

RESEARCH ARTICLE

IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP SUPPORT ON EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION: EXAMINING THE MEDIATING ROLE OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

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ABSTRACT

Effective leadership fosters job satisfaction and enhances work-life balance by creating a supportive and motivating work environment. The leaders, in particular, inspire and empower employees, leading to greater organizational commitment and personal well-being. This study examines the impact of leadership on employee job satisfaction, emphasizing the mediating role of work-life balance of the employees of hospitality sectors in Kathmandu valley. To accomplish the research objective, data were gathered through a structured questionnaire distributed using a convenience sampling method. The sample included 390 employees from various positions within the hospitality sector. The structural relationships in the proposed theoretical model were analyzed using Smart PLS 4.0. The findings reveal that effective leadership significantly enhances employee job satisfaction, and this relationship is further strengthened by the presence of a positive work-life balance. The results indicate that leaders who prioritize employee well-being and foster a supportive work environment contribute to higher levels of job satisfaction. Moreover, work-life balance emerged as a crucial mediator, underscoring its importance in the leadership-satisfaction dynamic. These insights highlight the need for organizations to cultivate strong leadership practices and promote work-life balance to achieve optimal employee satisfaction and overall organizational success.

KEYWORDS

Hospitality sector, job satisfaction, leadership, personal well-being, work-life balance

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a dynamic blend of vision, integrity, and the ability to inspire and motivate others (Northouse, 2018). At its core, effective leadership involves setting a clear and compelling vision for the future, one that aligns with the values and aspirations of the organization and its people (Yukl, 2013). Leaders must possess a deep understanding of their organization's goals and the context within which it operates, enabling them to make informed and strategic decisions. Integrity is fundamental to effective leadership; it fosters trust and respect, creating a culture where employees feel valued and empowered (Zenger and Folkman 2002). A leader's actions and decisions must consistently reflect their principles and the ethical standards of the organization (Yukl, 2013). Additionally, effective leaders excel in communication, ensuring that their vision is articulated clearly and persuasively. They listen actively and empathetically, creating an environment where diverse perspectives are welcomed and considered. This inclusivity not only enhances decision-making but also fosters a sense of belonging and engagement among team members (Kotter, 1996). Moreover, effective leaders are adept at recognizing and nurturing talent, providing opportunities for growth and development, and aligning individual aspirations with organizational goals. They are resilient and adaptable, able to navigate challenges and uncertainties with confidence and composure. By fostering a collaborative and innovative culture, effective leaders inspire their teams to achieve excellence and drive sustained success for the organization (Goleman, 2000). Ultimately, effective leadership is about empowering others, building strong relationships, and creating a shared sense of purpose and direction that propels the for the satisfaction of employees.

Leadership plays a critical role in determining employee satisfaction within an organization. Effective leadership fosters a positive work

environment, enhances motivation, and drives overall job satisfaction among employees. According to a study in 1994, transformational leadership, characterized by the ability to inspire and motivate employees, significantly correlates with higher levels of employee satisfaction (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Transformational leaders create a supportive and inclusive work culture, promoting open communication, recognition of achievements, and professional growth opportunities, which are essential for maintaining high employee morale. Moreover, Yukl in 2013, emphasized that leaders who engage in supportive behaviors, such as providing constructive feedback, showing empathy, and addressing employee concerns, contribute to a more satisfied and committed workforce (Yukl, 2013). Researchers had found that leadership involving in clear expectations and rewards for performance, also enhance job satisfaction by creating a structured and predictable work environment (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). As a result, organizations that prioritize building robust leadership capabilities are likely to experience higher employee satisfaction, lower turnover rates, and improved overall performance. The critical role of leadership in driving employee satisfaction highlights the importance of ongoing leadership development initiatives. These programs should focus on equipping leaders with the skills needed to address the changing demands of their workforce and to foster a motivated, engaged team.

