes more strongly (e.g., life satisfaction). Similarly, nonwork to work conflict is generally theorized to have a greater impact on work (e.g., job satisfaction) than

nonwork outcomes (Amstad, Meier, Fasel, Elfering, & Semmer, 2011; Nohe, Meier, Sonntag, & Michel, 2015).

Yet work-life supportive leadership presents a unique situation. On the one hand, work-life supportive leadership – as a leadership characteristic – may be considered more of a work-related construct (since it originates with the leader in the work domain). On the other hand, work-life supportive leadership is a more ubiquitous concept that has just as much of a focus – if not more – on the nonwork domain. Given the evidence from our review, work-life supportive leadership appears to have an equally strong impact on subordinates' work and nonwork outcomes.

**Future integrative research implications.** More research is required to fully understand the extent to which the virtuous cycle is dynamic and self-reinforcing over time. Our conceptualization of the virtuous cycle – although grounded in the reviewed studies – is in part based on piecemeal evidence, with studies typically considering the effect of leadership only in one direction (i.e., work-to-nonwork, focusing on the impact of leadership on subordinates' nonwork outcomes) or the other (i.e., nonwork-to-work, focusing on how leadership moderates the impact of subordinates' nonwork experiences on their work-related outcomes). Within the work-life literature, spillover recognizes that work and nonwork roles are linked and dynamic (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Staines, 1980). Grounding investigations in role spillover theory and further substantiating the virtuous cycle using longitudinal research designs with data collected over multiple waves is another prime opportunity to further integrate the leadership and work-life fields. In terms of a symbiotic relationship, work-life scholars can leverage their expertise with spillover theory and expand their integration of leadership concepts, while leadership scholars can familiarize themselves with spillover theory – a theory whose influence

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remains largely minimal in the leadership literature to date – to better explore the downstream effects of leadership and its recursive cross-domain dynamics.

Future research can further investigate how to unlock the most positive outcomes associated with the virtuous cycle. We've note that previous research shows that work-life supportive leadership was associated with diminished positive effects among subordinates who were unmarried or did not have dependents or family-related responsibilities (Tabor et al., 2020). Combined with the frequent perceptual gap between supervisor and subordinates (Kossek et al., 2018a) and the need to match the level of provided work-life supportive leadership with the amount desired by the subordinate (Yragui et al., 2012; see also Edwards & Rothbard, 2000), future research should theorize and investigate the mechanisms by which negative outcomes occur from mismatches in employee needs and leadership behaviors. Studies should also investigate additional moderators of relationships– including family stage, demography, caregiving (e.g., elder, child, sandwich), marital status household economic configuration (e.g., dual career, primary breadwinner), sexual orientation, and gender – to determine what level of work-life supportive leadership is the optimal fit for subordinates under which conditions. An important practical implication is that a “one size fits all” approach where a consistent level and nature of work-life supportive leadership across all subordinates is unlikely to suffice given the growing variation in unique nonwork-related needs and demands (Grover, 1991; Perrigino & Raveendhran, 2020) across an increasingly diverse workforce.

Despite this encouraging evidence, a noticeable gap among our reviewed studies concerns the role of work-life supportive leadership at the upper echelons of organizations. Even though the leadership literature sets multiple precedents for our conceptualization of work-life supportive leadership as applicable across all organizational levels, the work-life literature

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continues to lean heavily on the notion of supervisors as “gatekeepers” of work-life flexibility policy implementation (e.g., Kelly & Kalev, 2006; Kossek et al., 2011). While this is certainly important and relevant, there is a critical need for future research not only focus on how line managers implement or culturally support policies, but also on strategic decision making (given the clear connection between the two; Sikora, Ferris, & Van Iddekinge, 2015). Yet currently, there is a macro-micro divide in the current literature’s examination of work-life support. For example, the ways in which work-life issues are addressed at higher levels of the organization are primarily understood as responses to institutional pressures (Goodstein, 1994; Ollier-Malaterre & Foucreault, 2017) or CEO decision making (Peters & Heusinkveld, 2010; Reina, Peterson, & Zhang, 2017).

However, Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, (1985) argue in their research on the romance of leadership that sometimes studies overemphasize and assume that CEOs possess an outsized ability to influence and control occurrences within their organizations. Just as transformational leadership is a style that can be adapted by both supervisors and CEOs (e.g., Colbert, Kristof-Brown, Bradley, & Barrick, 2008; Waldman, Siegel, & Javidan, 2006; Zhu, Chew, & Spangler, 2005), so too can work-life supportive leadership on behalf of the CEO can play an outsized role not only in championing or introducing new work-life initiatives. CEOs are also pivotal to establishing a “strong” work-life supportive culture both internally (widely shared and understood among employees and in sync with the broader HRM system; Bowen & Ostroff, 2004) and externally (creating a positive organizational image and reputation; Perrigino, Dunford, Troup, Boss, & Boss, 2019; Thompson, Payne, & Taylor, 2015).

We encourage future research to determine whether the same virtuous cycle applies when viewed at higher organizational levels. On the one hand, various trickle-down models of

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leadership – which provide evidence that the behaviors of upper management affect the outcomes and behaviors of lower management (Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009; Stollberger, Las Heras, Rofcanin, & Bosch, 2019) – indicate that the pattern might remain consistent. On the other hand, a “linked lives” perspective focusing on the overlap between career and family progression might suggest that those in upper management positions will be older and have older children. Thus, their family- and caregiving-related demands – as well as their perceptions on the meaning of work-life supportive leadership, what such a style entails, and a willingness to engage in such a style based on one’s own experiences (connecting across to Theme #4) – might be qualitatively different compared to younger individuals in their first management position with young children at home or no caregiving responsibilities at all (Kossek et al., 2021c; Yu et al., 2022).

### **Theme 3 Takeaway: On the Job Payoffs Are Plentiful**

For both the work-family and the leadership literatures, our review clearly addresses the historical debate over whether family supportive supervision supports the “dual agenda” or the “dueling outcomes” view, suggesting that supportive supervision benefits not only nonwork outcomes – as expected – but also work-related outcomes and performance. Despite the prominence of naysayers such as our quotes in this paper’s introduction from revered managers questioning the importance of work-life balance, work-life supportive leadership has clear, on-the-job benefits that even the staunchest opponents must recognize – and put into practice. This is necessary in order to maximize their employees’ performance and their own effectiveness as leaders (Yu et al., 2022).

**Future integrative research implications.** Future research should continue to examine the beneficial effects of work-life supportive leadership on subordinates’ work outcomes. Even



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studies examining the most traditional, work-centric leadership approaches now have solid theoretical reasoning for opening the scope of their investigations to include work-life supportive leadership characteristics. Future studies are needed to advance current understanding of how and under what conditions, work-life supportive leadership can shape subordinates' work outcomes, such as facilitating positive self-development and thriving for the "whole employee" over their career and throughout the life course stages of adult development (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005). Moreover, research addressing workplace diversity and stereotype mitigation might conduct field experiments to shift leaders' perceptions work-life leadership support. When viewing work and life as complementary (rather than at odds), managers can directly benefit their subordinates by improving motivation and other job-related attitudes.

Investigating the relationship between work-life supportive leadership and work outcomes may help researchers develop additional assumptions of its payoffs beyond the moral philosophies that often underlie some leadership styles (e.g., Lemoine et al., 2019; Kleshinski et al., 2021). Nuanced studies are needed to investigate effective enactment of the dualism of competing leadership values. This new approach may provide additional economic rationale for employer investment in developing work-life supportive leadership development programs. Future studies can also draw on the positive organizational psychology literature which is increasingly showing how positive leadership demonstrating care and empathy for the whole person from these types of behaviors enhances business outcomes (Carmeli & Russo, 2016).

Studies are also needed to examine leader-employee social exchange dynamics. While the basic theoretical rationale is clear, future research can enhance understanding of how work-life supportive leadership operates as a social exchange mechanism between workers and leaders

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in order to determine what exactly is socially exchanged and how? Longitudinal perspectives should be applied to consider how work-life supportive leadership extends over the course of an employee career since certain aspects of work-life supportive leadership may be more or less important depending on the stage, and also may have lasting downstream career and personal and family well-being effects. For example, future research can disentangle the effects of work-life supportive leadership on pre-hiring and attraction, early career, mid-career, and retirement, investigating whether and when higher work-life supportive leadership aids retention, reduces turnover, reduces withdrawal behaviors, and enhances job performance. Given that the reviewed studies primarily addressed individual subordinates' outcomes, future research should also consider how work-life supportive leadership impacts team and business unit processes.

### **Theme #4 Takeaway: Don't Forget the Leaders Themselves**

Although critical in impact but under-considered, leaders' own family experiences influence and are influenced by their leadership style—including whether the extent to which they provide work-life supportive leadership to subordinates or seek out and receive work and nonwork support from their own bosses. For the leadership literature, this insight harkens back to early trait-based approaches to leadership (Lord et al., 2017). Yet our review adds the contextual element of *who* engages in leadership. Our analysis also highlights the continued relevance of spillover theory in the work-life literature to leadership issues. It adds to understanding of how a leader's family context influences a leadership style and behaviors (Oc, 2018).