Employee satisfaction significantly impacting various facets of an organization's environment and culture. Effective leadership plays a crucial role in creating a positive work environment where employees feel appreciated and motivated, ultimately boosting job satisfaction. A significant factor in this dynamic is the role of work-life balance as a mediator. Leaders who emphasize and support work-life balance initiatives can help reduce employee stress, prevent burnout, and contribute to greater overall job satisfaction. According to a study, work-

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life balance is a significant predictor of job satisfaction, and leaders who support flexible working arrangements contribute to employees' perception of balance between work and personal life (Haar et al., 2014). Furthermore, a supportive leadership style that acknowledges employees' personal and professional needs fosters a culture of trust and loyalty, thereby increasing job satisfaction (Hammer et al., 2011). McCarthy et al., highlights that employees who perceive high levels of support from their leaders in achieving work-life balance report greater job satisfaction and commitment to the organization (McCarthy et al., 2013). Therefore, leadership that emphasizes work-life balance not only enhances employee well-being but also promotes a more engaged and satisfied workforce, which is essential for organizational success.

In context of Nepalese hospitality sector, leadership challenges, such as a lack of professional development and inconsistent leadership styles, significantly impact employee satisfaction and work-life balance (Gurung, 2018; Rana, 2019). Employees often face job insecurity due to the industry's seasonal nature and experience dissatisfaction from low compensation and limited career progression opportunities (Shrestha, 2020). Additionally, long working hours, irregular schedules, and high stress levels contribute to poor work-life balance, exacerbated by inadequate support systems from management (Thapa, 2021). Addressing these issues through leadership development programs, competitive compensation packages, and flexible scheduling can enhance overall employee well-being and productivity. Addressing these facts, the primary aim of this study is to assess the influence of leadership on employee job satisfaction in the Nepalese hospitality sector, with a specific focus on the mediating role of work-life balance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing employee job satisfaction. Leadership, which inspires and motivates employees, fosters a supportive environment, and encourages personal and professional growth, is particularly associated with high levels of job satisfaction (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Transactional leadership, with its emphasis on clear structures, rewards, and penalties, can also contribute to job satisfaction by creating a sense of fairness and predictability (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). Supportive leadership, where leaders show genuine concern for employees' well-being, enhances job satisfaction by making employees feel valued and supported (House, 1971). Additionally, empowering leadership, which involves delegating authority and encouraging autonomy, boosts job satisfaction by increasing employees' sense of competence and value (Seibert et al., 2004). Overall, the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction underscores the important role of leadership that prioritize employee well-being and development.

2.1 Leadership support and work life balance

The connection between leadership and work-life balance is complex and multidimensional. The effective leadership playing a crucial role in promoting a healthy work-life balance among employees. Leaders who demonstrate empathy, flexibility, and support can significantly enhance their employees' ability to manage work and personal responsibilities (Malik and Dhar, 2017). Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiring and motivating employees, is positively associated with improved work-life balance, as such leaders are more likely to implement policies and practices that support flexible working hours and remote work options (Kumari Jha, 2017). Moreover, leaders who prioritize work-life balance tend to foster a more positive organizational culture, reduce employee burnout, and enhance overall job satisfaction and productivity (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). This supportive leadership style enhances employee well-being and promotes the organization's long-term success and sustainability (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Based on these facts, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H₁: Leadership support significantly influences work-life balance

2.2 Leadership support and employee job satisfaction

The impact of leadership support on employee job satisfaction has been extensively studied in organizational psychology. Transformational leadership is a leadership style defined by four key dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Leaders who embody idealized influence serve as role models, fostering trust and respect among their followers which consistently linked to higher levels of job satisfaction (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Judge and Piccolo, 2004). A meta-analysis in a study found that transformational leadership behaviors explained 34% of the variance in subordinates' job satisfaction (Kuhnert and Lewis, 1987). Moreover, authentic leadership, which emphasizes self-awareness, relational

transparency, and ethical decision-making, has been positively correlated with employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Giallonardo et al., 2010). Conversely, abusive supervision and laissez-faire leadership styles have been shown to negatively impact job satisfaction and increase turnover intentions (Tepper, 2000; Skogstad et al., 2007). Based on these facts, the following hypothesis has been proposed.

H₂: Leadership support significantly influences employee job satisfaction

2.3 Work life balance and employee job satisfaction

The link between work-life balance and employee job satisfaction is widely recognized as essential for achieving organizational success. Maintaining a healthy balance between professional responsibilities and personal life not only enhances employee well-being but also boosts morale, productivity, and overall job satisfaction. Organizations that prioritize work-life balance are more likely to retain talent, reduce burnout, and create a positive work environment, all of which contribute to long-term success. A positive work-life balance is associated with higher job satisfaction, as it allows employees to manage their work responsibilities while also fulfilling personal and family needs. When employees perceive a good balance between work and life, they experience less stress, higher levels of motivation, and improved mental health, leading to increased job satisfaction and productivity (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006; Haar et al., 2014). Conversely, poor work-life balance can result in burnout, absenteeism, and a decline in job satisfaction, ultimately impacting organizational performance negatively (Kossek and Ozeki, 1998). Therefore, organizations that prioritize and support work-life balance initiatives are more likely to foster a satisfied and committed workforce, enhancing overall performance and employee retention (Allen et al., 2000). Based on these, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H₃: Work-life balance significantly influences employee job satisfaction

2.4 Mediation by work life balance in the relationship between leadership support and employee satisfaction

Work-life balance plays a critical role in mediating the relationship between leadership and employee job satisfaction. Effective leadership often promotes policies and practices that support work-life balance, which in turn enhances employee satisfaction (Haar et al., 2014). The leaders who prioritize flexibility and understanding of employees' personal needs foster a supportive environment that contributes to higher job satisfaction (Haar et al., 2014). Research indicates that when employees perceive their leaders as supportive of work-life balance, they are more likely to experience reduced stress and increased job satisfaction (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). found that employees with better work-life balance report higher levels of job satisfaction, which underscores the importance of leadership in cultivating a balanced work environment. Moreover, several studies have demonstrated that work-life balance policies implemented by leadership can lead to improved employee morale and productivity (Kossek and Ozeki, 1998; Beauregard and Henry, 2009). Thus, work-life balance serves as a crucial intermediary that strengthens the positive impact of leadership on employee job satisfaction. Saded on these, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H₄: Work-life balance mediates the relationship between leadership and employee satisfaction

Based on the reviewed literature, the proposed theoretical mediation model, depicted in Figure 1, presents work-life balance as the mediating variable, leadership support as the independent variable, and employee satisfaction as the dependent variable.

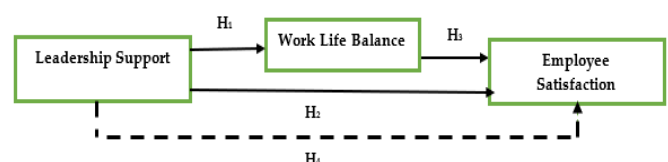


Figure 1: Hypothetical Mediation Model of the study

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study has employed the casual comparative research design to achieve the stated objectives. The population of study comprises all the employees working in different levels of hospitality sectors i.e. hotels and restaurants in Kathmandu valley. The sample size for this study was 233 respondents. Convenience sampling technique was used in this study. A

total of 253 questionnaires were distributed, with 235 returned, resulting in a highly satisfactory response rate of 93 percent (Babbie, 2016). Ultimately, 233 responses were used for data analysis, as 2 were excluded due to multiple non-responses. The structural relationships of the proposed theoretical model were analyzed by using Smart PLS 4.0 (Partial least square equation modeling, PLS-SEM) with bootstrapping techniques. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were used to test the reliability of data. Furthermore, convergent and discriminant validity were also examined.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Demographic profile of the respondents