**Future integrative research implications.** Future research should take into consideration how leaders' own family and work-life experiences impact their leadership styles. Several leadership theories suggest the importance of considering a person in their uniqueness and completeness (e.g., authentic leadership), in order to better understand their attitudes,

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behaviors, and work decisions as a leader (Braun & Nieberle, 2017). Very often, this belief translates into the consideration of a leader's personal thoughts, emotions, and experiences with the recommendation to act in accordance with the true self. Yet this belief has been recently criticized and proven to be a barrier to leaders' growth (Gardner et al., 2011; Ibarra, 2015; Petriglieri, 2015). The integration of this theme into leadership research can provide a richer understanding of which prior nonwork experiences have a profound impact on their leaders' true selves and, by extension, their leadership styles.

Despite the findings above, we still know relatively little regarding how prior and current family experiences – as well as the meanings and salience associated with work and life role identities – can influence leadership. Indeed, there is far more to investigate than the general conclusion that positive family experiences yield more transformational leadership behaviors and negative family experiences yield more abusive or aversive leadership behaviors. For example, future studies can explore the mechanisms that account for some surprising results highlighting how a leader might be likely to develop more selfish and negative attitudes and behaviors towards employees' personal needs when becoming a parent (Dahl et al., 2012). It may be that leaders' personal resources are depleted and some behaviors that support the family may then be expended and less available to support subordinates, indicative of a leadership supplies-resources scarcity theoretical perspective (Marks, 1977).

Future studies on leaders' own work-life support experiences (i.e., the degree to which leaders receive work-life support from their superiors) are also relevant to consider. For example, what are the consequences of a mismatch when a supervisor provides work-life supportive leadership to their subordinates but is not receiving support from their own boss? Is providing work-life supportive leadership a burden or, conversely, does it increase their own empathy and

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make them better leaders (or parents) by providing it? Crossover effects should be more fully examined, to determine whether a contagion effect – either from the supervisor to subordinate or vice versa – is powerful enough to carry across domains. Given, that our review identified relatively few studies on the nonwork issues of leaders (specifically, C-level executives and other top members in the organization) and how these individuals’ leadership styles or behaviors trickle-down to line managers, this is an area ripe for future research.

In the long term, conducting more research on this theme might help accumulate important evidence for creating a business case highlighting the benefits of developing a new, modernized leadership identity where a successful leader is viewed as someone who is more balanced in their pursuit of work and life and is more aligned with their changing workforce’s needs. Indeed, this is a post-pandemic topic that is increasingly capturing practitioners’ attention. Yet the idea that leaders’ investment in their personal life can be rewarding not only for the self but also for the organization is mostly confined to Harvard Business Review articles or books (e.g., “Total leadership” by Friedman, 2008; Russo & Morandin, 2019). While these practical writings are valuable, such thinking has yet to fully penetrate mainstream leadership research. Future empirical studies are needed to verify what organizational factors (e.g., organizational culture, the leader’s position in the organizational network, job status) can help leaders unlock this new identity. This can also contribute to reducing gendered considerations of what female or male leaders are expected to do in order to be aligned with gender-driven social identity roles and instead promote more gender-neutral, egalitarian images of the identities of a “successful” leader.

**Theme #5 Takeaway: Work-Life Leadership has Relevance Globally**

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The global convergence of work-life supportive leadership findings indicates that this characteristic of leadership is something that subordinates value and increasingly desire worldwide. Yet neither leadership nor work-life scholars have fully explored this theme across and within nations. Our review recognizes that leadership is a crucial linking mechanism between country-level contexts and individual work-life outcomes, which can build on the growing area of research on comparative and cross-cultural work-life outcomes (Ollier-Malaterre & Foucreault, 2017). Our findings highlight the importance of including culture as a contextual element of *where* leadership occurs in furthering understanding of how macro-level nonwork-related forces (e.g., norms and regulations) influence leader styles and behaviors (Oc, 2018). Accordingly, we re-emphasize the importance of studying leadership in a cross-national context, with work-life supportive leadership bridging eastern (e.g., benevolent leadership; Li et al., 2018) and western leadership perspectives to overcome the shortcomings of ethnocentric approaches. Indeed, work-life supportive leadership likely will take on both universal and culture-specific forms.