The study investigates whether work life balance mediates the

relationship between leadership and employee satisfaction in the hospitality sector of the Kathmandu Valley or not. The sample consisted of 233 employees with different job positions and levels. According to Table 1, 61.37% of the respondents were male, while 38.63% were female. Among them, 67.38% were married, and 38.63% were unmarried. Age-wise, 9.44% were below 20 years, 33.48% were aged 21-30, 44.21% were aged 31- 40, and 12.88% were over 40. Regarding education, 22.75% had completed school level, 60.09% had a bachelor's degree, and 17.17% had education beyond a bachelor's degree. In terms of job position, 14.59% were at the managerial level, 26.61% were assistants, 32.19% were officers, and 26.61% were juniors. Experience-wise, 60.09% had up to 5 years of experience, 30.04% had 5-10 years, and 9.87% had over 10 years. Salary-wise, 27.04% earned less than 25,000 per month, 58.80% earned between 25,000-40,000 per month, and 14.16% earned more than 40,000 per month.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents N=233

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	143	61.37
Female	90	38.63
Marital Status		
Married	157	67.38
Unmarried	76	32.62
Age		
Below 20	22	9.44
21-30	78	33.48
31-40	103	44.21
Above 40	30	12.88
Academic Qualification		
School Level	53	22.75
Bachelor	140	60.09
Above Bachelor	40	17.17
Job Position		
Manager Level	34	14.59
Assistant Level	62	26.61
Officer Level	75	32.19
Junior Level	62	26.61
Experience		
Up to 5 Years	140	60.09
5-10 Years	70	30.04
Above 10 Years	23	9.87
Income per Month	233	
Below 25,000	63	27.04
25001-40,000	137	58.80
Above 40,000	33	14.16

Source: Field survey, 2024

4.2 Measurement model

Table 2 demonstrates strong reliability and validity across all constructs. For the Leadership Support (LS) construct, Cronbach's alpha (CA) was 0.913, composite reliability (CR) was 0.914, and the average variance extracted (AVE) was 0.591, all of which indicate excellent internal consistency and convergent validity. According to Hair et al. (2011), CA and CR values should exceed 0.70, and AVE should be greater than 0.50. The item loadings for LS ranged from 0.699 to 0.831, closely aligning with the 0.70 threshold recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), thereby affirming strong indicator reliability. Additionally, variance inflation factor (VIF) values for LS were all below 5, suggesting no issues

of multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2011).

The Work-Life Balance (WLB) construct also exhibited high reliability, with a CA of 0.866, CR of 0.871, and AVE of 0.651. Item loadings for WLB ranged between 0.785 and 0.829, exceeding the 0.70 threshold, and VIF values were below 5, further confirming the absence of multicollinearity issues. Similarly, the Employee Satisfaction (ES) construct showed excellent reliability, with CA, CR, and AVE values of 0.906, 0.906, and 0.680, respectively, indicating strong reliability and convergent validity. The item loadings for ES ranged from 0.798 to 0.862, all above the 0.70 threshold, and VIF values below 5, confirming no multicollinearity concerns.

Table 2: Measurement Model

Constructs	Item Code	Loading	CA	CR	AVE	VIF
Leadership Support (LS)	LS1	0.809	0.913	0.914	0.591	2.558
	LS2	0.699				1.765
	LS3	0.831				2.841
	LS4	0.808				2.545
	LS5	0.818				2.662
	LS6	0.762				2.175
	LS7	0.720				1.925
	LS8	0.809				2.376

Table 2 (Cont.): Measurement Model

Work Life Balance (WLB)	WLB1	0.829	0.866	0.871	0.651	2.088
	WLB2	0.795				1.973
	WLB3	0.785				1.845
	WLB4	0.810				1.992
	WLB5	0.815				1.920
Employee Satisfaction (ES)	ES1	0.798	0.906	0.906	0.680	2.079
	ES2	0.817				2.224
	ES3	0.862				2.791
	ES4	0.814				2.188
	ES5	0.832				2.311
	ES6	0.821				2.287

Note: Average variance extracted (AVE); Cronbach alpha (CA); Composite reliability (CR), Variance inflation factor (VIF)

4.3 Discriminant validity

The square roots of the AVE values for constructs (ES 0.824, LS 0.784, and WLB 0.807) were greater than the correlations between the constructs. Hence, the Fornell-Larcker (1981) criterion confirmed discriminant validity. The HTMT values further confirmed discriminant validity since the values were below the threshold of 0.9.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity (latent variable correlation and square root of AVE)

	Fornell Larcker Criterion			HTMT Results	
	ES	LS	WLB	LS	WLB
ES	0.824				
LS	0.756	0.784		0.829	
WLB	0.636	0.724	0.807	0.710	0.806

Note: ES – Employee Satisfaction, LS- Leadership Support, WLB- Work Life Balance

4.4 Structural model

The analysis of the structural model demonstrates substantial explanatory power for the endogenous constructs, as detailed in Table 4. The coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates that 52.4% of the variance in Work-Life Balance (WLB) is accounted for by Life Satisfaction (LS). The model's predictive relevance (Q^2) for WLB is 0.562, suggesting a strong predictive capability. Additionally, 58.8% of the variance in Employee Satisfaction (ES) is explained by LS and WLB, with a Q^2 value of 0.562. According to Hair et al. (2017), a Q^2 value above 0.3 reflects strong

predictive relevance. The model fit indices are generally satisfactory, with a Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) of 0.064 and a Normed Fit Index (NFI) of 0.850. While the NFI falls slightly below the recommended threshold of 0.9, the overall model fit remains acceptable based on other fit parameters (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Schumacker & Lomax, 2010).

Table 4: Coefficient of Determination (R^2), Q^2 and model fit (SRMR- NFI)

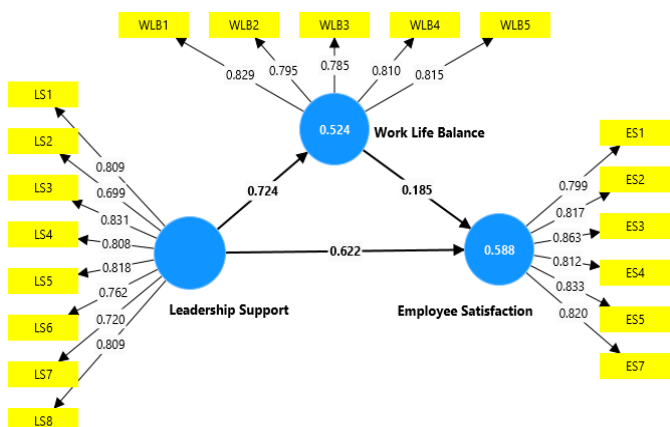
Endogenous Latent Factors	R2	Q2
ES	0.588	0.562
WLB	0.524	0.519
Model fit indices	SRMR	NFI
	0.064	0.850

The SEM path analysis revealed several key findings. Firstly, job satisfaction (LS) had a strong positive impact on work-life balance (WLB), with a standardized coefficient of $\beta = 0.725$ ($t = 18.210$, $p < 0.001$), thereby confirming H_1 . Secondly, work-life balance (WLB) was found to significantly positive influence on employee satisfaction (ES), with a standardized coefficient of $\beta = 0.621$ ($t = 8.328$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H_2 . Furthermore, the analysis indicated a significant positive effect of work-life balance (WLB) on employee satisfaction (ES), with a standardized coefficient of $\beta = 0.187$ ($t = 2.782$, $p < 0.001$), affirming H_3 . Additionally, there was a significant indirect effect of work-life balance (WLB) on employee job satisfaction (ES), with a standardized coefficient of $\beta = 0.136$ ($t = 2.616$, $p < 0.01$), supporting H_4 .