**Future integrative research implications.** Given that most empirical research on work-life supportive leadership comes from non-U.S. samples (Kossek et al., 2018a), scholars have an opportunity to explore how and when globalization-related forces converge with current work practices and leadership philosophy in U.S. and non-U.S.-based firms. Continued globalization and mergers of U.S. with non-U.S. employers may be another catalyst that creates cross-border convergence. One of the strongest efforts to study work-life dynamics globally relies on the International Study of Work and Family (ISWAF), involving more than 10,000 people from 30 different countries. Emerging results reveal that humane orientation (consistent with the value of expected social support within a culture) is a critical factor that shapes work-life supportive

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leadership expectations (Beham et al., 2022). While more post-pandemic research is needed to verify this theme, the research reviewed above to date suggests the importance of work-life supportive leadership as a core leadership characteristic regardless of where it takes place.

There is an opportunity for scholars to use this review as a springboard with the possibility that the pandemic not only will further accelerate organizational and societal attention to the importance of work-life supportive leadership but also can be a catalyst for developing a worldwide, generally accepted understanding of work-life support as a core leadership competency. It is noteworthy that most of the studies focusing on work-life supportive leadership interventions occurred within the United States even though the totality of empirical research across the reviewed studies occurred in non-U.S. samples. To promote cross-cultural convergence, studies can seek to replicate these established U.S.-based intervention study designs in other countries to see if cultural transference occurs, or additionally design country-specific leadership interventions going forward. This can include a focus on which aspects of work-life supportive leadership generalize across cultures and which aspects must be “recontextualized” (Brannen, 2004). Culturally grounded, leader self-awareness training could build on our findings that leaders must possess self-awareness of how their own work-life issues impact followers, including recent (e.g., daily experiences) and distant history (e.g., childhood experiences). Such training evaluation studies might make leaders aware of how their own assumptions and work-life experiences are shaped by the national culture and context in which they are embedded and evaluate the degree to which leader work-life values may or may not travel well across borders (both culturally and legally).

There is also a need to better integrate institutional context, such as considering which regulatory supports for work-life balance are present and identifying other boundary conditions

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that influence the extent to which work-life supportive leadership is effective and expected. Currently, there is still cultural variation in leadership beliefs on whether engaging in work-life supportive leadership is counterproductive for a leader (e.g., being perceived to be too nice could harm one's reputation). This cultural value may be especially important to assess especially when targeting those work-life supportive behaviors in a context that does not support or even stigmatizes them. Future research also can consider the influence and existence of institutional policies (e.g., laws mandating paid family leave, sick leave right to request a flexible schedules) as moderators or predictors of work-life supportive leadership. Studies can address this from a practice perspective, considering how to reduce barriers and – connecting back to the first three themes – can shift the narrative to encourage leaders to view this as a mainstream part of their managerial role and not merely a self-management issue for employees.

### **Conclusion**

Greater integration of the leadership and work-life fields is vital today since: (1) supervisors serve as gatekeepers to work-life policies, affect stigma for their use, and shape employees' perceptions of organizational climates; (2) employee perceptions of supervisors' behaviors have on and off the job impacts; (3) the workforce is increasingly diverse in terms of gender and family structures, requiring more flexible and adaptive leadership approaches to address employee's unique nonwork needs, and (4) the boundaries between work and nonwork are increasingly blurred, with the possibility that the pandemic will cause such blurring to become the new normal. All of these factors have combined to account for the renewed business attention to the role of the leader in providing work-life support (c.f. Kossek, Wilson, & Rosokha, 2020). With our review, we not only hope to help integrate the leadership and work-life literatures to advance future research innovation that adds to understanding of how leaders

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can take a prominent role to ensure healthy work-life cultures for effective organizations and societies around the globe.



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## WORK-LIFE SUPPORTIVE LEADERSHIP

**Table 1: Leadership Styles that Include Family Supportive Supervision**

Leadership Style / Approach	Definition that Includes Work-Life Supportive Leadership Component	Connection to Family Supportive Supervision (as Experienced by Subordinate)
<b>Authentic Leadership</b>	“A pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development” (Walumbwa et al. 2008, p. 94)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relational support</li> <li>• Encouraging self-development</li> </ul>
<b>Benevolent Leadership</b>	“Benevolent supervisors demonstrate positive behaviours, such as interactions between supervisors and subordinates, that provide holistic care to and expresses concern for employees, their children and their families” (Wu et al., 2020, p. 497)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caring for employees’ personal life</li> </ul>
<b>Charismatic Leadership</b>	“The charismatic leader inspires their followers to pursue the collective goal by serving as a role model which followers identify with and want to emulate. Furthermore, the charismatic leader instils a sense of strong confidence in their followers’ capability to accomplish the vision” (Southcombe et al. 2015, p. 975).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional support</li> <li>• Role modeling behaviors to demonstrate work-life balance</li> </ul>
<b>Ethical Leadership</b>	“Ethical leadership entails ethical decisions in the workplace and places primary emphasis on the best interests of the employees....Therefore, ethical leadership may promote greater understanding of and sensitivity toward employees’ family and life responsibilities, rather than focusing solely on their productivity and performance” (Zhang & Tu, 2018, p. 1085).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding employees’ family responsibilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Empowering Leadership</b>	“The process of implementing conditions that enable sharing power with an employee by delineating the significance of the employee’s job, providing greater decision-making autonomy, expressing confidence in the employee’s capabilities, and removing hindrances to performance” (Zhang & Bartol, 2010, p. 109)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing greater autonomy in performing one’s role requirements</li> </ul>

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<b>Leader-Member Exchange</b>	“LMX theory suggests that leaders and their followers engage in role-making processes, whereby they negotiate individually appropriate work assignments and performance expectations....Workers in high LMX relationships have greater leeway for ongoing role-making based on the trust and support their supervisors bestow on them in return for their loyalty and contributions” (Hornung, et al., 2014, p. 612-613).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relational Support</li> <li>• Providing greater resources (such as idiosyncratic deals for schedule flexibility)</li> </ul>
<b>Leader Member Personal Life Inclusion</b> (A dimension of leader-member guanxi)	“Leader–member personal life inclusion, which is one of the three dimensions of leader–member guanxi (LMG), is defined as the extent to which leaders and members include each other in their family or personal lives.... LMG refers to the extent to which a leader–member relationship has become a pseudo-family relationship” (Chen, et al. 2015, p. 673-674).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caring for subordinates as if they were caring for a family member</li> </ul>
<b>Servant Leadership</b>	<p>“A servant leader provides purpose, makes work meaningful and builds on the strengths of followers” (Rodríguez-Carvajal, et al., 2019, p. 500).</p> <p>“This type of leadership focuses on fulfilling followers’ needs to grow, learn, prosper, and develop their fullest potential in terms of task effectiveness, community stewardship, and leadership capabilities” (Tang, et al., 2016, p. 285).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging the use of personal strengths and individual recognition to pursue various work/nonwork goals and passions</li> </ul>
<b>Spiritual Leadership</b>	“As comprising the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one’s self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership” (Fry, 2003, p. 694-695).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering calling and a sense of membership in one’s work and family roles.</li> </ul>
<b>Transformational Leadership</b>	Transformational leadership encourages “behaviors such as identifying with one’s followers, providing a strong, appealing vision, encouraging followers to think for themselves, and taking followers’ needs into consideration ...may translate into gains not only in the workplace, but also for employees’ family lives” (Hammond, et al., 2015, p. 463)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empowering people</li> <li>• Encouraging followers to think about themselves</li> <li>• Increasing personal resources</li> </ul>