Table 5: Hypotheses constructs

Hypotheses	Relationship	Path Coefficient	T Stat.	P Value	Remark
Direct Relations					
H ₁	LS → WLB	0.725	18.210**	0.000	Significant
H ₂	LS → ES	0.621	8.328**	0.000	Significant
H ₃	WLB → ES	0.187	2.782**	0.005	Significant
Indirect Relations					
H ₄	LS → WLB → ES	0.136	2.616**	0.009	Significant

** signifiant at 1% level of significance

**Figure 2: PLS-SEM showing relationships among the variables**

5. DISCUSSION

The impact of leadership on employee job satisfaction, with work-life balance serving as a mediating factor, underscores the multifaceted nature of organizational dynamics. Leadership that emphasize empathy, clear communication, and support for employees' personal and professional needs tend to foster higher job satisfaction. When leaders actively promote work-life balance, it not only enhances employees' well-being but also creates a more productive and positive work environment. This positive relationship is significant because it highlights the essential role of leadership in shaping workplace culture and employee experiences. Empirical evidence from this study aligns with previous research has consistently found a strong link between supportive leadership and increased job satisfaction. Leaders who understand and advocate for work-life balance enable employees to manage their responsibilities more effectively, reducing stress and increasing job satisfaction. This relationship suggests that leadership is a critical lever for improving employee outcomes, as it directly influences the organizational climate

and employees' perceptions of their work environment (Yousef, 2017; Karatepe, 2013; Wang et al., 2010; Yukl, 2012).

However, while the findings of this study are in line with much of the existing literature, there are some contradictions worth noting. For instance, some previous studies have found that the impact of leadership on job satisfaction can be contingent on various factors, such as cultural context, organizational structure, and individual employee characteristics. In some cases, the positive effects of leadership and work-life balance on job satisfaction may not be as pronounced if other organizational issues, like job insecurity or lack of career development opportunities, are prevalent (Choi, 2018; Anitha, 2014). Moreover, the effectiveness of work life balance as a mediating factor might vary depending on the specific work life balance policies implemented and how they are perceived by employees. While this study provides robust evidence of the positive interplay between leadership, work-life balance, and job satisfaction, it also invites further exploration into the nuances that may influence these relationships. Understanding these subtleties is crucial for developing tailored leadership strategies that effectively enhance job satisfaction across diverse organizational settings (Fong and Snape, 2015; Allen et al., 2013).

6. CONCLUSION

The impact of leadership on employee job satisfaction is profound, with a significant positive relationship evident when considering the mediating role of work life balance. Effective leadership practices, characterized by clear communication, empathy, and support, directly influence employees' perceptions of their job satisfaction. Leaders who prioritize and facilitate a balanced work life environment create a supportive atmosphere where employees feel valued and understood, leading to higher levels of satisfaction. This holistic approach to leadership ensures that employees' professional and personal needs are addressed, fostering a sense of loyalty and motivation. The positive correlation between leadership and job satisfaction underscores the critical role that management plays in shaping the work environment and influencing employees' attitudes and performance.

Furthermore, the mediating role of work life balance highlights the intricate interplay between leadership practices and employee well-being. When leaders actively promote policies and practices that encourage a healthy work-life balance, employees experience reduced stress and increased job satisfaction. This balance allows employees to manage their work responsibilities alongside personal commitments effectively, leading to improved morale and productivity. The significant positive relationship between these variables indicates that work life balance acts as a crucial intermediary, amplifying the positive effects of good leadership on job satisfaction. This approach can lead to higher productivity, lower turnover rates, and a more positive organizational culture and organizations are required to provide leadership training programs that emphasize supporting work-life balance, implementing flexible work policies, and establishing robust employee assistance programs. These measures can directly improve job satisfaction. Additionally, creating regular feedback mechanisms can help leaders make informed decisions to support employee well-being. Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of leadership in not only guiding and supporting employees but also in creating a work culture that values and nurtures work life balance, ultimately enhancing job satisfaction and organizational success.

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