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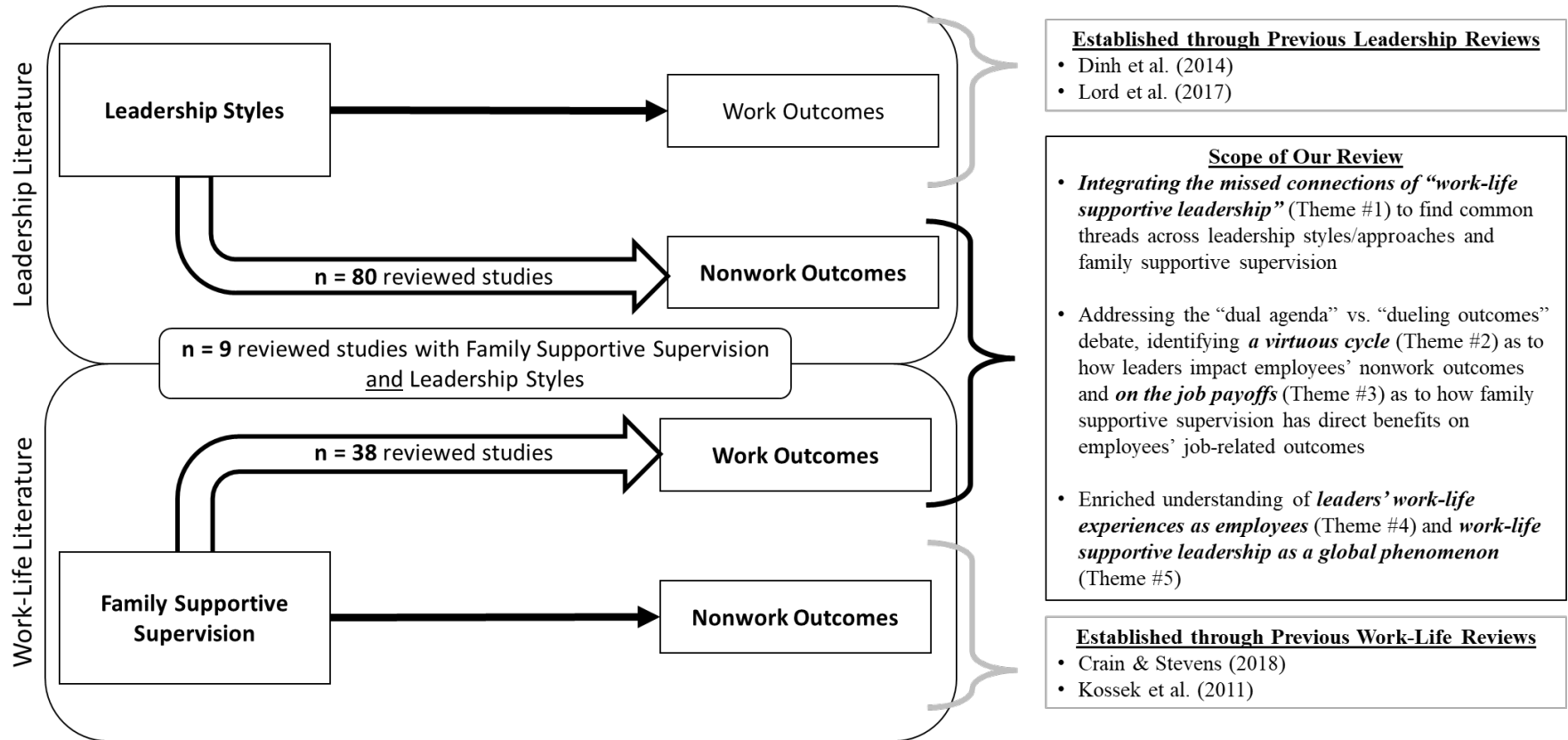
**Table 2: Leadership Styles that Exclude Family Supportive Supervision**

<b>Leadership Style / Approach</b>	<b>Definition that Includes a Lack of or Anti-Work-Life Supportive Leadership Component</b>	<b>Lack of Translation into Family Supportive Supervision (as Experienced by Subordinate)</b>
<b>Abusive Leadership</b>	“Abusive supervision represents the extent to which a supervisor engages in a sustained display of hostile and self-serving verbal and nonverbal behavior toward the subordinate” (Butts et al., 2015 p. 770).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hostile and disrespectful communication</li> <li>• Higher stress at work</li> <li>• Loss of resources, such as self-esteem</li> <li>• Showing no concern for others’ needs</li> </ul>
<b>Despotic Leadership</b>	“Despotic leadership as a leader’s tendency to engage in authoritarian and dominant behavior in pursuit of self-interest, self-aggrandizement, and exploitation of their subordinates...Despotic leaders are unethical and authoritarian, use an unethical code of conduct, and have little regard for others’ interests” (Nauman et al., 2018, p. 2-3).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disengagement and lack of support to the employees.</li> </ul>
<b>Passive Leadership</b>	“Passive leadership refers to a leadership style “where leaders avoid or delay taking necessary actions...and represents a behavioral pattern of a leader marked by disengagement and inaction” (Zhou et al., 2020, p. 1).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of empathy</li> <li>• Excessive workload</li> </ul>
<b>Toxic Leadership</b>	“Toxic leaders are distinct from other kinds of leaders through their neglect for the well-being of their subordinates. Toxic leaders also berate, belittle, and bully their subordinates, behaviors often accompanied by threats and authoritarianism. Other, more subtle ways in which toxic leaders operate is by holding subordinates responsible for things beyond their control, expecting unreasonable amounts of work from them, and requiring them to sacrifice their needs to support their leader’s goals and ambitions” (Matos et al., 2018, p. 502-503).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focused only on individuals’ contribution to the work environment</li> <li>• Neglects consideration of individuals’ family and personal needs and demands</li> </ul>
<b>Transactional Leadership</b>	“Transactional leadership focuses on economic-based, contractual exchanges, whereby the follower does his/her job and the leader rewards those efforts in accordance with expectations” (Morgan et al., 2018, p. 17).	



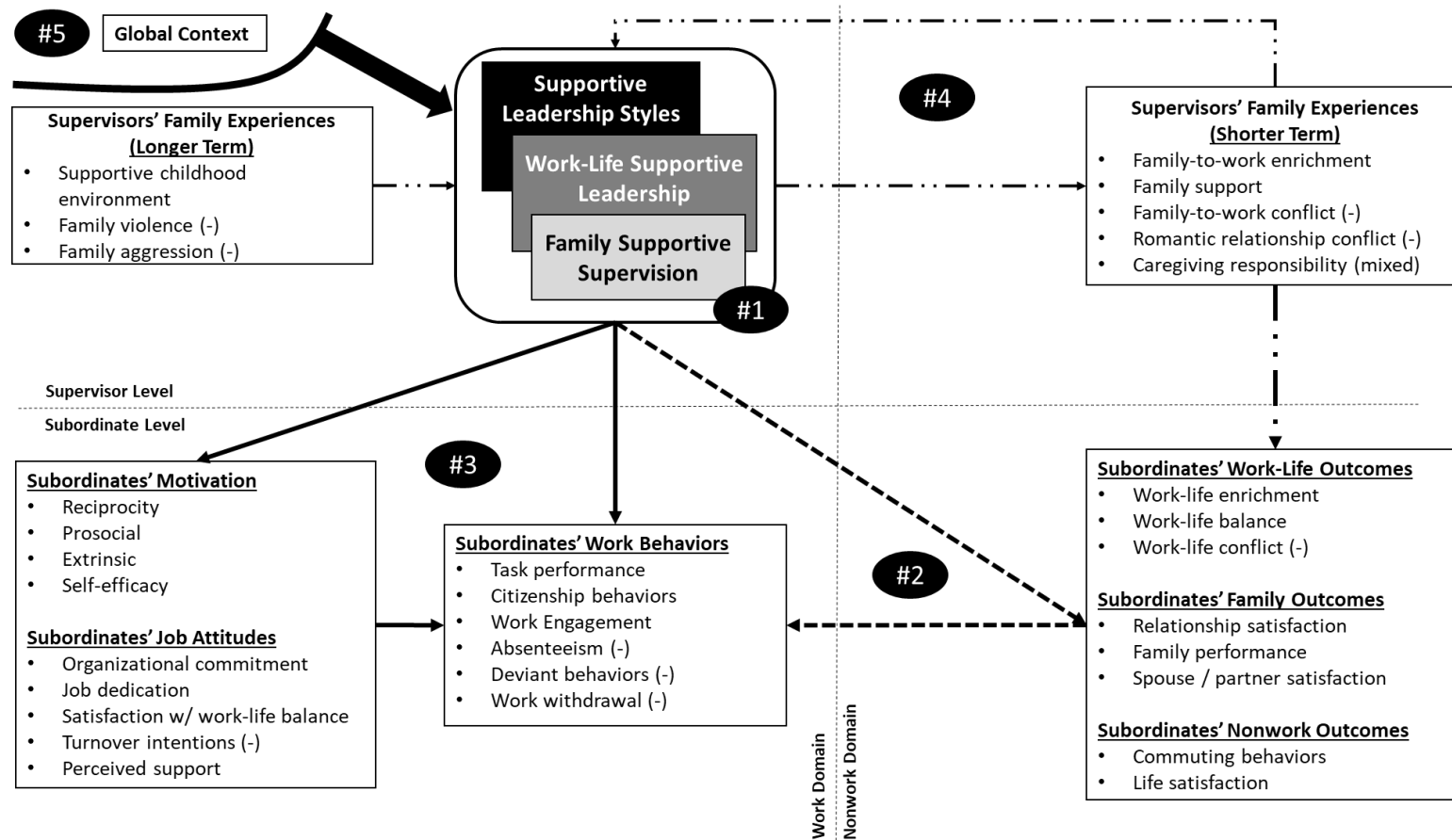
# WORK-LIFE SUPPORTIVE LEADERSHIP

Figure 1: Scope of Review (n = 127 studies)



## WORK-LIFE SUPPORTIVE LEADERSHIP

**Figure 2: Work-Life Supportive Leadership Review-Driven Framework**



**Notes:** The five numbered circles correspond to the five themes identified in our review. Theme #1 (Integrating the Missed Connections of “Work-Life Supportive Leadership”) is depicted in the triple-box reflecting supportive leadership styles, work-life supportive leadership as a shared leadership characteristic, and family supportive supervision. Theme #2 (A Virtuous Cycle) is depicted through the dashed lines. Theme #3 (On the Job Payoffs) is depicted through the solid lines. Theme #4 (Leaders’ Work-Life Experiences as Employees) is depicted through the double dot dash lines. Finally, Theme #5 (Work-Life Supportive Leadership as a Global Phenomenon) is denoted in the upper left-hand corner to indicate a general convergence in findings and understanding of work-life supportive leadership across various institutional and cultural contexts. Negative relationships are depicted with a minus sign in parentheses “(-)”.

APPENDIX

Table A1: Search Terminology for Review

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<i>Search #1:</i>	
<b><u>Leadership Terms</u></b>	<b><u>WITH Work-Family Terms</u></b>
“servant leader/ship” OR	“work-life” OR
“transformational leader/ship” OR	“work-family” OR
“benevolent leader/ship” OR	“family” OR
“authentic leader/ship” OR	“nonwork” OR
“ethical leader/ship” OR	“work-nonwork” OR
“spiritual leader/ship” OR	“well-being” OR
“self-sacrificing leader/ship” OR	“health” OR
“shared leader/ship” OR	“spillover” OR
“participative leader/ship” OR	“balance” OR
“leader/ship styles” OR	“family supportive”
“interactive leader/ship”	
“relational leadership” OR	
“LMX” OR	
“leader-member exchange” OR	
“abusive supervision” OR	
“toxic leader/ship” OR	
“aversive leader/ship”	
OR “destructive leader/ship”	
<i>Search #2:</i>	
<b><u>FSS Terms</u></b>	<b><u>WITH Performance Terms</u></b>
“family-supportive supervisor behavior” OR	“productivity” OR
“FSSB” OR	“performance” OR
“family-supportive supervisor” OR	“task” OR
“FSS” OR	“behavior”
“supportive supervisor” OR	“creativity”
“supervisor support” OR	“organizational citizenship behavior” OR
“perceived supervisor support” OR	“OCB”
“PSS” OR	“counter productive work behavior” OR
“supervisor nonwork support” OR	“CWB” OR
“work–family supervisor support” OR	“efficiency”
“supervisor family support”	

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Notes: We searched both leadership terms where denoted by the “/”. For example, “servant leader” and “servant leadership” were entered as two separate terms.

## WORK-LIFE SUPPORTIVE LEADERSHIP

**Table A2: Summary of Studies Split by Leadership Style and Country**

<u>Sample</u>	<u>A</u> <u>U</u>	<u>A</u> <u>V</u>	<u>BE</u> <u>N</u>	<u>ET</u> <u>H</u>	<u>G</u> <u>E</u> <u>N</u>	<u>IN</u> <u>T</u>	<u>L</u> <u>M</u> <u>X</u>	<u>S</u> <u>P</u>	<u>SV</u>	<u>T</u> <u>L</u>	<u>Leade</u> <u>rship</u>	<u>BO</u> <u>TH</u>	<u>FSS</u> <u>/B</u>
Australia							1			1	2		2
Belgium													1
Canada	1						2				3		
Chile												1	1
Chile, Colombia													1
Chile, Argentina, Philippines													1
China	2	2		1			5		5		15	1	3
China, Kenya, Taiwan										1	1		
Cyprus													1
Denmark					1					1	2		
El Salvador													1
Finland							1				1		
Germany	2						1			1	4		2
India													1
Japan													1
Kenya, Philippines, Brazil, Netherlands													1
Macau		1									1		
Mexico													1
Netherlands		1					3			1	5		1
Not Specified		4									4		
Pakistan		1									1		
Philippines		3									3		1
Russia							1				1		
Slovenia							1				1		
Spain									2	1	3		
Sri Lanka						1					1	1	
South Korea													2
Taipei							1				1		
Taiwan			1				2				3		
United Kingdom							1				1		
USA	1	7		1	4		7	1		6	27	6	17
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>38</b>

Note: AV = Aversive Leadership (including abusive supervision); AU = Authentic Leadership; ETH = Ethical Leadership; TL = Transformational Leadership (including Transactional and Charismatic Leadership); LMX = Leader-Member Exchange; SV = Servant Leadership; GEN = General; INT = Interactive Leadership; BEN = Benevolent Leadership; SP = Spiritual Leadership